

# Austin Guaranteed Income Pilot: Participant Goals and Uses for the Cash

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Participants' most common goals for the cash payments are to [achieve financial stability, stay healthy, support their families, and find stable housing](#).

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Most pilot participants used the funds to [pay rent and meet other basic needs](#).

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About half of participants said the cash [helped them make progress on their goals](#).

The Austin Guaranteed Income Pilot is testing how direct cash might help individuals and families with low incomes weather their unstable housing circumstances in some of the highest-poverty and most rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods in Austin, Texas. In September 2022, UpTogether and 10 community-based partners enrolled 135 households to receive \$1,000 per month for one year.

This fact sheet uses data from baseline and six-month surveys, as well as information from participant interviews, to present a snapshot of participants' goals and uses for the cash disbursements they have received so far.

## PARTICIPANT GOALS

The most common goals expressed by participants were achieving financial and housing stability, staying healthy physically and mentally, and supporting their family members, especially children. The majority of participants are using their funds to meet immediate needs such as housing or food, with the most common uses being rent, basic needs, and utilities. Just under half of the participants said the money they received has helped them work toward their short- and long-term goals. During the qualitative interviews, participants expressed that they are making plans to maintain the measure of short-term stability they have already gained and worry that they will be unable to fill the gaps in coverage for their basic needs once disbursements end in August.

## FROM REFUGEES TO AUSTINITES

Denpa\* was forced to flee his home country because of internal military campaigns against resistance fighters that killed or displaced thousands of civilians in the early 2000s. He was eventually able to resettle in the United States under refugee status in 2016 and has been living in Austin ever since. When he first arrived with his wife and two sons, he received about eight months of refugee assistance and worked a series of minimum wage jobs to cover rent and expenses for his family. Even though he now works as a nonprofit outreach coordinator, his part-time status means he is unable to receive full health care coverage or afford sufficient child care for their 2-year-old that would allow his wife to work. The guaranteed income has allowed his family to gain access to highspeed Wi-Fi, which Denpa and his wife use to take English classes and access job training programs and job search websites in hopes of securing a higher-paying full-time position before the pilot is over. He also uses the internet to volunteer advice and translation services to other refugees.

\* Name and several details have been changed to protect confidentiality.

TABLE 1

## Pilot Participant Goals Overview

Long-term goals	Share of participants
Financial stability	66%
Stay healthy physically and mentally	52%
Support my family	48%
Find stable housing	44%
Give back to others	38%
Start or continue my own business/organization	38%
Leisure time (spend time with family)	34%
Further my education	34%
Improve job or develop career options	32%
Improve transportation options	29%
Maintain stability in other areas of life	19%
No short- or long-term goals	1%

Source: Urban Institute analysis of 73 goal responses from baseline surveys completed through October 2022.

Note: Participants were able to select more than one goal, so percentages do not sum to 100.

TABLE 2

## Effectiveness of Cash Disbursements toward Participant Goals after Six Months

Did the money help meet participants' short- and long-term goals?	Share of responses at six-month survey
Yes	49%
No	39%
Prefer not to answer	6%
Somewhat	5%

Source: Urban Institute analysis of 78 short- and long-term goals responses from six-month follow-up surveys completed through March 2023.

TABLE 3

## Breakdown of Pilot Participants' Cash Disbursement Spending

Expenditure category	Average share of funds spent
Rent	58%
Basic needs	25%
Utilities	17%
Transportation	16%
Health	11%
Home improvement	6%
Child care	4%

Source: Urban Institute analysis of 75 spending responses from six-month follow-up surveys completed through March 2023.

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