



# GLOBALTOLOCAL

## Helping Our Community During COVID-19: Global to Local's Pandemic Response



From the beginning of the pandemic, Global to Local (G2L) worked within communities in SeaTac, Tukwila, and surrounding neighborhoods to limit COVID-19's spread and harm. COVID-19 disproportionately affects economically disadvantaged communities, as well as culturally and linguistically diverse communities. G2L responded by increasing awareness through education, and providing basic services for people in dire need. Specifically, G2L programs supported people in South King County in securing rental assistance, food, and direct financial assistance for critical needs.

G2L managed two of King County's Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act-funded programs to provide food assistance and support community members with rental assistance. Our staff focused on reaching the most vulnerable in our community to ensure they had access to these vital resources. Additionally, our trusted staff provided ongoing outreach and education to Spanish-speaking and Somali communities about COVID-19 safety guidelines and service programs.

[globaltolocal.org](https://globaltolocal.org)

# Vital Resources

The communities we serve, including immigrants, refugees, and families with low incomes, are especially vulnerable as they face multiple barriers to health care and other essential needs, and often lack up-to-date information.

Our Connection Desk program has a seven-year history of assisting community members with health insurance enrollment, social service access, job and housing searches, and other resource connections that promote wellbeing. Before the pandemic, our Connection Desk was co-located with a medical clinic, and focused on in-person services. When COVID-19 reached our area, our Connection Desk moved to virtual and outdoor spaces to continue service while ensuring staff and community member safety. In 2020, our Connection Desk team assisted 842 community members in accessing a variety of health and social services, such as food, unemployment benefits, and baby supplies.

Through our longstanding partnership with HealthPoint community health clinics, our Community Health Workers have established relationships with hundreds of chronically ill East African and Spanish-speaking patients, helping them overcome social and linguistic barriers to health care. Community Health Workers provided additional support to these patients once the pandemic began, checking in with them regularly to share resources for housing, food access, employment, and financial health.

Additionally, our Food Innovation Network's Community Food Advocates distributed 4,200 masks to diverse cultural communities, including Latinx, Kurdish, Congolese, Somali, Karen, and Filipino residents, along with information about food resources and COVID-19 safety.



## Christine's story

Christine is an asylum seeker from Kenya who now lives in Des Moines. She received her long-awaited work permit in January of 2020, and quickly found a position as a caregiver for older adults. However, as she learned about COVID-19 outbreaks at nearby adult caregiving facilities, she became concerned about her high risk for exposure. Her doctor advised her to stop working and isolate in mid-March; that's when she was referred to our Connection Desk. Because Christine had only been working for two months before she had to leave her job, she didn't qualify for regular unemployment benefits.

Rebecca, who coordinates our Connection Desk, helped Christine apply for the new alternative Pandemic Unemployment Assistance. Days after submitting her application, her claim was denied. Rebecca contacted the overwhelmed employment security department several times, and, after a few weeks, Christine received a message from the department prompting her to apply for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance. She was approved for benefits and received them for two weeks—then she was one of 200,000 legitimate benefit recipients whose accounts were frozen as the state investigated widespread fraud.

Rebecca helped Christine continue to file benefit claims, and also to file an appeal to release the hold on her account. After several weeks, Christine received a lump sum payment for the back-owed benefits. Thanks in part to Rebecca's persistence and skill in navigating systems, Christine accessed the financial assistance she needed to isolate and protect her health.

**842**  
community members  
connected with services

**4,200**  
masks distributed to 6+  
cultural communities

# Food Security

Even before the pandemic, more than one in 10 King County adults lacked reliable access to affordable, nutritious food—and food insecurity was even worse in South King County. Strategies to slow the spread of COVID-19 exacerbated the problem; as businesses closed, many workers lost income and the ability to buy food for their families.

G2L addressed food insecurity by distributing vouchers for groceries and prepared foods, launching a no-cost meals and produce program, and reaching out to cultural communities to share resources and information.

## Food vouchers

King County selected G2L to manage a CARES Act-funded food vouchers program for community members who were experiencing food insecurity. Our staff reached out to G2L clients and other community members to invite them to apply for this low-barrier program, which required participants only to answer questions about their food security—they did not have to submit any paperwork or documents.

We began distribution at our Spice Bridge food hall in November. By the end of December, we connected 369 community members with Safeway grocery vouchers, and 360 community members with [Spice Bridge](#) gift cards to purchase culturally relevant foods.



## Leticia's story

Leticia, an immigrant from Mexico, first connected with G2L a few years ago after she found a flier for a Zumba class posted at her HealthPoint clinic. She joined that program, as well as a financial health class led by Monica, one of our Spanish-speaking Community Health Workers. When the pandemic started, Leticia lost her job, and her husband's employer reduced his hours. Unemployment benefits and other government assistance weren't an option because of their immigration status. Leticia persistently sought new work, only to face setbacks when she needed emergency appendix surgery in June, and then had to leave a new job later in the summer after a shift schedule change interfered with her ability to care for her three children.

Monica checked in with Leticia regularly throughout the year, and reached out to her when grocery vouchers became available in mid-November. The \$400 Safeway vouchers came at a critical time for their family; Leticia, her husband, and two of her children became sick with COVID-19 around Thanksgiving. The vouchers were among the few supports they've had during the pandemic crisis, and Leticia was grateful to be stocked up on food during their stressful weeks of isolation and illness. Their health has improved, though Leticia noted a few months into her recovery that her lungs were not completely back to normal.

**360+**

community members connected  
with Safeway grocery vouchers  
and Spice Bridge gift cards

**\$136,800**

Safeway vouchers distributed

**\$50,250**

Spice Bridge gift cards distributed



# Food Security

## No-cost meals and produce

When lockdowns began in March, chefs who participate in our [Food Business Incubator](#) initiated an effort to feed isolated families and older adults in our community. They collected ingredients from their own pantries and from neighbors, and began preparing healthy meals that partner organizations delivered to community members in need. We expanded the program as food access needs grew, launching a community fundraising campaign and connecting with food banks, local businesses, and other groups that donated ingredients. By late spring, we received funding from the American Heart Association that allowed us to provide stipends to volunteer chefs, and the program was also supported by CARES Act funding in the fall.



*In this [KIRO 7 News story](#), chef Lilian Ryland shares her motivation for launching our no-cost meals initiative.*

Starting in July, our partners at IRC's New Roots program provided fresh produce that we sent along with the meals. We also created and shared information about food resources in English, French, and Somali. The program continued through early 2021, providing more than 8,700 meals.



## Additional community outreach

Community Food Advocates are leaders who represent the diverse multicultural communities of South King County, and they are at the heart of our Food Innovation Network's community engagement work.

In 2020, 10 Advocates reached out to community members to share information about food resources and COVID-19 safety. They reached a variety of cultural communities, including Latinx, Kurdish, Congolese, Somali, Karen, and Filipino South King County residents.

# 360

no-cost produce bags delivered  
to isolated older adults

# 8,700+

no-cost meals  
provided

# 10

Community Food Advocates  
engaged 6 cultural communities

# Housing Stability

Coming into 2020, the lack of affordable housing was already a crisis across our region, and skyrocketing rents burdened low-income community members. Housing instability became worse when efforts to slow the spread of COVID-19 caused many tenants to lose work, income, and the ability to pay rent. Eviction moratoriums provided near-term protection for tenants, but many still faced the possibility of future eviction.

To help community members avoid eviction, G2L managed a King County Eviction Prevention and Rental Assistance Program funded by the CARES Act. We supported 185 households facing eviction by helping with applications for past-due rental assistance.

Through partnerships and additional COVID-19 response resources, we also distributed \$25,000 in direct financial aid for food, housing, and hygiene supplies to 30 families. All families also received ongoing case management support from our staff to address needs throughout the pandemic. Additionally, we helped 14 families secure zero-interest loans of up to \$2,000 to cover basic living expenses through an innovative pilot program and partnership with Community Credit Lab.



**\$25,000**  
direct financial aid distributed  
to 30 families for  
housing, food, and hygiene

**14**  
families connected  
with zero-interest loans

**185**  
applications for past-due  
rental assistance

## Nadine's story

Nadine, an asylum seeker originally from Chad, found our Connection Desk in 2018. Over the years, our team has assisted Nadine with job searches, and also helped her connect with resources for food, transportation, cash benefits, health care, and subsidies for childcare for her four-year-old daughter. In 2020, Nadine was laid off due to the pandemic, and accessed unemployment benefits for several months. She returned to work part-time only to have her hours gradually reduced, and her difficult financial situation led to her being at risk of eviction from her home.

Rebecca, our Connection Desk program coordinator, assisted Nadine in securing \$800 in direct financial aid. Rebecca also helped her connect with King County's Eviction Prevention and Rental Assistance Program, and Nadine received \$3,975 to pay past-due rent. In the fall, Rebecca connected Nadine with \$400 in Safeway grocery vouchers. Between these three supports, Nadine was able to save up enough money to move with her daughter from her unstable, shared living situation into a new two-bedroom apartment in SeaTac.

# Business Stability

Food businesses have traditionally been a way for striving immigrants and low-income families to gain a foothold in the economy, but many South King County chefs face barriers to starting a business, including a lack of affordable commercial kitchen and restaurant spaces. Four years ago, our Food Innovation Network (FIN) launched a [Food Business Incubator](#) to help South King County women, immigrants, and refugees launch and grow food businesses. Despite the pandemic, our Food Business Incubator expanded in 2020 to support 13 businesses whose cuisines represent the diversity of our community.

As COVID-19 forced the cancellation of gatherings and farmers markets, Incubator participants lost significant income from catering and market booths. We took action to help business owners secure grants and interest-free loans to stabilize their businesses and their families. Our team also provided technical assistance to help entrepreneurs pivot to new ways of doing business, such as meal pickups,

and we connected chefs with paid opportunities to teach virtual cooking classes. We waived kitchen rent from April to June, and offered a subsidy to help businesses pay for their annual public health permits.

As our [no-cost meals program](#) grew, funding from the American Heart Association and the CARES Act enabled us to provide chefs with stipends—an important lifeline for Food Business Incubator participants whose businesses had suffered due to COVID-19 safety restrictions.

Even as many pandemic-related hardships closed many food businesses permanently, we launched [Spice Bridge](#), our new commercial kitchen and food hall, in September, providing our Food Business Incubator participants a space to prepare and sell takeaway food. Businesses got a boost when CARES Act funding allowed us to purchase gift cards totaling \$50,250 from Spice Bridge vendors, and distribute them to community members who were experiencing food insecurity.



## Adama's story

Adama, an immigrant from Gambia, is a single mother raising five children. In 2019, she and her sister, Oumie, launched [Afella Jollof Catering](#) with the support of our Food Business Incubator. Business was expanding until the pandemic hit and catering orders dried up. To support Adama in this difficult time, our incubator program manager, Kerrie, helped her apply for a variety of loans and grants.

Through our partnership with Community Credit Lab, Adama received a \$2,000 interest-free loan, which she used to pay off debt and invest in her business. She also qualified for a \$500 grant from the Plate Fund, and a \$2,300 grant from King County. These helped her buy takeout containers and other supplies that enabled the launch of Afella Jollof Catering's retail food stall at Spice Bridge in September. FIN also helped pay for Afella Jollof Catering's annual food business permit. The financial support helped Adama stabilize her family business, which is once again growing.

13

businesses incubated and stabilized

175

hours of one-on-one technical assistance  
provided to business owners

5

new businesses launched

\$11,470

stipends paid to 15 chefs who  
prepared no-cost meals