

USA

NATIONAL ACTION NETWORK Meal Distribution

PROJECT LOCATION: New York City, New York

PROJECT DURATION: 9 Weeks

GRANT AMOUNT: \$502,900
[sub-granted amount \$463,590]

NAN CONTACT: Katrina Jefferson,
katrinaj@nationalactionnetwork.net

CARE CONTACT: Savannah Miller,
savannah.miller@care.org



A CARE Package getting delivered to a family in need

Background and Context

The National Action Network (NAN) is one of the nation's leading civil rights organizations, with chapters throughout the U.S. dedicated to promoting justice and equality for all and addressing the needs of underserved communities. NAN sees health and wellness as a critical pillar of the modern civil rights agenda. Each of NAN's chapters is required to have a health and wellness committee to promote good nutrition and overall wellness in the communities they serve, and to help families, adults and children establish healthy lifestyles to fight off chronic diseases. Since March 2020, NAN has partnered with World Central Kitchen to help provide much-needed meals to the Harlem community in New York City. What began as a local project very quickly expanded to the establishment of three additional distribution sites through NAN regional offices in Detroit, Los Angeles and Miami.

The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified many pre-existing inequalities in underserved communities, making them extremely vulnerable to unpredictable health and economic outcomes. At the onset of the pandemic, the New York City Mayor's Office indicated that around one million New Yorkers experienced some sort of food insecurity. With roughly 40% of the city's food pantries and soup kitchens forced to close and the suspension of meal delivery programs across all five boroughs, by mid-May 2020, those numbers were believed to increase to over two million, with hundreds of thousands of people experiencing food insecurity for the first time. In an effort to provide a community-based solution to the overwhelming need for food assistance, NAN, in collaboration with CARE, sought to scale up its operations by opening a meal distribution center and establishing a delivery service that would provide meals to vulnerable families as well as essential workers and healthcare providers on the frontline of the crisis. This new operation, which leveraged the strengths of both organizations including CARE's experience providing food aid in emergencies worldwide, was made possible by the generous support of the Hutchins Family Foundation.

Project Activities and Results

Food Distribution for Bronx Community

During the first month of operations, lines at the Fort Mott Baptist Church in the Bronx formed as early as 10:15 am for the noon daily meal distribution, often stretching several blocks long. Approximately 35,000 meals were distributed within the first three weeks, with all meals distributed on a first-come-first-serve basis. Seeing this level of demand, the NAN team ramped up distribution by 500 meals per day for the week of May 25, and again on June 15. These increases allowed for greater impact and allowed us to provide support to those diligently working on the front lines through in-person pick-up and delivery services.

Our distribution site was located in a majority-Latinx population area and our actual distribution demographics were proportionate, which necessitated engagement of a high number of Spanish speakers. With close coordination with the Fort Mott Baptist Church lead pastor, Reverend James Duckett, NAN conducted outreach and communications, including through Spanish-language flyers. Recipient backgrounds varied, with some reporting recent COVID-related job losses and others reporting systemic job insecurity, unrelated to COVID. A high percentage of recipients were families with children who had to stay home from school, where they might have otherwise received meals.

Delivery through Lyft

To meet demand and respond to inquiries received from both healthcare workers and seniors complying with the city's shelter in place order, NAN began directly delivering meals to various locations throughout the Bronx and Harlem in June. In partnership with Lyft, project volunteers were able to provide meals to the following locations:

- Lincoln Hospital, Facilities Department (Bronx, NY);
- Montefiore Hospital, Facilities Department (Bronx, NY);
- Patterson Houses (Bronx, NY);
- Morris Houses (Bronx, NY);
- Sedgwick Houses (Bronx, NY);
- South Bronx Islamic Cultural Center (Bronx, NY);
- Prince Hall of Harlem (Harlem, NY);
- Alma Rangel Houses (Harlem, NY); and
- Manhattanville Housing Senior Center (Harlem, NY).

NAN, CARE and Sylvia's Restaurant

In addition to our Bronx location, NAN partnered with historic Sylvia's Restaurant in Harlem, one of many dining locales that have been gravely impacted by COVID-19, to provide hot meals for those in need and frontline workers engaged in the COVID response. This partnership has allowed us to provide an additional outlet where healthcare workers from the nearby Harlem Hospital can receive meals prior to beginning their shifts. Our first distribution with Sylvia's was Sunday, May 17, and it was covered by NY1 and ABC-7 news, showing NAN's President and Founder, Reverend Al Sharpton, providing meals to all who attended. Sylvia's Restaurant separately held fundraisers to help cover the costs of providing meals through our Sunday CARE Packages, and distributed gift cards to several package recipients as well.

Press and Final Results

Despite a crowded media landscape at the height of the pandemic peak in New York City, the initiative was featured in three outlets and resulted in over 7,411,498 media impressions. [CNBC](#) conducted a live interview with Glenn Hutchins on his partnership with CARE, while [Black Star News](#) and [Patch](#) wrote articles detailing how this initiative provided CARE Packages for families in New York City neighborhoods. Notably, Gwen Carr, mother of Eric Garner, and Reverend Al Sharpton, have also both personally handed out meals on multiple occasions.

In total, 140,000 meals were distributed – 121,750 through our Willis Street distribution location, 13,250 through our partnership with Lyft, and 5,000 hot meals through NAN’s partnership with Sylvia’s. NAN procured meals from a local vendor at a rate of \$3.15 per meal, and its physical food distribution operations were very efficient and effective, in the final weeks, distributing 3,500 meals daily in under 90 minutes.

CARE provided critical financial support for the initiative, including a financial document audit, which was triggered by a breach at NAN’s bank that resulted in a change of account numbers. The breach was reported to all required authorities, and was properly investigated. CARE’s audit verified all financial statements made by NAN to ensure transparency and accountability. Additionally, CARE conducted a final monitoring site visit on June 29, 2020.

Impact Stories

Michael J. (Manhattan, NY):

Coming to the Bronx distribution point since Day 1

“I work with Manhattan Borough for Seniors. I know a lot of people who don’t have the opportunity to come over to the distribution site, so I load up and take the meals over to them. Many have been home-bound since the city shut down, and so I have started going from location to location to pick up food and distribute to others in need. There should be more people out here like me. **This is what community looks like.** I feel good helping others.”



Pierre Q. - Harlem, NY:

Comes to NAN’s Harlem distribution point

“I have a family of three. I am 57 years old and had been working for eight years as a truck driver when the pandemic hit New York back in March. I have been out of work since the shutdown and have struggled taking care of my family. **I am so grateful to be able to pick up meals daily...**that leaves one less thing I have to worry about”.

Conclusion

Overall, the NAN-CARE partnership has brought tremendous relief and restored hope to communities that are very often overlooked. This project has been a powerful example of the opportunity for deep community partnerships in CARE’s emerging domestic programing here in the U.S. It also allowed us to initiate an important relationship with NAN that we hope to continue to explore and build around our shared mission around grassroots mobilizing and social justice. Additionally, they are graciously including CARE in their flyers and promo materials, as well as continuing to use the CARE Package bags for meal distribution through August.

On behalf of the thousands of people who benefitted from this project, CARE thanks the Hutchins Family Foundation for its generous support.

July 2020