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## Your Information

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**Your Name**

Amanda Afifi

**Your Commission**

Hispanic/Latino Quality of Life Resource Advisory Commission

**Email**

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**After question three, which questions from the flowchart are you prepared to answer?**

Is there funding?  
Which department holds the funding?  
How much funding is there?  
How is success measured?  
What are the impacts, and gaps?

## Root Cause Analysis

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**Story: What did you hear from the community?**

We heard a personal story from an individual in the community. She needed funding to start a small business. She was not eligible for funding through most programs, and she did not want to take out a high interest loan from a payday loan company. She heard of the Family Independence Initiative Austin. She applied and received an unrestricted cash transfer to start her small business. She also shared a story about another individual who would benefit from this type of program. She said the individual was a doctor in their home country; however, due to the high cost of the medical licensure, they were not able to provide medical services to members of their new community in the US. Access to unrestricted cash could help that individual obtain their medical licence. These individuals expressed the need for cash to help propel them out of poverty.

**Problem: What is the problem you identify?**

We heard that individuals living at or below the poverty line in the US are penalized with the current deficit-based system. We heard how some individuals need access to unrestricted funds to move out of poverty.

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**How does the problem show up in your community? Who is most impacted by the problem?**

Benefits decrease as income increases for communities with low income. In order to help individuals out of this cycle, they require unrestricted funds to go towards expenses they deem the most important. Families may use these funds to put a down payment on a house, pay for childcare, start a new business, buy a car, pay off debt, etc.. Additionally, COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted those individuals living in poverty, as well as the Hispanic/Latino community. The Austin City Council unanimously passed a resolution injecting \$15 million into the city's Relief in a State Emergency (RISE) Fund. Half of that funding will be distributed by organizations directly to Austin residents in need in the form of direct transfers. This money will provide short relief to residents. However, with COVID-19 expected to impact the world for a much longer period of time, residents will continue to need additional direct transfers.

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**Is there funding to address the problem?** Yes

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**Do multiple departments administer these funds?** Yes

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**What is the primary department that administers the funds?** Austin Public Health

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**What is the secondary department that administers the funds?** Neighborhood Housing and Community Development

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**Please name below any additional departments that administers funds.** PARD and Police

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**How much funding is identified to address this problem?** Approximately \$48.7 million

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**How is success measured in the contract/department? How does this align with SD2023?**

Success is measured differently depending on the contract/department.

This recommendation aligns with the following SD 2023 Outcome: Economic Opportunity & Affordability.

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**What are the impacts of the funding?**

A Social Services audit was completed December 2019. The audit report states, "While the City has allocated sufficient funding to meet Council's 2016 funding policy goal for social service contracts, it has not funded some of the additional community needs for these services due to budget constraints and other competing City priorities."

The audit surveyed a sample of 30 social service providers who have had social service contracts with the City within the last five years, and they also interviewed members of various City commissions. Findings indicate that the majority of the stakeholders perceive that the City's social service contracting process is adequately equitable and transparent, some stakeholders expressed concerns. The survey should have included a sample of providers that do not have contracts or have been denied contracts.

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**Considering all of the information you have or have not collected above, how do we solve for this problem?**

The Commission recommends providing direct financial assistance to individuals and families, including undocumented residents and small business owners, who need it the most by reallocating \$3 M to \$4 M to direct and unrestricted cash transfers to families struggling with poverty as a way to advance their social and economic mobility. The recommendation includes funding assistance for small social service organizations who are working with those demographics.

Organizations eligible to receive this assistance should be limited to:

- Smaller organizations with budgets of less than \$250,000 who are seeking to build capacity; and
- Culturally led organizations that are seeking to build capacity and serve vulnerable communities.

This recommendation aligns with the following SD 2023 Outcome:  
Economic Opportunity & Affordability.

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