

# STRONGER TOGETHER

## IMPACT UPDATE 2021



**2021 was a year to respond, recover, and rebuild for the long term. So United Way Bay Area leveraged our longstanding relationships and deep knowledge of the community to do what we do best in the aftermath of disasters: support those most vulnerable so that together, we can become stronger.**

### TOGETHER, WE RESPONDED.

Within a month of **initial** local shelter-in-place orders, UWBA launched the **COVID-19 COMMUNITY RELIEF FUND** to support the short- and long-term response and recovery efforts of nonprofit organizations throughout the Bay Area. The fund focused on basic needs, technology infrastructure, PPE, supports for workers, and reliable public messaging through 211.

Over the past year, the Bay Area has faced several compounding crises: the pandemic, increasingly devastating wildfires, and an economic crisis that disproportionately impacted our lowest-paid workers. These crises exacerbated widespread issues already plaguing the Bay Area **HOUSING JUSTICE**. Addressing housing and homelessness in the Bay Area has thus never been more essential than it is right now. As we work to dismantle the root causes of poverty in the Bay Area, which disproportionately impact Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color, UWBA is deepening our focus on improving access to stable, affordable housing and homelessness prevention resources.

We are doing so by:

- **SparkPoint Centers** increasing housing stability services and referrals along with continuing to deliver rent relief
- **211** increasing housing information and referral services and leveraging regional data to address gaps and inform policy
- **Emergency Food & Shelter** and the **Emergency Assistance Network** continuing support for basic needs, including housing
- Designing new or expanded programs to address the **racial wealth gap** through foreclosure prevention, homeownership assistance, alternative housing ownership structures, and alternative wealth-building strategies
- Expanding our housing-related **policy advocacy** to increase public funding for housing, reform exclusionary land-use policies, open access to opportunity for communities of color, and center!renters at risk of displacement

In short, fighting for housing stability and affordability requires putting equity front and center. Housing Justice is a social justice issue.

### COVID-19 RELIEF

**\$4.8M**

distributed to over 130 Bay Area organizations

**6,187**

individuals received cash assistance

**1M+**

individuals received assistance for food or groceries

**3,472**

individuals received rental or utility assistance

In response to our region's devastating wildfires, UWBA partnered with other local United Ways to launch the **GREATER BAY AREA AND CENTRAL COAST WILDFIRE RELIEF FUND**. Each United Way brings a deep understanding of their local community—which neighborhoods are most affected, what they need, and how to provide those services—as well as longstanding relationships with local governments and front-line nonprofits. Over \$1.7M in funds were distributed for direct aid, meals, rental relief, cash assistance, and more.

UWBA functioned as the administrative backbone for the region's efforts to get a complete count in the 2020 Census. **UWBA's BAY AREA COUNTS 2020** was a \$3.7M regional census outreach initiative, including grantmaking, regional coordination, data stewardship, and technical assistance to hundreds of partners. Despite shifting deadlines, widespread disinformation, and the cancellation of in-person events, 75.7% of all housing units in the Bay Area completed the census. Our counties also reported four of the five highest response rates in the state.

#### TOGETHER, WE REIMAGINED.

Created by Wells Fargo and supported by dozens of additional funders, **UWBA'S RENTAL RELIEF FUND** provided an initial \$500,000 in rental assistance to more than 300 families through SparkPoint centers and local community partners. By the end of 2021, UWBA will have raised and disbursed a total of \$3,000,000 for rent relief across the region.

UWBA is a founding partner of **GETYOURREFUND.ORG**, a national end-to-end pilot created by Code for America. Participants in our Earn It! Keep It! Save It! program were able to use this fully virtual site to access free tax preparation services safely during the Pandemic. During the 2021 tax season, we prepared approximately 4800 tax returns, with 15% of those completed through this platform.

UWBA launched its **COVID BENEFIT OUTREACH PROJECT**, or C-BOP, to people who are eligible for critical COVID relief benefits but poorly served by existing enrollment strategies. This outreach and referral campaign targeted W-2 workers, independent contractors, and undocumented workers, offering them step-by-step, hands-on help enrolling in benefits. C-BOP helped approximately 6,082 individuals claim their COVID benefits.

Every year UWBA hosts the **On Track Career Expo**—an experiential learning opportunity for young people to understand different educational and career paths from industry professionals. Despite being virtual this year, On Track maintained its interactivity and engaged nearly 70 youth and 40 volunteers from across the Bay Area on a virtual events platform. On Track featured seven different Industries and demos which included constructing a coffee robot with hardware engineer, Blaze Sanders; following a shaken iced tea recipe with Starbucks managers, Kate Markel and Shawn Ray; and getting an intro to the basics of coding with Bank of America's Mobile Engineering team.

#### TOGETHER, WE PERSEVERED.

**\$60M** returned to the community in tax refunds through our free tax preparation program

**\$2M+** distributed to agencies in 8 counties through the Emergency Food and Shelter Program

**76,831** calls and texts answered by our 211 helpline

**54,594** Santa Clara County residents served through Emergency Assistance Network food pantries

**21,621** families received groceries from the San Mateo Labor Community Services Union Food Distribution

**2,449** clients received long-term financial or career coaching through SparkPoint