



MURIEL BOWSER

MAYOR

December 14, 2022

The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chairman
Council of the District of Columbia
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 504
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Chairman Mendelson:

I am pleased to submit to the Council of the District of Columbia the enclosed "Report on Use of Grant Funds for the Strong Families, Strong Futures Program Pilot," which was prepared by the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED) pursuant to section 2032(p)(3) of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development Limited Grant-Making Authority Act of 2012,, effective November 13, 2021 (D.C. Law 24-45; D.C. Official Code § 1-328.04(p)(3)).

This report provides a description of the Strong Families, Strong Futures cash assistance program. It details how the cash assistance was distributed and in what amounts, the eligibility requirements for the pilot, the funding structure, information on how the pilot-program participants are using the cash assistance they received, and a summary analysis of the efficacy and benefits of the cash assistance issued by the grantee. It also provides details on the program's evaluation plan, including the preliminary results DMPED has received from the baseline evaluation survey and interviews. DMPED will receive analysis of the program's midterm evaluation in early 2023.

I am available to discuss any questions you may have regarding this report. In order to facilitate a response to your questions, please have your staff contact Erika Satterlee, Legislative Director, DMPED, at (202) 727-1983.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Muriel Bowser".

Muriel Bowser

Enclosures

Use of Grant Funds for Strong Families, Strong Futures Program Pilot
DC COUNCIL REPORT

Fiscal Year: 2022

Grantor: DMPED

Grantee: Martha's Table

Program Overview

Description of the cash assistance program, including how often cash was distributed and in what amounts. For any grant funds not yet distributed, please describe the plan for their distribution and in what amounts.

Strong Families, Strong Futures DC is an unconditional direct cash assistance program established to support mothers living in wards 5, 7, and 8 during the pivotal first year of their child's life. The program provides eligible mothers with \$10,800 over the course of one year.

Martha's Table accepted applications between February 28 – March 21, 2022 and received 1553 applications. After a period of random selection and eligibility verification, they finalized the cohort of 132 mothers in May and June 2022. The first round of payments were disbursed on May 20. At the point of program enrollment, mothers were given the option of receiving a single lump-sum payment of \$10,800 or receiving monthly payments of \$900 for one year. Of the 132 mothers enrolled, 100 selected a lump-sum payment, and 32 selected monthly payments (76% lump sum/24% monthly). As of October 2022, expenditures for cash payments total \$1,220,400 of \$1,425,600, which represents nearly 86%. The remaining balance will be distributed by May 2023, when the mothers who opted for monthly installments of \$900 will receive their final payment.

Eligibility

Description of the eligibility requirements for the program or pilot, including the total number of individuals or households served.

The program is designed to serve 132 new and expecting mothers residing in Wards 5, 7 and 8 of the District of Columbia who have yearly household earnings below 250% of the 2021 federal poverty level. The program defines a new mother as raising a child 3 months of age or younger as of March 21, 2022. An expecting mother is defined as pregnant in their second or third trimester as of March 21, 2022.

Of the 132 mothers in total are participating in the program. Eighty-nine percent identify as Black or African American, and 77% are between the ages of 20-29. 89% of the program participants make \$32,000 or less a year, and 87% are currently receiving public benefits. The participants live in ward 5 (18%), ward 7 (27%), and ward 8 (55%).

Funding

Description of the funding structure for the program or pilot program.

The program is fully funded in Fiscal Year 2022 with local funds under the authority of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED). Martha's Table was awarded \$1.5 million (grant No. GI-22-2022) pursuant to the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development Grants and Initiatives Amendment Act of 2021.

Use of Cash Assistance

Information on how the program or pilot-program participants used the cash assistance they received.

The grantee, Martha's Table, is conducting a program evaluation to assess how mothers are using the cash assistance and how it is impacting the participants' financial well-being and status, the health of the participating mother and child, and their housing and food security. The evaluation is being conducted using quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods. Martha's Table will conduct evaluation activity at the baseline (May 2022), midpoint (November 2022), and endline (May 2023) of the program. The midpoint evaluation survey, which was administered on November 1, 2022 will provide information on how the pilot program participants are using their cash assistance. DMPED expects to receive the survey results and analysis in late 2022 or early 2023.

In May 2022, Martha's Table initiated a baseline assessment, using qualitative and quantitative methods to understand the participant's financial, health, housing, and food status *before* they received cash assistance. The baseline assessment included 6 in-depth interviews, 2 focus group discussions, and a quantitative survey. The survey participation rate was 84% (111 of 132 mothers filled out the survey).

Information from the baseline survey revealed that, before receiving the payments, the mothers were experiencing severe financial, housing, and food insecurity.

- 68% said they worry about stable housing for the next two months.
- 63% said they worry about their food running out before they had money to buy more.
- 58% reported that the food they bought didn't last, and they didn't have money to get more.
- 47% were unable to pay for transportation, and 43% were unable to pay for basic household or personal hygiene items.

Through interviews and focus group discussions, participants in the baseline evaluation reported that they:

- Rely on welfare programs for food and housing, face challenge paying utility bills and car notes on time, and are unable to afford necessities for their newborn or for their household, including healthy foods
- Have lost employment, hold low paying jobs, and face challenges with the increased cost of living. They described that they were "getting by" from month to month or "always in survival mode," financially.
- Have been forced to limit their personal consumption or forego their personal needs to care for their families, change consumption to make food last longer, and supplement their income through additional work
- They rely heavily on receiving social support from family members, friends, significant others, and/or local community organizations, including Martha's Table.

Though mothers reported having a positive health status, many experienced weakened health after giving birth, as suggested in the in-depth interviews. Participants described poor health with physical pain, tiredness, anxiety, distress, and postpartum depression for which they seek professional mental health support.

Efficacy and Benefits

Provide a summary analysis of the efficacy and benefits of the cash assistance issued by the grantee or grantees.

On November 1, 2022, Martha's Table administered the midpoint survey evaluation to begin evaluating the efficacy and benefits of the cash assistance, six months after the mothers first received their payments in May 2022. Like the baseline, the midpoint evaluation will consist of quantitative methods (a survey administered to all mothers) as well as qualitative methods (In-depth Interviews and Focus Groups). The midpoint will also help Martha's Table and DMPED assess whether the program is on track to meet its intended goals or whether programmatic changes are needed at this stage. DMPED expects to have the results of the midpoint evaluation by late 2022/early 2023, and an endline assessment will also be undertaken 12 months after the baseline (in May 2023).

For the midpoint evaluation, Martha's Table is asking survey, interview, and focus group questions to understand key questions, including the following sample questions:

- How did you choose to receive cash support payments?
- What were your reasons for choosing a lump sum or monthly payment?
- How much, if any, of your cash payment have you spent on the following?
 - Food
 - Housing (rent or mortgage)
 - Utilities (gas, oil, electric, water)
 - Transportation
 - Internet/Phone Plans and Devices
 - Other household items (clothing and cleaning supplies)
 - Health care
 - Child care
 - Paying off debt (credit cards and loans)
 - Child support
 - Building up cash savings for the future
 - Other, please specify: __
- Compared to 6 months ago, would you describe yourself (and your household) as worse off, the same, or better off financially?
- Are you worried or concerned that in the next two months you may not have stable housing that you own, rent, or stay in as a part of a household?
- Since you enrolled in Strong Families, Strong Futures, has the cash you received from SFSF helped you obtain any of the following (check all that apply):
 - Healthcare
 - Childcare
 - Employment opportunities
 - Educational opportunities
- We want to know whether our efforts to safeguard your public benefits have been effective. As a result of receiving cash payments through the Strong Families, Strong Futures program, have you lost any public benefit(s) you had received before participating in the program?
- Are there any gaps in the program or challenges that Martha's Table and DMPED should be aware of?

The data received from the midpoint survey will inform any needed course corrections to ensure that the program meets its intended goals before the end of the program.