

HISPANIC AFFAIRS PROJECT

2020 Annual Report



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In loving remembrance of HAP Founder, Fr. John Kiernan

Our Mission and Vision

Who We Are

The mission of the Hispanic Affairs Project is to promote the integration of Latino immigrants in Western Colorado through leadership development, community organizing, and providing key services.

Who We Serve

We are a grassroots nonprofit organization serving Western Colorado immigrant communities, including Mesa, Delta, Montrose, San Miguel, Ouray, and Gunnison counties.

What Makes Us Unique

As part of the integration process, we encourage civic participation by helping people find their voices and learn how they can get involved in their community. We envision Western Colorado communities where cultural diversity is celebrated, and where immigrants actively contribute to change for a more just and equitable society.



Dear Friends,

We thank you for your continued support through the difficulties of the past year. 2020 created an opportunity for the Hispanic Affairs Project to strengthen its efforts to better serve our community. We adapted to new ways of organizing and administering services to help immigrant families in their greatest time of need. A highlight, with participation from many of you, was the launch of the *Western Colorado Immigrant Relief Fund*. This fund was an effort that HAP undertook at the start of the COVID-19 outbreak when we saw the immediate impact of the pandemic on undocumented workers and their families. **Thanks to your generosity, we were able to assist many families in crisis across the region.**



HAP team members meet with Colorado Secretary of State, Jena Griswold

COVID-19 revealed the inequality and racial disparity that impacts a significant workforce of immigrants and people of color. These workers, who are considered *essential*, remain unprotected in their workplaces. HAP seized the opportunity to **elevate awareness about these disparities and advocate for policy changes** to ensure that these communities have access to the same services, resources, and opportunities that are available to most people in the U.S.

Given the importance of our civic engagement focus, HAP deployed strategic communications and outreach to ensure that Latino immigrants were included in the 2020 Census count. We launched our **first-ever nonpartisan voter engagement campaign** to encourage our community to register to vote and to participate in the 2020 general elections. Despite the in-person contact restrictions, we carried out a robust campaign incorporating targeted media, civic education, and outreach to mobilize our community.

Finally, as a result of our years of migrant outreach and advocacy work, we invested significant time working with statewide partners to unite in coalition to advance the Farmworker Bill of Rights, a legislative proposal focused on addressing the unequal treatment of essential migrant and seasonal farmworkers. **This proposal would ensure that these workers are included in state wage and labor protections just like every other Colorado worker.**

In this report, we want to highlight key achievements that were made possible through your unwavering support and solidarity.

With deep gratitude,
Ricardo Perez, Executive Director

Western Colorado Immigrant Relief Fund

In late March, based on the outlook of the pandemic and what we were hearing from within the immigrant community, HAP quickly launched the **Western Colorado Immigrant Relief Fund (WCIRF)** to assist families impacted by COVID-19 who were ineligible for state and federal emergency assistance or other safety-net programs. As this was a new area of focus for HAP, we had to learn best practices for providing this form of direct assistance and set up the infrastructure to do this effectively and transparently.

Between May 15 to December 1, 2020, HAP distributed \$37,800 to support 55 families (223 people) that experienced a job loss or reduced hours, lost work due to COVID-19 infection, or required time off work to care for a loved one who had become infected with COVID-19. These funds were distributed through direct payment of rent to property management, utility companies, or other billing entities. Gift cards for food and household needs were also provided as a form of direct assistance.

As part of this effort, we reached out to community partners about the WCIRF program to solicit referrals and to avoid duplication of services. Knowing that immigrant families were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic provided us a unique opportunity to partner with diverse organizations that did not have the capacity to reach the immigrant population. **Through these partnerships, we connected an additional 175 families in need with emergency assistance ranging from cash grants, grocery vouchers, and utility assistance among other forms of crucial aid.**

"I am grateful to the entire HAP team, and all the people who support this work to assist families in need during these difficult times. Thank you for the financial support that I obtained through the WCIRF to pay my rent, it made a difference."

— Guadalupe Garcia, Grand Junction



Left Behind Workers Fund

In May, HAP became a partner of the **Left Behind Workers Fund (LBWF)**, a fund created by *Impact Charitable* to provide monetary and rental assistance for undocumented workers throughout the state of Colorado that were impacted by COVID-19. Through this collaboration, HAP helped to identify and screen eligible workers for financial assistance, in addition to the WCIRF.

LBWF was launched recognizing that the undocumented community would be left out of most funds available for U.S. citizens and some permanent residents, even though many were *essential workers* and were more at risk of contracting COVID-19. The monetary assistance was used for the specific needs of each family and **HAP helped approximately 105 individuals and their families be able to make ends meet during these difficult times through the LBWF.**

Through the end of 2020, \$9,067,000 was distributed by the LBWF to 9,067 people who received direct cash grants of \$1,000. **This benefited 16,080 children in 39 Colorado counties, and HAP was pleased to be part of this crucial program as it expanded the amount of emergency assistance reaching our community.**



Ensuring Language Justice

When the pandemic hit and the Governor announced the stay-at-home order, it was difficult for everyone in our communities. However, there was little to no information available in Spanish when the outbreak started and in the months following which compelled HAP to jump into action to ensure that important information was being shared with our community. Through weekly email bulletins, HAP's website, and social media, we provided timely updates, resources, and alerts about COVID-19 precautions, local and state restrictions, and emergency resources.

Language justice is critical to ensuring that immigrant families are included in the local response. HAP will continue to advocate for local and state institutions to further invest in language access as part of emergency response and broader community inclusion efforts.



Immigration Legal Assistance

Since 2015, HAP has provided low-cost immigration legal assistance to clients from across Western Colorado as well as from neighboring states. In 2020, the **U.S. Department of Justice approved HAP's application for renewal of recognition** which will allow the organization to provide these critical services for another six years. Immigration legal assistance continues to be an essential service due to the scarcity of trustworthy immigration attorneys in the region.

Notario fraud is an ongoing problem, making our immigration legal assistance program even more vital to ensure people have access to accredited immigration legal representation. **Unscrupulous individuals continue to take advantage of immigrants seeking immigration benefits.** This can have serious consequences for an individual or family if an unauthorized agent incorrectly fills out immigration forms. Because of this, providing community education to prevent individuals from becoming victims of fraud is a crucial aspect of our legal assistance program.

Participation in the **New Americans Campaign**, a national network of organizations promoting citizenship by aiding lawful permanent residents with the naturalization process, continues to expand our citizenship programming. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, we provided more virtual assistance and despite the challenges, **we were able to assist even more people with their citizenship applications in 2020 compared to 2019.**

Migeeli Chanco, Legal Assistance Client

In 2020 HAP helped Migeeli Chanco adjust her immigration status through her U.S. citizen spouse. Here is what Migeeli shared about the support she received from HAP:

My experience with HAP was very positive because their legal representative helped us understand the process and was always available to answer questions. I have struggled to find work because I don't have proof of immigration status. Now I feel confident that I will be able to find a job and I plan to visit my family in Peru so they can meet my husband and son. This is a blessing that brings me much joy to think about.

Access to immigration legal assistance in a rural area like Gunnison is very important as there are few places to go for legal and immigration issues. It's difficult to find help that is trustworthy and does not exploit the vulnerable situation many of us are in.



Migeeli and her family

Helping Residents Access Driver's Licenses

Between July 2019 and January 2020, several Division of Motor Vehicle (DMV) offices across the state started processing driver's licenses under the SB251 Colorado Road and Community Safety Act passed in 2013, providing access to a driver's license to undocumented Colorado residents. **As a designated community partner of the DMV, HAP assisted 117 individuals from across Colorado through the process of applying for a driver's license, license renewal, or identification card under the SB251 program.** Among those served were individuals from Montrose, Olathe, Delta, Gunnison, Almont, Telluride, Ouray, Cedaredge, Clifton, and Grand Junction.

Obtaining a valid driver's license means that people can **register their vehicles and purchase car insurance which makes our roads safer for everyone.** It also means that people can safely take their children to school, drive to work, or go to the grocery store. The SB251 driver's license program has not simply provided an identification document to individuals but has also opened doors and created a sense of belonging and community by creating more inclusive policies in Colorado.

After obtaining a driver's license, some first-generation immigrants are opening new businesses. Others are considering new job opportunities, and some are even opening up their first bank accounts, just to name a few of the benefits. While the overall economic ripple effects are substantial, **most importantly, the peace of mind that comes with being able to drive safely and without fear of being stopped by law enforcement is life-changing.**



HAP's community advocate helps with a driver's license request

"Having a driver's license has made me feel safer and more protected. My wife can now drive and go to medical appointments and transport the family when needed. I am proud of Colorado and all of the organizations that keep working to improve the law so that it protects residents. It is everyone's job to make changes that benefit all. That gives us greater confidence to drive on the roads without the fear of being questioned for not having a license."

— Eric Lopez, Montrose

2020 Census



"Participation in the Census is so important, and this was part of our ongoing work to encourage more active civic participation of our immigrant community to ensure that everyone is counted now and in the future."

*— Karen Sherman Perez,
Civic Engagement & Development Coordinator*

The Hispanic Affairs Project joined community partners to support 2020 Census outreach and education. Focusing on “hard to count” populations, **HAP launched a communications campaign to actively dispel misinformation and improve census participation among Latino immigrants.** Through paid Spanish-language radio and newspaper ads, online communications, phone banking, and the delivery of bilingual information packets, HAP was able to reach a significant portion of the Spanish-speaking community.

Census participation is important for determining funding for critical services and infrastructure, as well as the number of seats Colorado has in the U.S. House of Representatives. **Census data is also used to redefine congressional and state legislative districts that reflect the people who live there.**



Local youth leaders help distribute 2020 Census information

Getting Out The Vote

With much at stake in the 2020 U.S. general election, HAP made a commitment to launch its first-ever nonpartisan voter engagement campaign to encourage the participation of Latino voters. This effort was possible through a partnership with the **Voter Empowerment Project**, a nonpartisan volunteer-led effort focused on expanding the capacity of small, high-impact organizations through technical assistance to increase voter turnout through voter registration, education, mobilization, and protection.

There is a gap when it comes to voter engagement efforts in rural communities and **HAP is committed to continuing to build our capacity to further engage New Americans and Latino voters in the future to ensure that the voices of our community are heard!**



A New American voter drops off her ballot



HAP staff work on Get Out The Vote messaging

Highlights

- Created a **3-part Spanish language video series** focused on: How to Register to Vote in Colorado, How to Fill Out Your Ballot, and How to Submit Your Ballot
- Distributed **3,000 voter education packets** in Montrose and Mesa Counties
- Launched **targeted social media campaign** that reached over 3,300 people
- Sent over **1,000 letters to potentially eligible voters** to encourage voter registration
- Made over **1,000 phone calls** to registered voters

Inspiring Leadership

As part of HAP's ongoing leadership development program, community members gathered in January **to learn about power and how power can be used.** Using Latin American *popular education*, participants learned about U.S. history, the formation of U.S. political institutions, and how the power of our voices together with collective action can be used to build power and affect change in our community.

Recognizing the significance of immigrant and cultural heritage as part of leadership development is also an important aspect of helping community members understand how they can contribute to something bigger than themselves. For HAP, expanding awareness about how every individual can be an agent of change is an important aspect of the immigrant integration process.



Community members participate in the January leadership retreat

Montrose Latino Police Academy



Participants of the academy listen to an officer from the MPD

In February, HAP collaborated with the Montrose Police Department to host the first *Latino Police Academy*. The goal of this event was to create a space for community members to learn how the police department works, build trust with law enforcement, and identify ways that the Latino community can become more engaged in working together with local police as well as other governmental institutions.

With a history of harsh immigration enforcement policies in Colorado, rebuilding trust between immigrants and law enforcement is still a work in progress. Despite repealing the state's "show me your papers" law in 2013, **there continues to be a deep distrust within our community**, and providing opportunities for interactions in safe spaces is an important part of efforts to foster safety for everyone in our community.

Farmworker Bill of Rights



For years, HAP has heard from local immigrant and migrant farmworkers about the difficulties they face working for low wages with few labor protections. After months of advocating for the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment to include migrant and seasonal farmworkers in state wage and labor standards with no results, **HAP joined statewide partners to work on a 2021 state legislative proposal to improve wage and labor conditions for this sector of the workforce.**

"My family lives paycheck to paycheck. I work 7 days a week but do not receive the minimum wage or overtime pay. Agricultural work is the only thing I know how to do, but it is hard work and I deserve to be paid a fair wage."

— Miguel Hernandez, Delta

COVID-19 Health Equity Response Team

HAP's Executive Director, Ricardo Perez, was appointed to the State of Colorado's **COVID-19 Health Equity Response Team** established by Governor Polis. This Team was created to help address the **disparities impacting communities of color who are experiencing the pandemic differently than other communities** due to limited access to healthcare and increased risk due to working in low-paying essential jobs.

"COVID demonstrated once again the inequality that exists within our social and economic systems and we have a lot of work to do to achieve equality and equity for marginalized communities."

— Ricardo Perez, Executive Director

The Team recommended policy proposals to be considered in the 2020 special legislative session focused on:

- ensuring that essential employees receive **workers' compensation** due to risk of exposure to COVID-19,
- establishing an **earned paid sick leave policy** for all Colorado workers, regardless of status, industry, or form of employment, and
- providing **whistleblower protections** for employees filing complaints against employers failing to comply with public health orders.

(<https://covid19.colorado.gov/health-equity-response-team>).

By the Numbers

Here is a brief summary of the number of people we supported in 2020:



255

Immigration
Legal Assistance

923

COVID-19
Emergency Assistance



2,542

Resources
& Referrals

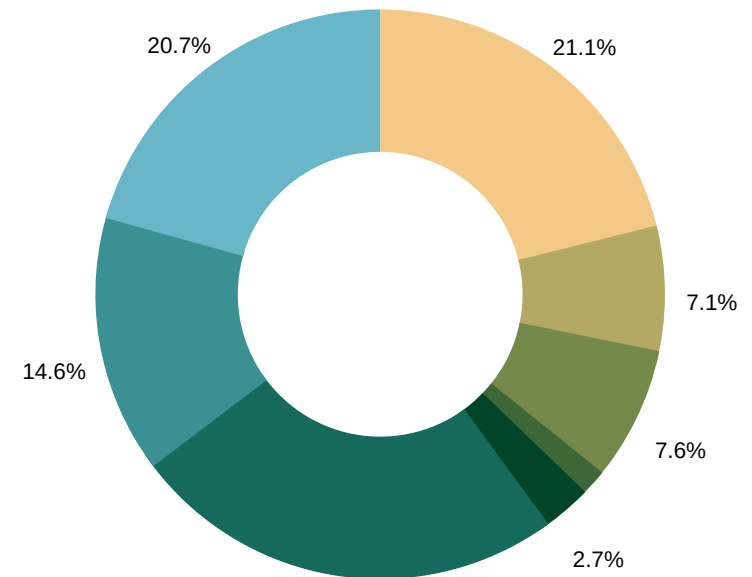
8,900

Outreach &
Communications



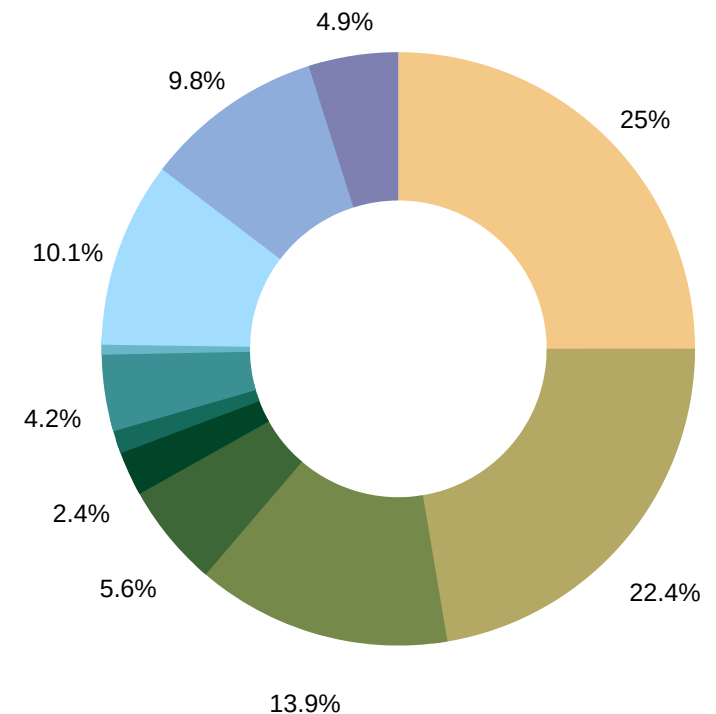
INCOME - \$830,700

Grants	\$175,500	21.1%
State & Federal Grants	\$58,800	7.1%
Individual Donors & Events	\$62,800	7.6%
Organizational Contributions	\$12,000	1.5%
Program Service Fees	\$22,700	2.7%
Western CO Immigrant Relief (Restricted)	\$205,500	24.7%
Capital Building Fund (Restricted)	\$121,600	14.6%
Fund for 2021 (Restricted)	\$171,800	20.7%



EXPENSES - \$372,401

Immigration Legal Assistance	\$93,000	25%
Community Resources	\$83,300	22.4%
Sexual Assault/DV Prevention	\$51,880	13.9%
Leadership Development	\$21,000	5.6%
Welcoming Initiatives	\$9,000	2.4%
Advocacy & Policy Education	\$4,630	1.2%
Migrant Outreach	\$15,071	4.2%
Combatting Human Trafficking	\$2,000	0.5%
Western CO Immigrant Relief	\$37,800	10.1%
General Operations & Administration	\$36,480	9.8%
Fundraising	\$18,240	4.9%





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HAP: Hispanic Affairs Project



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Make a financial contribution to support our work

Donate online at hapgj.org, or send your contribution to:

Hispanic Affairs Project
P.O. Box 2024
Montrose, CO 81402

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Receive monthly updates about our work and the impact we having in West Slope communities.

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Engaging the Latino
Immigrant Community in
Western Colorado

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