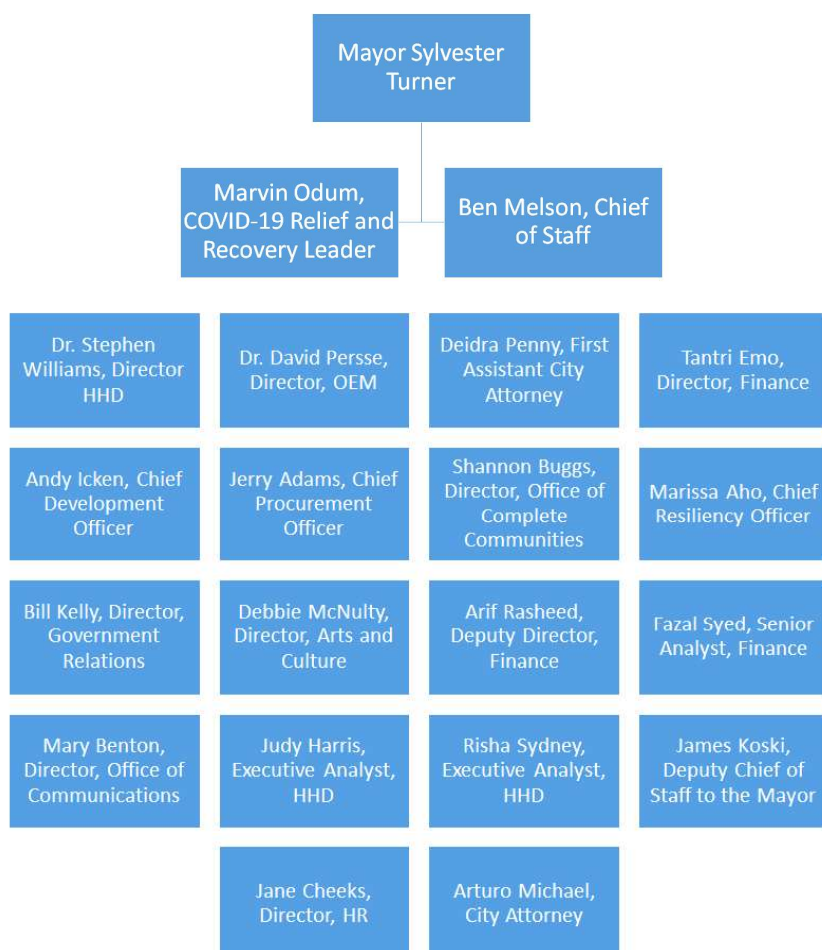


THE RECOVERY TEAM

City of Houston Response and Recovery

The Recovery Team consists of Director-level and senior staff from multiple departments across the breadth of City planning and operational activities. This team began meeting weekly in April 2020, ensuring broad perspectives were captured for the overall response. This structure also ensured that Houston's response remained agile as conditions and needs frequently changed throughout the year.

A coordinated response among City and partner organizations with consistent communications to the public remains a key focus. The Recovery Team, in coordination with HPD, HFD, HCD, IT, and many other departments, identified and proposed potential response 'projects' across the full spectrum of public health, new ways of working (safe work environment), public assistance, small business support, and many others.



APPROACH AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Crisis response and recovery are largely about setting priorities and allocating resources. As always, the need far outweighs the resources available and COVID-19 is no exception. Mayor Turner led the recovery team in identifying a set of guiding principles to employ when deciding which programs to execute. In summary, these include:

- **Securing public health**
- **Prioritizing the most vulnerable and at-risk in our community, and**
- **Resiliency – better preparing the City for future shocks and stresses.**

Activities to secure public health are front and center in the response program and, as you will see in this report, have received a majority of available funding. This includes activities such as testing, contact tracing, vaccine distribution, communications, and numerous others.

A primary role for the City is to act as the safety net for those most at-risk in our community. The inclusion of this principle has driven not only the health-related response but also the large number of programs aimed at direct assistance to vulnerable individuals and families.

Resiliency is a key measure of success for mid/long-term recovery. This is about raising the bar in our city and its investments in human capital and financial resources. This principle pushed us to prioritize key capabilities such as connectivity for education, improved telemedicine capabilities, efficient systems for vaccine tracking (now and in the future), and many others.



COLLABORATION

Regional collaboration is a critical component to our response.

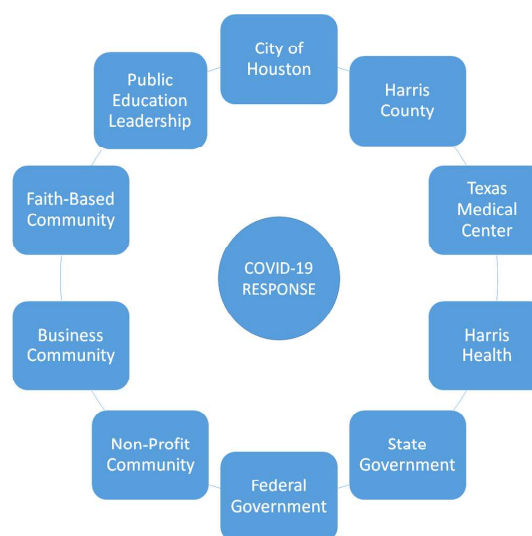
Closely related to the guiding principles is collaboration. The Recovery Team has dedicated itself to amplifying and broadening the impact of initiatives through collaboration. This is exemplified by the dozens of community/non-profit/faith-based organizations that partnered with the Health Equity Response Task Force and the partners working closely with the Houston Health Department.

The City of Houston and Harris County have endeavored to work in a coordinated fashion that improves on examples of the past. Key, joint initiatives include programs such as rental assistance, testing sites, sharing of information, communications, and, most recently, implementation of vaccination programs.

The State of Texas is a key partner primarily as it relates to education and digital connectivity programs, testing, and vaccination activities.

Beginning March 2020, the Texas Medical Center hosted twice-a-week meetings with representatives from the City of Houston, Harris County, hospital system leadership, Harris Health, SETRAC, the Greater Houston Partnership, and others. These sessions continue to enable a coordinated response to issues that arise as the pandemic progresses. It has critically aided in the advancement of testing, contact tracing, communication campaigns, information-sharing, requests to the State of Texas, and many other initiatives related to health and safety. It continues to be one of the most effective examples of collaboration associated with the pandemic.

REGIONAL COLLABORATION



"We are working in a collaborative sense to establish an integrated and robust COVID-19 response plan for the greater Houston region."

-Marvin Odum

CRF PERFORMANCE AND ASSURANCE PROGRAM

OVERVIEW

The federal Corona Virus Relief Fund (CRF) provided a direct allocation to the City of Houston of approximately \$405 million for COVID-19 response and recovery. This money was received in May 2020. Unlike past disasters the City has faced, this early infusion of emergency response funding enabled the Recovery Team to take very quick action in ramping up the response programs.

From the outset, the Recovery Team established a deliberate, disciplined, and transparent approach to the allocation of CRF. Each aspect of city leadership and operation was encouraged to submit proposals for use of CRF.

A **CRF Challenge Team** (a subset of the Recovery Team) was established to:

- Ensure alignment with all Federal/State/Local regulatory requirements
- Screen for fit with the guiding principles, and
- High-grade the proposals based on estimated impact to the community.

Programs not selected were moved to a waiting list for reconsideration in the event additional funding becomes available or priorities change.

The Challenge Team recommendations of priority projects were then presented to Mayor Turner for support and subsequently sent to the City Council for support. Periodic updates on approved programs, project management, and spending were provided to the City Council's Budget and Fiscal Affairs (BFA) committee. For **transparency**, each project approved and the spend associated with it was made public (primarily through the information provided to the BFA committee) from the beginning.

CHALLENGE TEAM

Ben Melson,
Recovery Team

Marvin Odum
Recovery Team

Marvalette
Hunter,
Administration

James Koski,
Administration

Andy Icken, Chief
Development
Officer

Deidra Penny,
Legal

Tantri Emo,
Finance

Arif Rasheed,
Finance

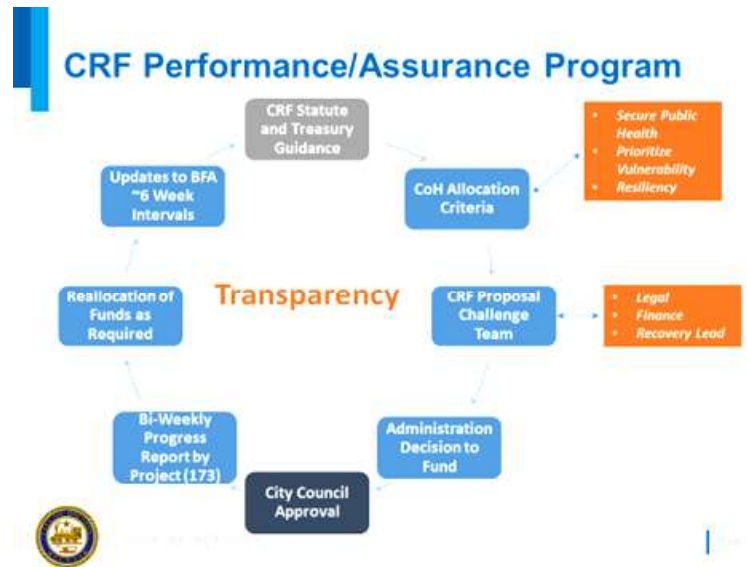
Fazal Syed,
Finance

The team reviewed well over 250 project proposals and ultimately approved about 180 projects that were critical to immediate and long-term relief and recovery efforts. Not surprisingly, the need was and continues to be far greater than the funding we have at our disposal. Over the course of the CRF program, over \$250 million in program funding requests were denied. Project descriptions and costs associated with each of the approved projects can be found in the appendices of this Interim Report.

The vast majority of the CRF programs that were finally approved fell into a handful of priority response categories including public health, direct public assistance, new ways of working (safe work environment), and support to small business. This is defined further later in this report.

The Challenge Team also established an internal, bi-weekly performance management tracking system to allow us to ensure each program was implemented effectively and as planned. Adjustments were made throughout the year as necessary and nearly all the projects were completely implemented by the end of 2020.

Finally, a key principle established by the Challenge Team is that audit records were to be prepared as each project progressed (for all CRF spend) and this program is considered audit-ready when and if necessary.



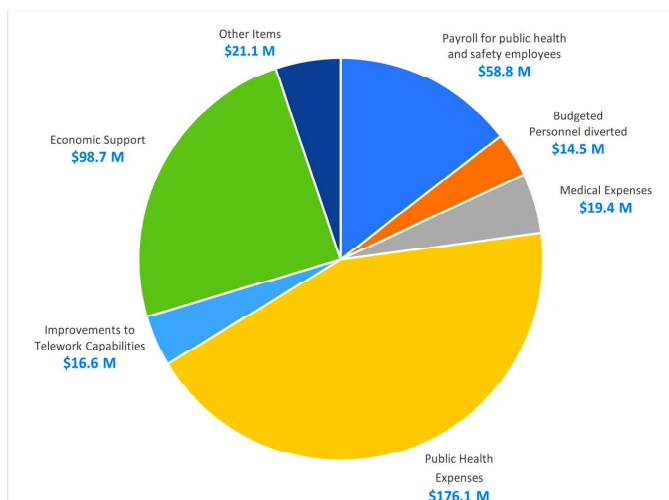
FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

Acceptable uses for the CRF are dictated and defined by the CARES ACT, with interpretive guidance issued by the U.S. Department of Treasury through a series of requirements and guidelines. While the Treasury adjusted these guidelines throughout the past year, two high-level requirements remained consistent. First, CRF can only be applied to expenditures incurred due to the pandemic. Second, funds cannot be used for any expense that was accounted for in the budget approved prior to March 27, 2020. Initial guidance from the Treasury was also that the entirety of the CRF had to be spent by December 30, 2020, and that any remaining money at that time was to be returned to the U.S. Department of Treasury. This last requirement was eventually altered, but only in the second half of December, less than two weeks before the original deadline.

CRF PROGRAM OVERVIEW

This section of the report will provide several breakdowns of the categories of expenditure and various CRF programs which add up to the ~\$405 million the City of Houston received. As referenced previously, detail on the 180+ projects that make up the City's CRF spend is provided in the appendices.

ALL APPROVED CRF PROGRAMS BY FEDERAL TREASURY CATEGORY



The first chart details the breakdown of expenditures in categories defined by the U.S. Department of Treasury.

At a glance, it is obvious that the City's direct public health-related response (which includes activities such as testing, contact tracing, acquisition of personal protective equipment (PPE), data acquisition/monitoring, vaccine-related systems, support for nursing homes, and long-term care facilities, etc.) make up the majority of the spend.

MONTHLY CRF EXPENDITURES MAY 2020 - MARCH 2021



Note: March 2021 expenses are only for the period March 1st to March 5th

The other significant portion of general spend is in the area of direct assistance to individuals, families, small businesses, and others. Many of these programs were advanced by the Mayor's Health Equity Response (HER) Task Force along with community partners. More detailed breakdowns of the health and direct assistance programs are provided below. This is a balanced program designed to secure public health and provide assistance to those that need it the most.

PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE

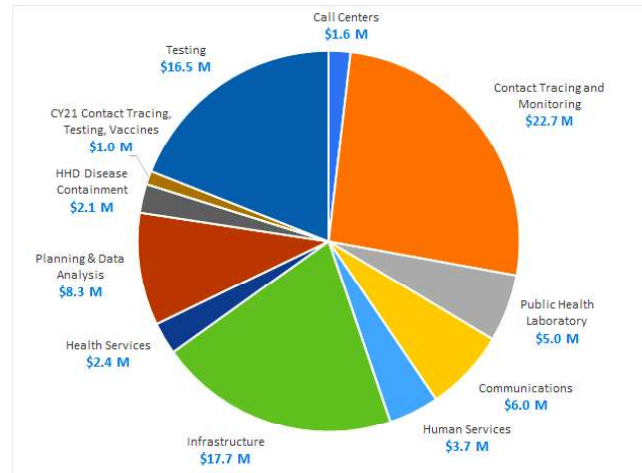
The overall public health response spend can be characterized in various segments, the first being infrastructure, and disposable assets. **This includes programs such as:**

- expansion of the city laboratory capacity to help manage high volumes and, importantly, reduce the turn-around time from administering a test to providing test results
- huge amounts of PPE for use across the City's operations and departments including HPD, HFD, etc.
- provision of quarantine and isolation facilities, and others.

The second category includes services provided which include:

- provision of free, safe, and accessible testing to Houstonians
- contact tracing (>300 full-time trained staff)
- disease containment activities across City assets including enhanced screening and sanitation services.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT CRF PROGRAMS



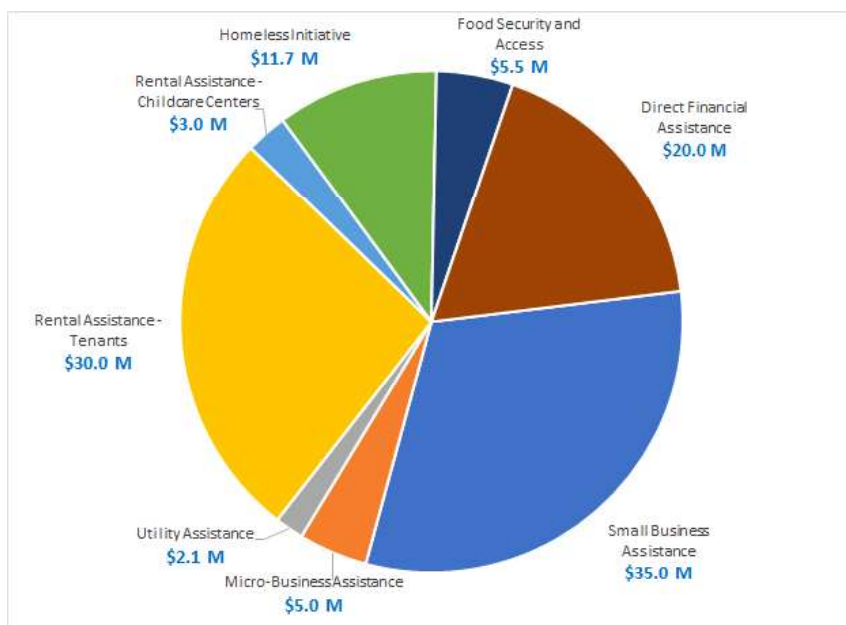
- establishment of a high-capacity call center to handle COVID inquiries
- fit for purpose programs to assist the homeless population which has risen with the pandemic
- allocating staff and resources to Long-Term Care Facilities (LTCF) and special situations such as the jail population.
- Leading communication and community education programs.

Additional information is provided in The Houston Health Department section of this report.



VULNERABLE POPULATION ASSISTANCE

As highlighted in the chart, considerable resources have been allocated to direct assistance initiatives for individuals, families, and small businesses. The dual health and economic crisis resulted in an enormous loss of financial security across the Houston community. These programs targeted gaps that could not be met by other community organizations or governmental entities. The subsequent sections of this report provide the description and impact assessment of these programs.



While there is never enough funding to meet the need, these programs had a tremendous impact on individuals across the city and are vital to ensuring increased equity during such a difficult time.



HEALTH DEPARTMENT RESPONSE

The Houston Health Department's response to the COVID-19 pandemic is a testament to its well-established reputation as a leading local health department in the United States. Guided by its access and equity response strategy, the department's tireless work helped prevent Houston from experiencing the level of tragedy that occurred in some other major cities.

When Houston's first case was confirmed in early March 2020, the department had a response team mobilized and processes and procedures in place to ultimately save lives.

One of the earliest actions of the department was visiting and assessing nursing homes, assisted living centers, and similar facilities. Through more than 300 site visits, these facilities were provided guidance to help prevent and mitigate cases among this vulnerable population.

Always a data-driven department, the data analysis team is the core of its access and equity response strategy.

By tracking and analyzing data such as cases, deaths, and positivity rate, department leadership is equipped with the information needed to target resources to the most vulnerable and impacted communities.

The department's innovation is on display through its wastewater testing and seroprevalence survey programs, providing even more precise information to guide response efforts. These programs are now mimicked by other local health departments in Texas and the United States.

Mass testing sites were quickly established in Houston through partnerships with federal and local agencies. As supplies increased, the health department implemented a strategy that offers dozens of free testing sites across the city on a weekly basis, with mobile sites targeting vulnerable communities. The department offered in-home testing services for homebound Houstonians.

take your
**BEST
SHOT!**

Protect yourself
and your loved ones.
Get vaccinated
against COVID-19.



**Better.
Together.**



HOUSTON HEALTH
DEPARTMENT

houstonhealth.org

HEALTH DEPARTMENT RESPONSE

The department stood up a massive case investigation and contact tracing unit with more than 300 staffers investigating cases, providing guidance, and notifying contacts of potential exposure. This provides Houstonians with COVID-19 and their contact the vital information needed to protect their family and community. The unit also routinely connects people with basic needs such as assistance with food, rent/housing, utilities, transportation, and technology through the department's human services program.

The department's "Better. Together" and "Don't stop. Don't forget." public health education campaigns promote the combination of behaviors/tactics proven to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and the availability of testing and resources. On the broad messaging front, the department has advertising across TV, radio, print, and geo-targeted digital ads. Assets are shared with trusted voices like elected officials and community organizations to help spread the message. Perhaps most importantly, the department conducts outreach directly in the hardest hit communities through canvassing and distribution drives.



In December, the department was one of the first – if not the first – government entity to open a mass vaccination site for qualifying members of the public. Since then, the department established additional mass vaccination sites in the city, including drive-thru sites. As supply increases, the department is strengthening its access and equity strategy by making vaccines available directly in the most vulnerable and impacted communities. In addition to offering vaccines at its strategically located health centers and multi-service centers, the department partners with trusted community clinics, pharmacies, and clinics to administer vaccines. As supply continues to increase, the department will operate mobile strike teams to micro-target underserved communities. The department also anticipates offering at-home vaccinations to homebound Houstonians.

HEALTH EQUITY RESPONSE TASK FORCE

The Health Equity Response (H.E.R.) Initiative and Task Force is a vital component of the City of Houston's COVID-19 Response and Recovery effort launched by Mayor Sylvester Turner in April 2020 as an intervention for vulnerable and at-risk populations.

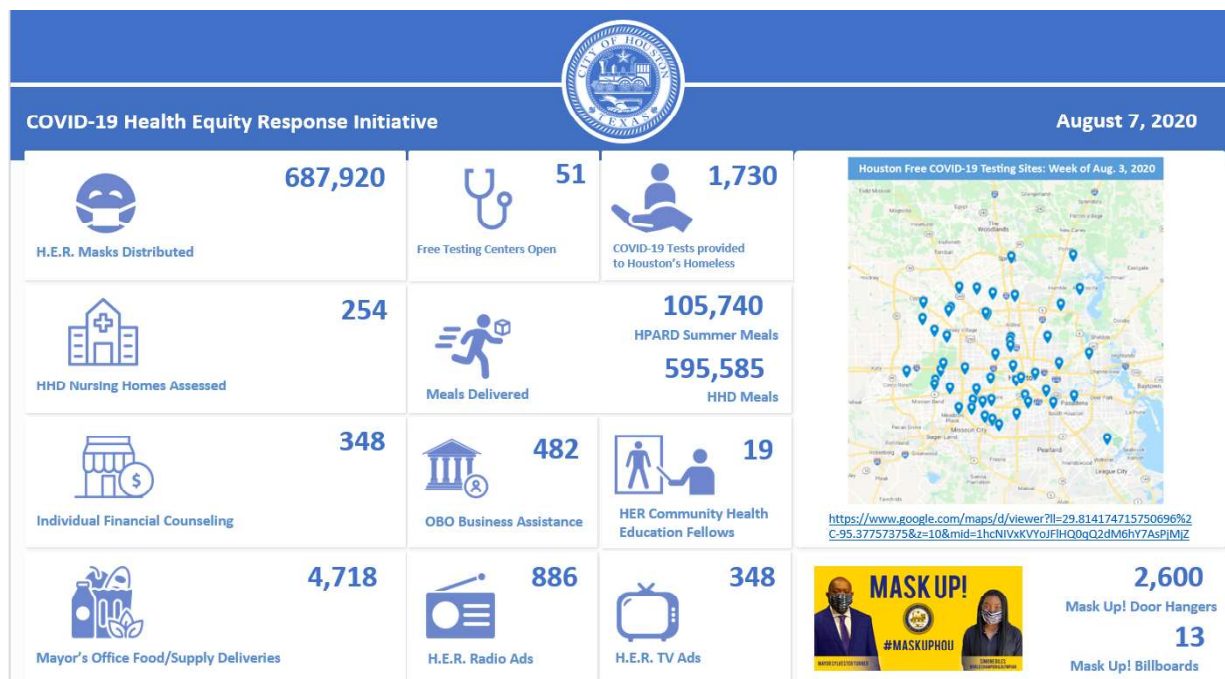
The initiative is led by six Mayor's Office Division Directors with implementation visioning and support from the H.E.R. Task Force comprised of more than 50 civic leaders. The mayoral appointees to the Task Force include medical specialists, public health professionals, communications creatives, data scientists, technology experts and faith leaders.

The H.E.R. Task Force is organized into six subcommittees – Data and Metrics, Faith & Community Leaders, Marketing & Communications, Medical Care, Public Health Education, and Technology Access. Each subcommittee was led by a Mayor's Office Director in collaboration with a Community Chair and/or Co-Chairs.

The initiative is a data-driven equitable relief drive that leverages existing efforts, including the Resilient Houston strategy and the Complete Communities Action Plans, to respond to the intersection of underlying health disparities with increased vulnerability of specific populations and neighborhoods. The initiative addresses health inequities and lack of healthcare access by targeting rapid response for residents in Houston's 10 Complete Communities and 17 additional priority Super Neighborhoods determined to have the greatest vulnerability using the Centers for Disease Controls social vulnerability data and healthcare accessibility data. These neighborhoods include Acres Home, Denver Harbor, Eastex-Jensen, Fifth Ward, Gulfton, Independence Heights, Kashmere Gardens, Magnolia Park- Manchester, Second Ward, Sunnyside, and Third Ward.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed and intensified health inequities in communities where people were already struggling. Combined with new economic challenges, some of our neighbors now face increased food insecurity as well as little-to-no resources to acquire items for novel coronavirus protection and to maintain general health.

To provide some relief, the Mayor's H.E.R. Task Force regularly partnered with local organizations to distribute free masks, hand sanitizer, groceries, prepared meals, and educational materials. To supplement in-kind donations, the task force managed more than \$8 million in CARES Act Funding to purchase supplies and food, provide financial relief, and create programs that met the needs of economically distressed and virus-vulnerable residents.



In 2020, the Mayor's H.E.R. Task Force accomplished the following:

- Launched the Mask Up! campaign in April 2020 and used outdoor, broadcast, print and social media through December 2020 to amplify messaging about the importance of face masks and other pandemic precautions to fight against COVID-19.
- Distributed more than 2 Million masks
- Worked with Collaborative for Children to provide rental relief to 118 child-care centers throughout the City of Houston to keep their doors open
- Worked with 19 restaurants to distribute more than 200,000 meals for vulnerable Houstonians in just over 7 weeks through the Houston Eats Restaurant Support (H.E.R.S.) Program
- Distributed laptops and internet vouchers to increase connectivity in economically distressed households and worked to expand publicly accessible WIFI
- Engaged two street teams to encourage Houstonians to stay safe and distribute masks, hand sanitizer, food, and public health information
- Worked with faith, community, and Hispanic leaders to host webinars and Facebook Live panel discussions ranging from mental health awareness to vaccine hesitancy.
- Worked with over 100 young people to become Community Health Education Fellows. (CHEFS)
- Worked with the Houston Housing & Community Development Department and BakerRipley to manage the direct rental assistance program that provided \$1,200 checks to more than 16,000 residents.
- Set up a dashboard for Houstonians to track the City's ongoing response and recovery efforts, which can be found [here](#).



DIRECT ASSISTANCE

"And as the U.S. Congress debates whether to increase direct stimulus aid to Americans from \$600 to \$2,000, the City is putting \$1,200 checks of much-needed assistance directly into the hands of those who are struggling financially."

-Mayor Sylvester Turner

In December of 2020, while negotiations continued to stall over a second COVID-19 stimulus relief bill in Washington D.C., the City of Houston led the development of a program to help individuals who are struggling financially due to the pandemic. On December 2, Houston City Council unanimously approved another round of COVID-19 relief funds in the amount of \$20 million. BakerRipley administered the program on the City's behalf.

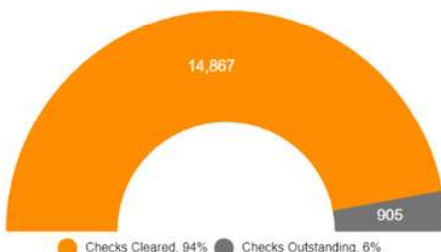
On December 7, the Direct Assistance Program went live and by December 30, all applications were fully vetted for eligibility, and payments were issued. This extremely quick ramp-up time and three-week execution period was an incredible achievement lead by City staff and primarily thanks to Rene Solis and the staff at Baker Ripley who worked tirelessly over the holidays to provide this much-needed assistance. This direct assistance was provided to nearly 17,000 households and as of March 2020, the remaining funds have been expended.

Direct Assistance Dashboard Checks Distributed 12/14/20 - 12/30/20

City of Houston Funds Distributed

\$18,926,400
Total Amount Distributed
\$17,840,400
Amount Cleared
\$1,086,000
Amount Outstanding

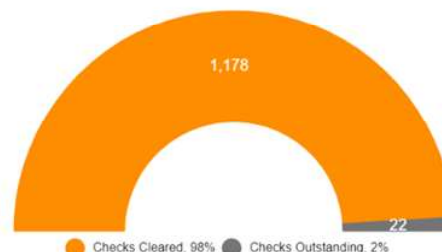
Checks Distributed = 15,772



Private Funds Distributed

\$1,440,000
Total Amount Distributed
\$1,413,600
Amount Cleared
\$26,400
Amount Outstanding

Checks Distributed = 1,200



RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The two rounds of rental assistance funding from the City of Houston have provided about \$30 million in funding to over 17,000 tenants and landlords.

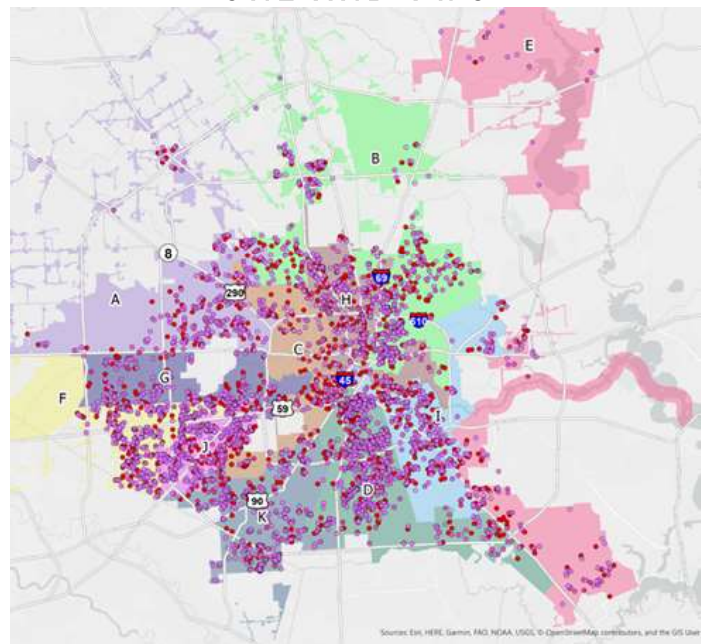
Utilizing CRF, the City launched two rental assistance programs totaling \$30 million in funding. Following a detailed review of the nearly 27,000 applicants, the two rounds of rental assistance funding have provided about \$30 million in funding to over 17,000 tenants and landlords. Following the administration and completion of the first rental assistance program, we worked closely with our Harris County colleagues to align our rental assistance programs to ensure everyone who was in need of assistance had an opportunity to receive that assistance in a timely manner.

On this map, you can see each place of residence that received rental assistance across the City. A targeted and strategic approach to administering the program was built in consultation with the Recovery Team, the City's Housing and Community Development Department, non-profit organizations, landlords, and other community leaders.

In addition to the CRF dollars that were allocated by the Recovery Team and Mayor Turner to the first two rental assistance programs, the federal government approved the second round of stimulus funding in late December 2020.

This stimulus package included \$69 million in funding for the City of Houston with the specific purpose of providing rental and utility assistance. To facilitate the creation of a third rental assistance program, the City of Houston and Harris County have created a joint task force to direct the administration of the funds. The combined program will total is \$159 million and the funds will be distributed by two agencies with established experience in helping people in need: BakerRipley and Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston.

RENTAL ASSISTANCE: PHASE ONE AND TWO



NOTE: RED DOTS INDICATE PHASE ONE AND PURPLE
DOTS INDICATE PHASE TWO HOUSEHOLD