

A Broken Bridge: Addressing Lack of Accessible Resources for Immigrants & Refugees
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Section I: Narrative

A two-sentence summary of the goals of your project: Our main goal was to address the lack of accessible resources for immigrant communities was to create a stop-gap fund to provide assistance to immigrant communities. We also wanted to develop a network of social service agencies dedicated to helping immigrant communities access resources and navigate conflicts.

Did other fund-raising efforts contribute to your project? What were they?: While we envisioned additional fund-raising efforts to facilitate the stop-gap fund we created for Canopy, we were ultimately not able to execute these efforts during the summer.

How did you come up with the idea for your project? As three immigrants ourselves, we feel deeply connected to the issues immigrant communities face as they attempt to gain shelter in this nation, but are largely unable to access essential resources and services. This motivated us to develop a project that directly assisted immigrant communities and addressed the issues they face.

Why do you think the issue your project is responding to exists?: The issues surrounding migrant rights have historically existed in the United States, but have been exacerbated during the previous presidential administration, resulting in greater blockades against immigration rights and migrant's access to essential resources, due to biased rhetoric and harmful prejudices.

Why did you choose your host site to work in? What was it like to work in your host site?: After connecting with RAICES, a Texas-based NGO that promotes migrant justice through social services and programs to underserved immigrant children, families, and refugees, we were introduced to Canopy, their national resource hotline that connects migrants with social service agencies. Canopy was a joy to work with, as our supervisors allowed us freedom and flexibility to work on our goals and provided us with valuable advice regarding working with immigrant communities.

Did you feel at any point that the project was not going to work? In what ways?: We faced a few logistic problems throughout the execution of our project. Accessing the funds for running our project proved to be a lengthy issue that was solved about two weeks prior to finishing our project.

What were the challenges you encountered in communicating with people?: We didn't experience many challenges regarding communication at Canopy, as our supervisors were very flexible and accommodating. The communication process with the callers was a bit lengthy because we had to reach out to them through a Canopy representative, however, the process was easy to handle once we set it up and did not present any issues or challenges.

How do you define peace?: As students and human beings, we recognize that peace is an essential right, state of life, and foundation for human interaction. Peace allows all communities and their members to have the ability to access essential resources and hone skills in order to make informed decisions in order to progress, heal, and succeed.

How does or will your project contribute to peace? Short-term? Long-term?: By building a fund that provided financial aid to immigrant families, we were able to provide both short-time and long-term contributions to peace for these families and communities. As we issued food vouchers and rent assistance checks we were able to help these families achieve some peace in their daily lives in the short-term and gain equitable standing in the long-term as they now had decreased financial burden to more effectively and peacefully continue working to establish better lives for themselves and their families.

Has your project changed the way you think about the world? How has it changed you?: This project showed us how many layers there are to migrants rights and all issues related to conflict resolution. Our perspectives changed for the better, as we became more aware of all the intricate layers related to these issues and how assistance is often distributed, so that we are able to make more focused and effective efforts in future projects and experiences related to human rights and migrant issues.

Was your project impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic? If you were able to implement your project remotely, speak to the highlights and challenges of conducting a remote project: We structured our project to work remotely so we didn't feel impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic overall. The remote structure of the project allowed flexibility, however, we weren't able to connect with as many agencies as we planned. Despite this we were still able to advance our goals with virtual workarounds and connected with both callers and agencies through phone, email and video calls.

What advice would you give to future PfP grantees given the pandemic-related challenges you experienced?: For future PfP grantees we would recommend looking into remote or local-based projects due to pandemic-related challenges that may make it difficult to travel.

Personal statements addressing how and why this project was valuable and what was the most important thing you learned:

- “This project was a valuable experience, thanks to the Davis Projects for Peace Foundation. Learning how to productively address the consequences of conflict help people overcome those hurdles and achieve peace was both humbling and rewarding.” - Maryam Iftikhar, Team Leader.
- “I knew that there were gaps in funding and knowledge but this project helped me gain an intimate look into the lives of new immigrants and the challenges they face. I learned how we can each help and advocate on behalf of immigrant communities as they make the US their permanent home or temporary safe haven.” - Sai Jallow, Team Member.
- “The Davis Peace Projects for Peace foundation helped us be a beacon of hope to immigrant families that were struggling to meet the basic needs of their families on top of legal issues.” - Maria Elena Silva, Team Member.

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Section II: Photographs

