

# Every U.S. city testing free money programs: Cities across the country are testing the waters for guaranteed income and universal basic income programs.

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*Give a Buck is Mashable's deep dive into Universal Basic Income — an idea gaining currency in a time of pandemic and mass unemployment. Now more than ever, our future depends on whether we can pay the bills.*

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Even as the U.S. economy starts to trend upwards, the promise of Universal Basic Income (UBI) isn't being ignored. Cities across the country keep announcing new free cash programs for residents as recently as last week. This page, which we will update regularly, will help you keep track.

UBI is an old concept with plenty of historic examples where it boosted the economy. In the 21st century, the more local programs we launch, the more it seems to work. The idea is very simple: long-term cash payments that provide a basic safety net for everyone. Payments come with absolutely no conditions attached, as often as once a month.

The idea gained relevance in 2020, as millions of households coped with the financial impact of the pandemic. Many cities are testing out guaranteed income programs — similar in principle to UBI, but offered to a select portion of a city's population instead of all residents.

The groups are either randomly selected, or chosen based on location, wealth, or even career, like the guaranteed income programs for artists in San Francisco and Long Beach, California. Mayors for a Guaranteed Income, founded in 2020 by former Stockton, California mayor Michael Tubbs, advocates for guaranteed income programs across the country. Currently there are more than 40 mayors involved. Nine have already launched pilot programs. Another six are planning guaranteed income initiatives. Member cities can apply for up to \$500,000 in funding for their own pilot programs, courtesy of a \$15 million donation from Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey. The movement for guaranteed income is growing, spurred on by last year's demands for financial safety nets during the pandemic shutdown. Momentum is growing thanks to groups like the grassroots nonprofit Income Movement, which consults with city governments, and organizes global public marches pushing for basic income and the Economic Security Project, another nonprofit that also advocates for a guaranteed income.

Here's the list of guaranteed income programs in the U.S., from the completed to the recently-announced.

## **Stockton, California (Stockton Economic Empowerment Demonstration)**

Announced in February 2019 by then-mayor (and Mayors for a Guaranteed Income founder) Michael Tubbs, the Stockton Economic Empowerment Demonstration (SEED) is a completed pilot program that provided 125 residents with \$500 monthly payouts over 24

months. The residents were chosen randomly from neighborhoods at or below Stockton's median household income. It was funded entirely by \$3 million in donations.

The results of the pilot program were released in March. According to SEED, the guaranteed income resulted in higher rates of full-time employment. It also positively impacted the mental health of recipients. Participants reported being less anxious and depressed and "saw improvements in emotional health, fatigue levels, and overall well-being."

### **Compton, California (Compton Pledge)**

The Compton Pledge program, announced in October, provides monthly cash payments (between \$300 and \$600) to more than 800 families in the city of Compton for two years. The families are primarily "irregularly or informally employed residents, immigrants of varied legal status, and the formerly incarcerated," according to a city statement.

Participants also have access to free banking services provided by Compton Pledge. As of April 14, the program has already distributed \$1 million of its \$2 million pool to 1,770 residents. Compton anticipates giving out \$9 million over the two-year life of the project.

### **Oakland, California (Oakland Resilient Families)**

Oakland's guaranteed income project was unveiled in March and will provide hundreds of low-income families \$500 monthly payments for 18 months. Households with the greatest income disparities, as defined by the Oakland Equity Index, have priority. To qualify, families must have one child under the age of 18. The program was originally limited to people of color but that criteria was later removed after backlash on social media. Participants are to be randomly selected.

The program is entirely funded by private donors, which had raised \$6.75 million as of March 2021. "At least 80 percent" of that will be distributed over the next 18 months, Oakland says.

### **Los Angeles, California (**Basic Income Guaranteed: LA Economic Assistance Pilot**)**

Los Angeles mayor Eric Garcetti announced a \$24 million guaranteed income program for LA residents in April 2021. The city government will reallocate \$6 million cut from the LAPD budget towards the initiative.

While still in the early stages, the Basic Income Guaranteed: LA Economic Assistance Pilot (better known by its acronym, BIG LEAP) plans to give 2,000 residents under the poverty line \$1,000 monthly payments for a year.

### **Marin County, California**

Inspired by the success of the neighboring Oakland and Stockton pilot programs, Marin County announced plans for its own pilot program in March 2021. The program, as yet unnamed, will give \$1,000 to 125 women of color who are raising at least one child under the age of 18.

This \$3 million initiative is supported by a nonprofit philanthropic group, the Marin Community Foundation, and a \$400,000 grant from the Marin County board of supervisors. According to the foundation, the pilot's first round of recipients focuses on those facing "the greatest aggregate of

challenges: low income, young children and facing the daily travails and insults of overt and covert racial discrimination."

Eligible mothers will be chosen from a pool of more than 4,000 individuals who already receive funding from the foundation.

### **Denver, Colorado (Denver Basic Income Project)**

Denver's recently announced pilot program is a nonprofit initiative in collaboration with Mayors for a Guaranteed Income and the University of Denver's Center for Housing and Homeless Research, specifically helping the city's homeless population.

The program's \$5.5 million budget was funded entirely through private donations and philanthropic support. It will stagger varying payments over the course of the year: 260 people will receive \$1,000 a month, another 260 will receive an initial \$6,500 payment followed by \$500 every month, and a third group of 300 participants will receive \$50 every month.

### **Santa Clara County, California**

Last July, Santa Clara county launched the first guaranteed income program in the country that specifically helps young adults transitioning out of the foster care system. The pilot, which had a \$900,000 budget, gave 72 former foster care youth \$1,000 a month for one year.

Inspired by the success of the pilot program, California Sen. Dave Cortes introduced the Universal Basic Income for Transition Age Foster Youth Act, which, if passed, would give \$1,000 a month to approximately 2,500 youth aging out of a state foster care program. The bill is making its way through committees and has a long way to go.

### **Gainesville, Florida**

The city of Gainesville is in the planning stage of a guaranteed income program for formerly incarcerated residents, in collaboration with Mayors for a Guaranteed Income and the local nonprofit Community Spring.

The current proposed model would provide a test group of residents with \$600 a month for two years. The program's first payments are expected to be disbursed by October 1, according to Mayor Lauren Poe.

### **Atlanta, Georgia (Old Fourth Ward Dividend Fund)**

In partnership with the Economic Security Project, Atlanta's Old Fourth Ward Economic Security Task Force is currently building a pilot program that will provide between \$200 and \$800 a month to families in the area.

The task force published a report in January outlining the proposed initiative, and is currently seeking private donors to fund the program, which is estimated to cost \$5 million.

### **Chicago, Illinois**

Chicago City Alderman Gilbert Villega announced his city's proposed guaranteed income program in April 2021. If the necessary ordinance is approved by the city council, its \$30 million pricetag would come from the city's \$1.9 billion in American Rescue Plan funds.

The proposal provides at least 5,000 eligible recipients with \$500 a month for one year, beginning in June. To qualify, you would need to be making less than three times the federal poverty rate — that is, \$38,640 for a single resident and \$52,260 for a married couple.

### **Gary, Indiana (Guaranteed Income Validation Effort)**

The Guaranteed Income Validation Efforts (GIVE) was supported by a \$500,000 grant from Mayors for a Guaranteed Income. GIVE is still seeking another \$1.6 million in private funding to support the pilot program.

If fully funded, GIVE will provide \$500 a month to 125 low-income residents. Recipients must make less than \$35,000 a year and will be selected based on citywide survey responses.

### **Chelsea, Massachusetts (Direct Assistance Stipend Program)**

In response to the economic impact of COVID-19, the city of Chelsea announced a relief program for more than 2,000 low-income residents who reported struggling with food insecurity. The program is supported by both Mayors for a Guaranteed Income and the Shah Family Foundation, which randomly chose its recipients from a pool of more than 3,000 applicants.

The program currently supports 2,040 families that are receiving between \$200 and \$400 a month, according to Mayors for a Guaranteed Income. There is no set end date for the payments, but at its current funding level, the assistance will continue until the fall.

### **Cambridge, Massachusetts (Cambridge Recurring Income for Success and Empowerment)**

Announced in April 2021, the Cambridge pilot program will begin in June and run for 18 months. The aim: to support single caretaker households. Most of the program is funded through a \$500,000 grant from Mayors for a Guaranteed Income; it is also supported by the Center of Guaranteed Income Research at the University of Pennsylvania.

Cambridge RISE offers \$500 monthly payments to 120 households which earn less than 80 percent of the area median income. The application window will open on June 1, with the first payments coming in August.

### **Lynn, Massachusetts (Family Health Project)**

The Family Health Project supports new mothers with a guaranteed income during their children's first three years. The program provides new moms with \$400 a month, as well as social service support from partnered agencies. The first cohort of 15 families will start receiving payments in spring 2021.

Recipients must be referred to the program by a federally qualified community health center in partnership with the project. It's entirely funded by philanthropic donations.

### **St. Paul, Minnesota (People's Prosperity Guaranteed Income Pilot)**

St. Paul's pilot program began in October and is giving 150 families \$500 per month for a period of up to 18 months. Of the program's \$1.53 million budget, the city has already sent \$350,000 to recipients. The program is funded by the city's grant under the federal CARES act, as well as by private donors.

Recipients were chosen from those already enrolled in the CollegeBound Saint Paul program, a city-wide initiative to provide St. Paul children born after January 1, 2020 with college savings accounts.

### **Jackson, Mississippi (Magnolia Mother's Trust)**

The Magnolia program was launched by Springboard to Opportunities in 2018. This pilot was the first in the U.S. to offer monthly payments specifically to low-income African-American mothers. After the success of its first cohort in 2018, the program launched its second cohort in March 2020, which gave \$1,000 a month to 110 mothers for one year. In April, Magnolia Mother's Trust unveiled its third group of participants, which add another 100 new mothers who will receive \$1,000 monthly payments.

### **Newark, New Jersey (Newark Equity)**

In 2019, Newark's Guaranteed Income Task Force partnered with the Economic Security Project and the Jain Family Institute, a nonprofit research group supporting guaranteed income projects, to build a proposal for the city's first pilot program.

In February 2021, the city formally adopted a resolution supporting the task force's recommendations, and in May Newark Mayor Ras Baraka announced it would move forward with a two-year pilot program. The pilot will provide \$6,000 annually to 400 residents. Eligible residents must have an income that falls 200 percent below the federal poverty income level. One group will receive payments bi-weekly, another will be paid on a monthly basis, and the third will receive two annual payouts. The first 30 participants have started receiving payments, and interested residents can apply for Fall payments starting in July.

### **Paterson, New Jersey (Guaranteed Income)**

Paterson's pilot program was announced in March 2021, and is also supported by Mayors for a Guaranteed Income.

The pilot will run for one year and will give \$400 to 110 residents, regardless of employment status the city clarified. Eligibility is based on income — Applicants must make less than \$30,000 annually for individuals, while family income is capped at \$88,000. The application cut-off date was April 30. Recipients will be chosen in mid-May through a lottery system, with the first payments going out by July.

### **Hudson, New York (HudsonUp)**

Mutual aid community center The Spark of Hudson and nonprofit advocacy group Humanity Forward joined together with Hudson Mayor Kamal Johnson to launch the city's first basic income pilot last year. The HudsonUp program is supported by two \$300,000 grants from Spark of Hudson and Humanity Forward.

The ongoing program provides 25 residents with \$500 every month for five years; it's one of the longest guaranteed income pilot programs in the country. Eligible recipients had to be 18 years or older and make less than the city's median annual income of \$35,153.

### **Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania**

Pittsburgh's pilot income program was announced in September, after the city's mayor, William Peduto, added his city to the growing list of Mayors for a Guaranteed Income members. Payments will go to 200 residents that are earning less than 50 percent of the city's median income. Those eligible will receive \$500 a month for two years.

### **Columbia, South Carolina (Columbia Life Improvement Monetary Boost)**

The CLIMB program was announced by Mayor Stephen Benjamin in December and is set to begin this spring. The guaranteed income is targeted specifically for Black fathers, in collaboration with the community resource group Midlands Fatherhood Coalition. Participants were randomly selected from a group of almost 900 people already connected with Midlands Fatherhood Coalition.

It will provide 100 residents with \$500 monthly payments for 12 months and is funded by both private donors and support from Mayors for a Guaranteed Income.

### **Richmond, Virginia (Richmond Resilience Initiative)**

When introduced in 2020 amid COVID-19 concerns, Richmond's guaranteed income program was the smallest pilot project out there — giving just 18 families \$500 monthly payments for two years. Recipients were chosen from people who use the city's Office of Community Wealth Building, part of a city anti-poverty commission. All have children and are employed, but don't qualify for traditional public benefits.

The pilot was supported by the nonprofit Robins Foundation and money from the federal CARES Act. Now, as another member of Mayors for a Guaranteed Income, Richmond received a \$500,000 grant in December to expand the Richmond Resilience Initiative and can offer money to 37 more families.

### **Tacoma, Washington (Growing Resilience in Tacoma)**

The GRIT program, announced late last year, is set to provide at least 100 families with \$500 monthly payments for one year. Eligible recipients are employed, but low-income. They are above the federal poverty limit, but still struggle to pay for basic needs like food, housing, healthcare, and childcare. The program will also prioritize people of color and single heads of household.

The city's pilot is funded by a \$500,000 grant from Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey and a \$100,000 grant from Mayors for a Guaranteed Income.