

Progress Report

Taskforce on Racial Inclusion & Equity





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Message from the Mayor



My fellow New Yorkers,

This has been a year unlike any other.

Our City was met with challenge after challenge in 2020: a once-in-a-century pandemic, an economic crisis that rivals the Great Depression, and a long-overdue reckoning with systemic racism and inequality both here in New York City and nationwide.

These are anything but easy times. Yet day after day, we've seen New Yorkers respond with extraordinary strength, courage, and resolve. Doctors and nurses have shown up in the face of danger and saved lives. Community leaders have gone above and beyond to help protect our most vulnerable. Young people have led the march for change, organizing powerful demonstrations across our five boroughs. Every day, New Yorkers are demonstrating that we can emerge from this crisis a stronger, fairer, and more equitable city.

That is exactly the mission of our Taskforce on Racial Inclusion & Equity – and as you will see in this report, it is a challenge they have taken on with remarkable determination. In a few short

months, this Taskforce has changed lives in the communities of color hit hardest by this crisis. They have saved small businesses, expanded critical services like Broadband to communities that need it most, and brought quality health care to New Yorkers who had been left behind for too long. But they have also helped us reimagine what is possible in our City, laying a foundation for racial justice and equality that will guide a recovery for all.

I thank the Taskforce Co-Chairs for their leadership: First Lady Chirlane McCray, Deputy Mayor Phil Thompson, and Deputy Mayor Melanie Hartzog. I commend each team member of the Taskforce – dedicated public servants who have gone above and beyond in their work. And I invite every New Yorker to help us keep building a City of fairness, equity, and inclusion.

Mayor Bill de Blasio

Bill de Blasio

Letter from the Taskforce Co-Chairs



To our fellow New Yorkers,

When the Mayor convened the Taskforce on Racial Inclusion & Equity in the early days of the COVID-19 crisis, our mission was simple yet powerful: Build a fairer, more equitable city for all New Yorkers.

For too long, our communities of color have not shared in the great opportunity that has defined New York City. They have gone without the same access to quality, affordable health care. They have been left behind when it comes to critical services like Broadband. And as we have seen so clearly in this crisis, they are on the front lines of our economy – working essential jobs that put them and their families at risk while often living paycheck-to-paycheck.

This is a moment for fundamental change. We must not only help these communities through this pandemic, but leave them -- and our City -- stronger. Through real structural change these communities will be healthier and have more jobs. We must question basic assumptions and long-standing City policies, directly confront racial injustice, and emerge from this crisis stronger.

This is a moment for fundamental change. We must not only help these communities through this pandemic, but transform who we are as a City. We must question basic assumptions and

long-standing City policies, directly confront racial injustice, and emerge from this crisis stronger.

This report shows how we have ensured equity and inclusion are at the heart of New York City's COVID-19 response and recovery. You will read about our efforts to save the small businesses that define our neighborhoods; protections for thousands of jobs and a living wage for workers; health care access to the neighborhoods hit hardest by COVID-19 that will make a difference for decades to come; and so much more.

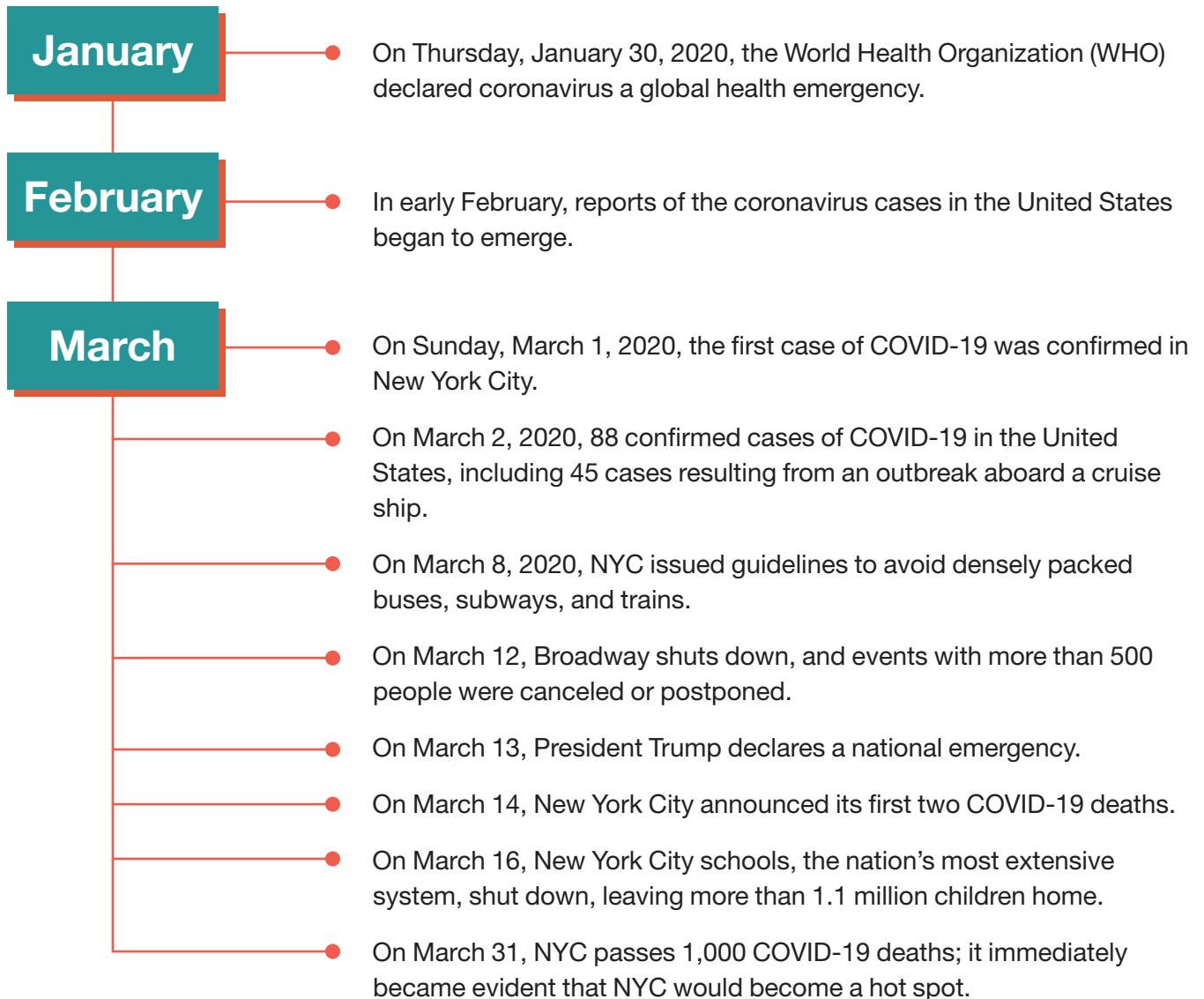
Most importantly, we have done this work together. Our Taskforce has brought together diverse leaders from across 67 City agencies – many of whom live and work in the same hard-hit neighborhoods we have focused on. We have brought everyone to the table. Our work is far from finished but as this report details, we are on a path to a fair, just, and inclusive recovery.

First Lady Chirlane McCray
Deputy Mayor Phil Thompson
Deputy Mayor Melanie Hartzog
Co-Chairs of the Taskforce on Racial Inclusion & Equity

COVID-19 and New York City



When the COVID-19 pandemic reached our city, New Yorkers braced for what turned out to be a devastating crisis. Within weeks, everyday life was shattered, transformed or put on hold as New Yorkers adjusted to a historic public health emergency. Families and communities suffered unemployment, illness and death, increased food and housing insecurity, and disruptions in education, business, and day-to-day socialization. Schools, restaurants, museums and office towers closed. Broadway went dark. Streets in every borough were eerily silent as New Yorkers practiced social distancing to flatten the curve, even as the death toll climbed.



On April 7, preliminary data released by the Health Department highlighted that Black and Latino city residents had died from coronavirus at twice the rate of white or Asian New Yorkers. Latinos died at a rate of 22.8 per 100 residents and black New Yorkers at 19.9 per 100,000.

By early April, it was clear that the pandemic was exacting a horrific toll on communities of color in New York City. It was an experience replicated in cities across the nation. A lack of comprehensive policies

and targeted resources to address vulnerabilities in communities of color left Black and brown Americans at a higher risk for contracting the virus. They were likely to experience more severe complications from the infection. Those catastrophic outcomes reflected historic inequities and underinvestment in Black and brown communities and long-standing racial disparities.

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City leaders quickly realized the need for an immediate response to a cascade of crisis: a mounting death toll, children disconnected from remote learning because of a lack of broadband, and families facing eviction and hunger because of unemployment. The pandemic was a public health crisis, a mental health crisis, and an economic crisis at once.

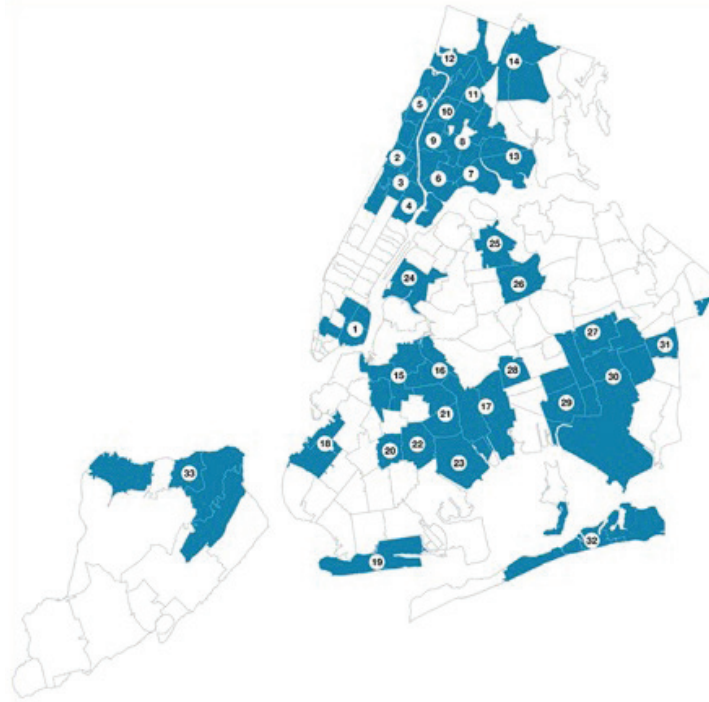
Meeting the Moment

In April 2020, the City announced the Taskforce on Racial Inclusion & Equity (TRIE) in response to the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color. The Taskforce was unprecedented in the way it brought together City leaders from 67 agencies and offices, to work in teams to monitor the COVID-19 response and identify solutions to deliver immediate and long-term relief to those communities. Many Taskforce members – primarily people of color -- lived, worked, or had grown up in the very same communities that they were now called on to assist. They intimately know the streets and the people in neighborhoods like East New York, Queens Village, Washington Heights, Chinatown, and Stapleton.

The over 100-member Taskforce initially identified 27 neighborhoods, based on COVID cases, deaths, and other health and socioeconomic indicators. In January 2021, the Taskforce expanded to 33 neighborhoods, including all neighborhoods within the top 20 percent of those with equity burdens citywide. The factors considered when selecting neighborhoods were: health status, living conditions, social inequities, occupation, and COVID-19 Wave 1 impact.

Listening to community voices to assess the immediate actions needed was a foundational idea of the Taskforce. As Taskforce Executive Director Sideya Sherman put it, the pandemic was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to offer a response and recovery that would create a more equitable city.

Assumptions were challenged – why did some communities thrive and others languish? Instead of government programs born primarily of experts and agencies, the Taskforce relied on a community survey, one-on-one conversations, and feedback from everyone from small business owners to youth groups. And the Taskforce asked those New Yorkers: what are you worried about next month? In the next couple of months? Next year? People who never set foot in City Hall had a direct line to leaders helping respond to this crisis.



	Borough	Neighborhood	ZIP Codes (modZCTAs)
1	Manhattan	Lower East Side and Chinatown	10002, 10003, 10009, 10013
2	Manhattan	Morningside Heights and Hamilton Heights	10025, 10027, 10031, 10032
3	Manhattan	Central Harlem	10026, 10027, 10030, 10037, 10039
4	Manhattan	East Harlem	10029, 10035
5	Manhattan	Washington Heights and Inwood	10032, 10033, 10034, 10040
6	Bronx	Mott Haven and Melrose	10451, 10454, 10455, 10456
7	Bronx	Hunts Point and Longwood	10455, 10459, 10474
8	Bronx	Morrisania and Crotona	10456, 10459, 10460
9	Bronx	Highbridge and Concourse	10452
10	Bronx	Fordham and University Heights	10453, 10458
11	Bronx	Belmont and East Tremont	10457, 10458
12	Bronx	Kingsbridge	10463, 10468
13	Bronx	Parkchester and Soundview	10472, 10473
14	Bronx	Williambridge and Baychester, Edenwald	10466, 10467, 10468
15	Brooklyn	Bedford Stuyvesant	11205, 11206, 11216, 11221, 11233, 11238
16	Brooklyn	Bushwick	11206, 11207, 11221, 11237
17	Brooklyn	East New York and Starrett City	11207, 11208, 11239
18	Brooklyn	Sunset Park	11220, 11232
19	Brooklyn	Coney Island	11224, 11235
20	Brooklyn	Flatbush and Midwood	11226
21	Brooklyn	Brownsville	11212, 11233
22	Brooklyn	East Flatbush	11203, 11226
23	Brooklyn	Flatlands and Canarsie	11236
24	Queens	Queensbridge and Astoria	11101

	Borough	Neighborhood	ZIP Codes (modZCTAs)
25	Queens	Jackson Heights	11368, 11369
26	Queens	Elmhurst and Corona	11368
27	Queens	Briarwood, Flushing South	11435
28	Queens	Kew Gardens and Woodhaven	11419, 11421
29	Queens	Woodhaven, Richmond Hill, South Ozone Park	11419, 11420
30	Queens	Jamaica and Hollis	11412, 11423, 11432, 11433, 11434, 11435, 11436
31	Queens	Queens Village	11429
32	Queens	Rockaway and Broad Channel	11691, 11692, 11693, 11694
33	Staten Island	St. George, Stapleton, Port Richmond	10301, 10303, 10304, 10310

How TRIE Works

The Taskforce worked intentionally and methodically, quickly organizing into 11 topical subcommittees: COVID-related health care access; Data; Delayed Healthcare Service; Food Access and Insecurity; Housing; Jobs and Workforce; Mental Health Needs; Needs of Undocumented Workers and Families; Small Business; Social Distancing; and Youth and Education.

Each committee identified needs and gaps in services, as well as short and long-term solutions; Taskforce members ended up generating nearly 100 new ideas and recommendations. They ranged from expanding access to health insurance, to new efforts to support minority and women-owned businesses, to social and emotional supports for youth.

This report highlights the range of programs and policies the Taskforce has advanced to support the most vulnerable New Yorkers. It also hopes to capture the shared sense of urgency, passion and inspiration that carried Taskforce members through some of the darkest months in the city they love and call home. Their work has been front and center in the recovery: the Taskforce neighborhoods encompass roughly half of all New Yorkers.

“I’ve had the opportunity to engage advocates, colleagues and other experts around the big questions facing those of us in this field: what does it mean to have the right data and how do we ensure that it used for the right purposes? There are likely no easy answers to this, but the Task force has provided a critical moment for inflection.”

— Tayyab Walker, Director of Enterprise Data Solutions, NYC Opportunity

“I can only be hopeful about the future of our City, knowing that New Yorkers are resilient, compassionate, and willing to go the extra mile to help those in need.”

— Gary Jenkins, HRA Administrator



Setting Priorities

The Taskforce started by collecting feedback from 277 community leaders to understand immediate and anticipated long-term needs at the neighborhood level. The top community-identified problems were:

Housing and food security: Rent burden and food insecurity were cited as the primary issues facing communities.

Health: Communities requested more mental health services and quality health care during the pandemic. Mental health in particular was the most frequently named health need.

A digital divide: Communities expressed a need for non-digital forms of information dissemination, including flyers, radio, telephone calls and local outreach teams. They asked for credible messengers. Students without access to tablets were not receiving adequate instruction. Telecommunication companies cut off services due to unpaid bills in low-income communities of color, widening the divide.

Fear and mistrust of government: Local leaders indicated that unequal social distancing enforcement and policing at test sites put communities of color at risk. Unclear eviction standards and benefits eligibility requirements also prevented communities from seeking help. They viewed the pandemic as an opportunity to invest differently and revisit the way government does business.

Support and services for undocumented residents: Immigrants, including those who are undocumented, comprised a large proportion of essential workers. The majority of COVID-related supports excluded this community. Undocumented immigrants could not and/or were afraid to utilize benefits and were most at risk of eviction and hunger.

Uneven educational support: Local leaders shared that cuts to school and youth program budgets increased emotional and financial stress for families of color.

Transforming Our Communities The Taskforce in Action





Health

What We Heard

“Approach mental health services like we do physical fitness. Everyone gets preventative services several times a week.”

Community Survey Respondent, Harlem, Manhattan

Respondents to a Taskforce “Community Voices Survey” shared how COVID-19 exacerbated and revealed health and mental health challenges and requested more services and quality care.

COVID Centers of Excellence

NYC Health + Hospitals

Communities that have experienced longstanding health disparities, are now faced with the potential long-term health impacts of COVID-19. To proactively address this, the City began opening COVID-19 Centers of Excellence (COEs), a one-stop shop for care for the whole person in neighborhoods hardest-hit by COVID-19.

The centers – based in the Bronx, Queens, and Brooklyn – will help New Yorkers treat and recover from COVID-19 outside of the hospital, prevent hospitalizations through testing and preventive care, and ensure increased access to primary health care.

The Centers of Excellence offer onsite state of the art diagnostic testing, pulmonary and cardiac care. A range of preventive health services include mental health services for such conditions as anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder.

Outcome

The first COVID-19 Center of Excellence was launched in Tremont in November 2020 and is expected to serve 6,700 unique New Yorkers over the next year. A new center opened in Jackson Heights in February 2021 and a third center will open in Bushwick in August 2021.



The Mayor joins Dr. Ted Long (Health + Hospitals), Sideya Sherman (TRIE), State Senator Jessica Ramos, community leaders, and Gotham Health and H+H leadership at the opening of COVID Center of Excellence in Jackson Heights, Queens.

Equity-Centered Mental Health Disaster Response Workshops ***NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH)***

Through the Community Survey, local leaders expressed an urgent need for mental health resources, to not only address fear and anxiety of the pandemic, but to help communities process grief and loss. The Equity-Centered Mental Health Disaster Response Workshops, redirected Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) staff to deliver mental health disaster response and coping sessions to over 10,000 residents from July-December 2020, leveraging community and faith-based organizations to reach residents. The program included COVID-19 Community Conversations on mental health disaster response and coping and a longer interactive session called “Taking Care of Yourself, Your Neighbor, and Your Community: An Equity-Centered Anti-Racist Mental Health Response to COVID-19”.

Outcome

COVID-19 Community Conversations, launched in July 2020 and reached the following milestones by the end of May 2021:

- 17,049 total participants have attended 1,135 virtual presentations
- 115 upcoming presentations are scheduled, and 2,351 organizations have been contacted for future workshops.

Phase II of the Program started in March 2021.

Expansion of NYC Care NYC Health + Hospitals

Every New Yorker, regardless of income or immigration status, is guaranteed healthcare through NYC Care. This ambitious program, originally scheduled to be phased in borough by borough, was accelerated through the Taskforce. By September 2020, every New Yorker in the hardest-hit communities had access to guaranteed health care. Within two weeks of enrollment, new NYC Care members have access to a new patient appointment at one of more than 50 hospitals or clinics; preventive and specialty services; 24/7 pharmacy access; and an enhanced customer service experience, such as a 24/7 hotline and member materials in multiple languages.

Outcome

Through NYC Care residents can access a primary care doctor, which opens a critical door to so many other services, including mental health - one of the number one health concerns shared through our Taskforce's community survey. NYC Care is now available in all five boroughs as part of the Mayor's Guaranteed Care commitment, offering quality health care services at low or no-cost to New Yorkers who do not qualify for or cannot afford health insurance based on federal guidelines. As of February 2021, over 50,000 New Yorkers have enrolled in NYC Care.



Expanding Access to Primary Care

Maria, Manhattan

For the last few years, Maria, a former ballerina, had suffered frequent falls. Once, she came to an emergency room with broken wrists, but lacking insurance could not afford the recommended follow-up treatment. When Maria joined NYC Care and saw her primary care doctor for the first time in years, an examination revealed a cyst in her spine that was compressing a nerve. Her doctor referred her to physical therapy and to a neurosurgeon to remove the cyst.

Pedro, Brooklyn

Pedro experienced panic attacks since receiving a positive COVID-19 test. He had constant headaches, but because of the pandemic, he lost his job and couldn't afford private health care. Pedro was connected to NYC Care after meeting a staff member from one of NYC Care's community-based organizations at an outreach event in Sunset Park. Pedro immediately saw a doctor who speaks his language and helped him discover the reason for his headaches.



Housing

What We Heard

“Access to affordable housing is the number one issue that lies at the intersection of racial equity and making our communities more resilient to future disasters.”

Community Survey Respondent, Stapleton and St. George

Nearly all respondents to the Community Voices Survey cited rent burden as a primary issue facing their communities. Many said that burden affected their mental health and overall quality of life. As the City continues to recover from COVID-19, we must keep tenants safe and in their homes.

Citywide Landlord-Tenant Mediation Project

NYC Housing Preservation & Development (HPD), Mayor’s Office to Protect Tenants (MOPT)

The State’s Tenant Safe Harbor Act was enacted in May 2020 to protect tenants from eviction if they are suffering financial hardship or had received warrants of eviction before the start of the pandemic. When the eviction moratorium and mortgage forbearance end, job and rental income instability from the COVID-19 pandemic has the potential to ripple across the real estate market and cause housing instability.

The Taskforce expanded support through the City-Wide Landlord-Tenant Mediation Project (The Mediation Project). This project will serve hundreds of New Yorkers each month by addressing rent-related issues in a mediation setting outside of the housing court system. Through this Project, non-profit Community Dispute Resolution Centers (CDRCs) put decision-making power in the hands of tenants and small landlords, helping them resolve cases before they reach litigation and likely preventing the negative outcomes typical of eviction proceedings.

Outcome

The Mediation Project launched in July 2020, tenants can call 311 or visit the NYC Tenant Resource Portal online for assistance and prescreening from trained staff. Tenants may also be referred to other City resources, as appropriate. The Mediation Project has the capacity to offer 200-250 mediations per month. If both parties (landlord and tenant) are interested, the process is expected to take 2-3 weeks.

“When I was approached by the New York Peace Institute to participate in a mediation with a tenant of mine I was skeptical at the onset, but I must say the process was pleasant; professional; productive and a true breath of fresh air. In fact, I have requested that the Institute attempt to assist me with other disputes I have with residential tenants who have not been able to pay their rent.”

Brooklyn Landlord participating in mediation project.

Broadband Expansion

Mayor's Office of the Chief Technology Officer (CTO)

COVID-19 compounded our City's digital divide. Within days, many New Yorkers were forced to shift their work, school, and socializing to web-based platforms. Access to broadband internet services became almost as essential as electricity. But, 46 percent of New York City households living in poverty do not have broadband at home, and 18 percent of all New York City residents – more than 1.5 million people – have neither home nor mobile connection. Having broadband internet can make a difference in whether a family can access healthcare, unemployment benefits, and critical government services. In July 2020, the Taskforce announced a historic **\$157 million investment** to provide high-speed internet to New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) communities and other disconnected communities. This investment included \$87 million redirected from the New York Police Department budget.

Outcome

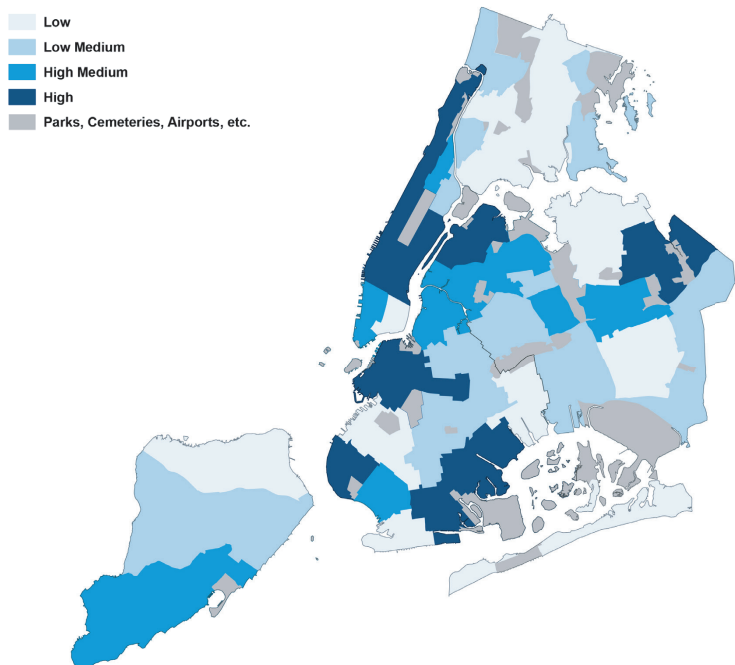
This new investment will accelerate the City's masterplan and extend new internet service options to 600,000 underserved New Yorkers. The investment also included commitments for new job and training opportunities targeting residents and in the 33 hardest-hit communities, NYCHA, and other low-income communities of color. The CTO is also engaging minority and women business entrepreneurs and a variety of carriers to foster competition and innovation.

In the fall of 2021, the City will negotiate contracts and licenses for use of City assets to provide free and low-cost internet. New service options will have started on a rolling basis and construction for infrastructure gaps will be underway by the end of 2021.

Map 1: Combined Home and Mobile Broadband

Adoption Rates by Public Use Microdata Area 1

Source: 2017 5-Year Estimate of Presence and Type of Internet Subscription in the Household data, provided by the American Community Survey. The legend categories represent the following percentages: Low 34%-54%, Low Medium 55%-60% High Medium 61%-66.5%, High 67%-81%.





Small Business

What We Heard

“Need some resources to better connect small businesses with a mentor or ambassador.”

Community Survey Respondent, Long Island City

Small businesses are an integral part of New York City, but during the pandemic they have faced unprecedented financial challenges and disruptions. The Taskforce is committed to ensuring New York City remains a place where diverse entrepreneurs can build successful businesses and are guided on a road to recovery post-pandemic.

“Minority and women-owned businesses hire people in the community whom other businesses won’t take a chance on, serve as the eyes and ears that help keep communities safe and form the bedrock that our communities can build upon.”

- J. Phillip Thompson, Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives and Co-Chair of the Taskforce on Racial Inclusion and Equity



First Lady Chirlane McCray eats lunch with Gary Jenkins, Acting Administrator, Human Resources Administration and Toya Williford, Executive Director of The Mayor’s Fund at Tsion Cafe

Restaurant Revitalization Program

NYC Human Resources Administration (HRA), Mayor’s Office for Economic Opportunity, and the Mayor’s Fund to Advance New York City

The [Restaurant Revitalization Program](#) provided relief to local restaurant owners when they needed it most, helping them retain and restart critical restaurant operations and bring employees back at a living wage, while they provided more food options (including free meals) to their communities.

The program specifically provided restaurants with short-term payroll support, funding subsidized wages to employ displaced restaurant workers for at least six weeks. . Participating restaurants were eligible for up to \$30,000 each, to be used to pay wages of \$20 an hour to subsidized employees. To launch this initiative, the City also collaborated with One Fair Wage, a nationally recognized advocacy organization working to raise employment standards and equity across the restaurant industry. In partnership with the City, One Fair Wage also committed one million dollars to support local restaurants. Together, the City and One Fair Wage committed \$3 Million dollars to the program.

Outcome

Launched in June 2020, the Restaurant Revitalization Program and One Fair Wage have awarded more than 100 restaurants \$2.5 million, collectively. To date, those restaurants have donated more than 85,000 meals to New Yorker in need.

“That was the golden ticket. I had my team back and I could pay them a living wage. With that, we had some ground to stand on finally. Of course, the grant money was a huge relief, but what I actually gained has no price tag. I connected on a deeper level in my community. It became not just about saving my business, but sustaining the community. One hand will feed the other.”

Elena Calderon, Owner, Rincón Salvadoreño, Queens

Minority and Women-Owned Businesses Executive Order & New Support for Minority-Owned Businesses

NYC Small Business Services (SBS), NYC Mayor’s Office of Minority & Women-Owned Business Enterprises

On July 28, 2020, Mayor Bill de Blasio signed an Executive Order that immediately strengthened the City’s utilization of Minority and Women-Owned Businesses (M/WBE) and creates more opportunities for M/WBEs to win procurements. The Executive Order focused on expanding the pool of contracts including M/WBE goals and establishes a Chief Diversity Officer in every City agency. It also encourages all City agencies to procure goods, services, and construction from M/WBEs for amounts up to \$500,000 and increases oversight for high-value projects. The Executive Order requires every City agency conducting procurement in response to the State of Emergency to consider at least one quote from a M/WBE before awarding the contract, reversing a historic area of M/WBE exclusion.

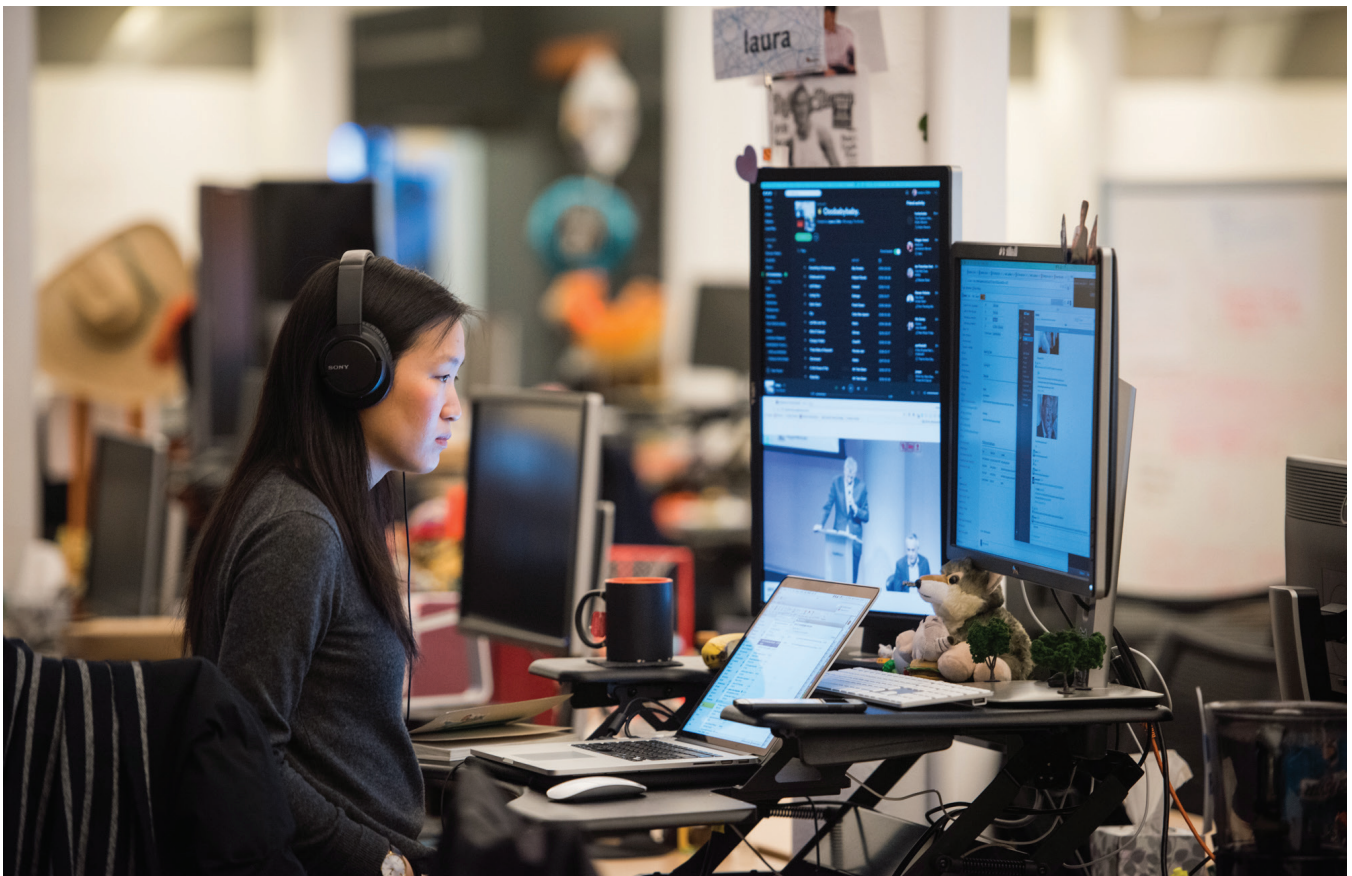
The Mayor also announced a series of new programs with the Taskforce to connect Black, Latino, and Asian American entrepreneurs to business opportunities, including government contract matching, access to pro bono business consultants, and mentorship networks. The project allows non-certified businesses to also learn how to do business with the City.

Outcome

In August 2020, the City surpassed its goal of 10,000 certified M/WBEs, a 173.4 percent increase since the Administration's start. This puts the Administration on track to award 30 percent of all city contracts to M/WBEs by 2021 and continues the City's 10-year target to award \$25 billion to certified M/WBEs by 2025.

“The MWBE community is not only the core of our great city, but it's also the core of all of our communities. And the pandemic has really exposed the health and wealth gap that exists. Our MWBE firms are in the businesses of very survival right now and so this executive order is a right now step towards a right now solution.”

Elizabeth Velez, President of Velez Organization and M/WBE Business Owner





Food Access

What We Heard

“Access to fresh and healthy food was already limited in Red Hook before the pandemic. It’s even more urgent with the barriers imposed by Coronavirus spread prevention.”

Community Survey respondent, Red Hook

Many communities were food insecure before the pandemic, and their situations worsened during the crisis through loss of income, limited grocery delivery options, and a strain on traditional emergency food systems, such as pantries. While the City established a massive emergency food program, “Get Food,” led by the Food Czar team, the Taskforce advanced complementary food access programs that were localized and supported small and independent businesses.

“Communities across New York City - and communities of color in particular - deserve access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food, and need it now more than ever. I am proud of the Taskforce’s work to expand and improve these important initiatives and support local businesses in the process. Moreover, these options will help expand choice, including to culturally appropriate foods, so that New Yorkers can choose which foods they want to eat and feed their families.”

- Anusha Venkataraman, Executive Director of the Racial Justice Commission and former co-chair of the Taskforce subcommittee on Food Access & Insecurity.

Get the Good Stuff Program

NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH)

Get the Good Stuff was launched in 2019 as NYC’s first grocery store-based fruit and vegetable incentive program for New Yorkers using the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), making healthy and fresh food accessible to more New Yorkers. The program adds \$1 to a program loyalty card for every \$1 spent in SNAP on eligible fresh, frozen, canned, and dried fruits, vegetables, and beans. Participants are predominantly Latino/Hispanic (48 percent) and Black (19 percent). One-third report having hypertension, and one in five report having diabetes.

In August 2020, the Taskforce expanded Get the Good Stuff to recruit additional independently owned grocery stores, located in communities hardest-hit by the pandemic. The expansion also allows New Yorkers with low incomes who may not participate in SNAP to enroll in the program. With this expansion, called Get the Good Stuff Now, the City will partner with seven community-based organizations to enroll participants and to provide program cards to purchase eligible fruits, vegetables, and beans.

Outcome

Get the Good Stuff Now will partner with seven grocery stores, located in neighborhoods identified as high priority by the Taskforce, and enroll 2,800 participants. It is estimated that over \$200,000 worth of fruits, vegetables and beans will be distributed through the program.

Grow NYCHA Resident Food Business NYC Housing Authority (NYCHA)

In the fall of 2020, the Taskforce announced the “Grow NYCHA Food Business” program. The program provides direct contracts to NYCHA resident-owned food businesses to serve as emergency food contractors for NYCHA residents. With strains on food pantries and other traditional supports for emergency food supply, this program provides “NYCHAprenuers” with a business opportunity while serving residents.



NYCHA Food Business delivery for residents

Outcome

The program will provide for more than 13,000 emergency meals and is operated in partnership with GrowNYC, a non-profit food access organization

“This opportunity is great for us because it’s going to put some of our workers back to work and it’s going to put money in our pockets. We plan on going back to work when school opens, and now we’ll have some funds to get started back to work.”

Ms. Covington, Pomonock Houses Resident and Business Owner



Youth and Community Safety

What We Heard

“Access to youth employment and engagement should be prioritized.”

Community Survey Respondent, Sunset Park

Made in New York

NYC Department of Probation (DOP)

The Taskforce heard over and over that young people needed therapeutic spaces to connect and reduce feelings of hopelessness and isolation, sometimes related to COVID-19. The “Made in New York Animation Project” (MiNY) provides youth with the technical training to pursue careers in the animation sector, while supporting their personal development through education with a social-emotional component. The MiNY Animation Project provides instruction from animators and licensed creative arts therapists who engage participants through a curriculum that fosters skill-building, creativity, and professional development.

Through the Taskforce, the MiNY program will expand within the hardest-hit communities and provide students access to group 3D computer animation therapy to create animated stories for the public. Students will also learn storytelling, scriptwriting, audio and animation technology, and 3D modeling. At the same time, they are provided a much-needed social connection to their peers during a time of loss and isolation.

Outcome

MiNY will expand by 1,000 slots, nearly doubling the size of the program, targeting Taskforce neighborhoods. Program evaluations show significant positive changes for students in their social competence and sense of social support.

Community Crisis Response Initiative

NYC Young Men's Initiative (YMI)

Throughout the pandemic, mission-driven nonprofits quickly shifted to remote programming and tried various strategies to reach young people. The Community Crisis Response Initiative provided \$10,000 in funding to 22 local youth-focused community organizations to support and expand existing community relief efforts with a focus on supporting at least 500 young people.

This funding allowed organizations like the Red Hook Initiative to support programming at the Red Hook Houses farm and Sustainable South Bronx to provide a remote work readiness curriculum and mental health services for young people.



Franklin S.

“SSBx came into my life during a time when I really needed it. I gained certificates and knowledge that I’ll be able to use in my life, and I look forward to continuing to better myself.”

Social Distancing Ambassadors

Mayor's Office to Prevent Gun Violence (OPGV)

Many of the communities hard-hit by COVID also have a history of police and community tension. At the height of the pandemic, New Yorkers from many backgrounds joined the nationwide call for racial justice and reimagined public safety and civil law enforcement. In an effort to shift social distancing enforcement from a police activity to a community engagement activity, the Taskforce announced a



Community Crisis Response Initiative

new Social Distancing Ambassador program. Across key neighborhoods and in partnership with Cure Violence providers, Ambassadors were deployed to detect and interrupt areas where social distancing was not practiced. As credible messengers within their communities, the Ambassadors set out to increase social distancing through direct conversations and education, PPE distribution and instructions, and community events. The Ambassadors' work was amplified through a robust canvassing and outreach campaign amplified through social media. Messaging emphasized the risks of COVID-19, best practices, and where to seek medical attention and testing. It also recognized increased gun violence within these communities and community leaders were engaged to work collectively to promote public safety and peace.

Outcome

Ambassadors directly engaged residents in 13 key Taskforce neighborhoods and distributed over 70,000 faces mask, 8,000 sanitizers, and 10,000 sets of gloves.

#KnockoutCovid



The Young Men's Initiative, in partnership with the Department of Probation, paid young people to conduct research and create social messaging campaigns on the importance of social distancing. Collaborating with credible messengers, they came up with memes, videos, drawings, and more.

“Anyone can get it. It's in the air. It's spreadable. Me, I was lucky I beat it. Not everybody is that lucky. I don't want anyone to take that risk. You could go home and transfer the COVID-19 to your nephew, your grandmother, your grandfather, your father. Right now we need to continue to social distance to be safe.”

**Program Participant,
Brooklyn**



Undocumented Workers

What We Heard

“The Queens immigrant and low income community was hit hardest by the pandemic. The CBO has had to provide cash assistance... The food pantry has 7,250 new clients since the start of the pandemic.”

Community Survey Respondent, Jackson Heights, Queens

Rapid Response Legal Collaborative Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA)

“When COVID-19 presented our city with myriad unprecedented challenges and disproportionately impacted communities that have experienced persistent structural and institutional racism, the Taskforce on Racial Inclusion and Equity became a crucial body for driving our City’s work towards an equitable recovery from the pandemic. By supporting initiatives like MOIA’s work to address gaps in federal relief, to expand language access, and to allay fears and hesitancy among immigrants for seeking care and support through City-funded services, the Taskforce has played a critical role in providing for community needs.”

- Bitta Mostofi, former Commissioner of the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) and former co-chair of the Taskforce on Racial Inclusion and Equity’s subcommittee on Undocumented Workers and Families.

New Yorkers facing family separation and economic loss due to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) actions are particularly at risk during the pandemic. Not only have these families experienced loss in income, the health and safety stakes of detention are at a peak due to COVID-19. A multi-pronged advocacy, litigation, and collaborative approach was necessary to keep people safe, reunite families, and ensure high-quality legal representation.

In 2019, the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs invested in the Rapid Response Legal Collaborative (RRLC) -- a coalition of immigration legal service providers deploying rapid assistance to those detained or at imminent risk of detention and deportation. Lead partners include Make the Road New York, New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG), and UnLocal, and the program has served over 340 New Yorkers. In response to COVID, this program has been expanded to nearly triple the number of undocumented New Yorkers served.

Outcome

Since October 2020, over 200 New Yorkers have benefitted from screenings and legal services.

The Emergency Relief Fund

Mayor's Office for Immigrant Affairs, Mayor's Fund to Advance NYC

The Emergency Relief Fund Program provides emergency cash assistance to immigrants, not eligible for certain types of federal aid. In response to COVID, the Relief Fund was established to ensure undocumented and mixed status families have critical supports. Recipients were able to pay for food and groceries, utilities, rent, and healthcare services. The Emergency Relief Fund has heard many stories of how this program has benefitted recipients:

- T.D. fled Cote D'Ivoire, after being severely traumatized by gender-based violence. For the past few years, she lived in a homeless shelter in the Bronx, but recently found a job as a home health aide. After losing that job because of the pandemic, T.D. was able to buy groceries with the help of the Emergency Relief Fund.
- C.E. came to the U.S. from Mexico to escape discrimination and sexual abuse because of her identity as a transgender woman. Since March, she and her husband have experienced financial hardship due to their ineligibility to get any pandemic benefits. The family struggled to cover their essential needs. With the help of the Emergency Relief Fund, C.E. has been able to pay for rent for their room in West Harlem, their phone bill and buy personal hygiene products.



Community Engagement

What We Heard

“If the City would collaborate with and resource these local coalitions, the resources the City is creating to meet residents’ needs would more effectively reach the vulnerable residents these coalitions have trusted relationships with.”

Community Survey Respondent, Stapleton, Staten Island

TRIE Neighborhoods

Civic Engagement Commission, NYC Young Men’s Initiative (YMI)

Grassroots coalitions and community-led networks have been on the frontlines of this pandemic and will play a crucial role in our city’s recovery. In spring 2021, the Taskforce will launch “TRIE Neighborhoods,” -- local coalitions across all 33 priority communities that will work collectively to connect residents to resources and information. TRIE Neighborhoods will also provide real-time feedback loops to the City through a designated local Neighborhood Coordinator. The Taskforce will award each TRIE Neighborhood funding between 2021 – 2022 to form a local coalition to support ongoing COVID-19 recovery, increase the local civic infrastructure, and conduct a community needs assessment. Each coalition will include diverse, multi-sector stakeholders, similar to a community board, but more localized. Coalitions are a powerful tool for building community cohesion, which is crucial to COVID-19 recovery. With this investment, the Taskforce is moving beyond individual programs to help strengthen communities by bringing together nonprofit organizations, businesses, houses of worship, community boards, educational institutions, mutual aid networks, and civic bodies.

Outcome

Each TRIE Neighborhood will support vaccine education and outreach, encourage testing and COVID-19 precautions, and share mental health resources while completing a neighborhood needs assessment over a 15-month period. TRIE Neighborhoods will also have a secondary focus on civic education and preparing community members for rank choice voting in the upcoming NYC elections. Using community feedback, each TRIE Neighborhood will also set a community agenda and access funding to advance a resident-selected priority over the 2021-2022 City fiscal year.

Looking Ahead

On January 28, 2021, Mayor de Blasio signed an Executive Order making the Taskforce on Racial Inclusion & Equity a permanent part of City government. With this announcement, the Taskforce has shifted its focus to long-term recommendations and supporting rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine.

In January 2021, the Taskforce developed a set of equity principles to guide access to the COVID-19 vaccine. It expanded the Taskforce neighborhoods from 27 to 33, accounting for COVID-19 fatalities and other health and socioeconomic disparities. As of mid-May 2021, the City has completed over 7.6 million vaccine shots and the COVID-19 percent positivity rate is below 4% – a sign of hope after a long and difficult year. Still, the work to ensure communities of color are accessing the vaccine remains paramount. This includes deploying a localized strategy for outreach, education, vaccination access, and community conversations to build vaccine confidence. Over 70% of the City’s vaccination sites are in Taskforce communities and community-based organizations, and City agencies have been activated to reach key populations, including seniors in public housing and undocumented workers.

The Taskforce is also assessing gender and racial equity within City government. In partnership with the Commission on Gender Equity, TRIE will release a set of Pay Equity recommendations by fall 2021 to address race and gender pay disparities among municipal employees. These recommendations will address how compensation decisions are made and outline strategies for recruitment, retention, improving workplace culture, and increasing diversity across occupations.

Juneteenth Economic Justice Plan

On June 17, 2021 -- two days before the first federal holiday observing Juneteenth -- Mayor Bill de Blasio and the Taskforce announced the NYC Juneteenth Economic Justice Plan: Building Generational Wealth. To help build generational wealth and to shrink the huge racial gaps in the median net worth of households, that plan directs resources to students, some as young as Kindergartners. The Economic Justice Plan includes:

- **Universal NYC Baby Bonds**

In 2016, Mayor de Blasio launched a “baby bonds” 529 college savings pilot in Queens School District 30 in partnership with the non-profit NYC Kids Rise (NYCKR). Children in District 30 now have over \$6 million for college and career training.

Through public-private partnerships, NYCKR will be expanded to all school districts, providing universal 529 savings accounts to every public-school child, starting in Kindergarten 2021. The City will invest \$15 million annually through 2025.

- **CUNY Scholarship Fund**

New York City will provide over 2,800 four-year CUNY ACE model scholarships valued at \$4,000 per year. This \$45 million investment will help cover gaps in financial aid, books, transportation, and advising for eligible students.

The program will serve 1,000 students at Medgar Evers College and 1,800 low-income students in the Taskforce neighborhoods hit hardest by COVID, NYCHA housing developments, and other low-income zip codes.

- **The Brooklyn Recovery Corps at Medgar Evers College**

Medgar Evers College will launch the Brooklyn Recovery Corps to provide over 200 students annually with the opportunity to contribute to the ongoing economic recovery of Brooklyn, focusing on experiences that integrate science, business, public health, or the green economy. Students will receive paid internships, work experience, and career prep.

“We must double down on our efforts to combat systemic health inequities such as violence, chronic disease, and maternal health outcomes. I look forward to continuing this work with the taskforce, to reimagine our city and communities in a just and equitable recovery.”

- Dr. Torian Easterling, First Deputy Commissioner and Chief Equity Officer, DOHMH

Conclusion



The work of this Taskforce represents much more than a laundry list of emergency solutions and innovations to tackle racial disparities that were exacerbated and laid bare by the pandemic. The Taskforce offers a model for how government can respond to problems that are too often written off as intractable, due to individual failings, or needing long studies and huge financial investments. The foundational idea of the Taskforce seems both self-evident and revolutionary: identify what communities themselves say they need to thrive and identify the remedies within the power of government.

Driven by urgency, the Taskforce listened to communities, quickly identified problems, forged solutions, and brought people and resources together to make a difference. It connected New Yorkers to health care and legal assistance, created creative outlets and community for young people, gave people fresh food, and offered mental health support in communities ravaged by death, illness and uncertainty. It has accomplished an enormous amount in a short time. Its work continues.

Over 150 years ago, at another time of national crisis and division, President Abraham Lincoln issued an eloquent call for unity and shared purpose. We use his words to declare that New York City's Taskforce on Racial Inclusion and Equity represents government at its best: of the people, by the people, for the people.



Mayor de Blasio, Dr. Torian Easterling (DOHMH), and Sideya Sherman (TRIE), visit the Sheepshead-Nostrand Houses vaccination site in Brooklyn, NY.

Acknowledgements

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Ashley Ross-Teel, Chief Content Officer, TRIE

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TRIE Coordination Team

Ebony Johnson, Zone Coordinator, New York City Housing Authority

Dina Simon, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs

Ismelda Rosario, Executive Director of Program and Performance Management,
Administration for Children's Services

Linda Tigani, Senior Director, Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health

TRIE Co-Chair Teams

Ayana Hall, Director of Special Projects & Policy Analyst, Office of First Lady of the
City of New York

Dabash Negash, Senior Advisor, Office of First Lady of the City of New York

Grace Choi, Former Director of Policy, Office of First Lady of the City of New York

Chanel Caraway, Communications Advisor & Deputy Press Secretary, Office of
First Lady of the City of New York

Roxanne John, Chief of Staff, Office of First Lady of the City of New York

Michaela Daniel, Chief of Staff, Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives

Michael Sedillo, Deputy Chief of Staff, Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives

Ellen Eng, Chief of Staff, Deputy Mayor for Health & Human Services

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Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services.

TRIE Membership

The Taskforce is comprised of nearly 100 members across 67 agencies and offices. Under the leadership of subcommittee co-chairs, Taskforce members have worked collectively to address disparities in hard-hit communities and center equity in our ongoing response to COVID-19.

Subcommittee Co-Chairs

Alexandra Ruiz, Co-Branch Chief for Forward Planning , Vaccine Command Center (Vaccine Equity)

Anusha Venkataraman, Executive Director, Racial Justice Commission (Food Insecurity)

Benjamin Tucker, First Deputy Commissioner, NYC Police Department (Social Distancing)

Bitta Mostofi, Former Commissioner, Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (Undocumented)

Cecile Noel, Executive Director, Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence (Mental Health)

Chansi Powel, Former Chief of Staff, THRIVE NYC (Mental Health)

Dr. Daniel Stephens, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Mental Health & Hygiene (Delayed Healthcare)

Dawn Pinnock, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Citywide Administrative Services (Workforce and Pay Equity)

Gregg Bishop, Former Commissioner, Small Business Services (Workforce)

Harold Miller, Former Campaign Manager, NYC Test & Trace (Food Insecurity)

Jessica W. Jeavons, Equity Lead for Vaccine Operations, Department of Mental Health & Hygiene (Vaccine Equity)

Jonnel Doris, Commissioner, Department of Small Business Services (Small Business)

Jordan Stockdale, Executive Director, Young Men's Initiative (Youth, Stakeholder Engagement)

Justin Moore, Former Commissioner, Public Design Commission (Housing)

Kelly Jin, Former Commissioner, Mayor's Office for Data Analytics (Data and Research)

LaShawn Robinson, Deputy Chancellor, Department of Education (Youth)

Lawanna Kimbro, Former Chief Diversity Officer, Department of Social Services
(Housing)

Lorelei Salas, Former Commissioner, Department of Consumer & Worker
Protection (Undocumented Workers)

Louise Carrol, Commissioner, Housing Preservation & Development (Housing)

Marco Carrion, Former Commissioner, Mayor's Office for Community Affairs
(Social Distancing)

Dr. Sarah Sayeed, Executive Director, Civic Engagement Commission (Covid-
related Healthcare, Stakeholder Engagement)

Suzanne Veira, Vice President & Chief Diversity Officer, School Construction
Authority (Small Business)

Tayaab Walker, Director of Enterprise Data Solutions, NYC Opportunity (Data and
Research)

Dr. Torian Easterling, First Deputy Commissioner and Chief Equity Officer,
Department of Mental Health & Hygiene (COVID-related Healthcare)

Toya Williford, Former Executive Director, Mayor's Fund to Advance NYC
(Undocumented Workers)

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