Let’s GO (Guarantee Opportunity) DMV
A Double-Bottom Line Strategy to Support DC Region Hospitality Workers Guaranteed Income Pilot Project

The Need & Opportunity

COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on our region, in particular on Black and other people of color who had previously worked in the DC region’s hospitality industry but lost their jobs because of the pandemic. Many of these workers received Federal unemployment benefits that were expanded through the American Rescue Plan, but these expanded benefits expired on September 6, ending a critical lifeline for so many and creating significant stress and anxiety in them and their families.

We are seeking funders to support Let’s GO (Guarantee Opportunity) DMV, a guaranteed income (GI) pilot centering hospitality workers displaced by COVID, primarily funded by an innovative double bottom-line strategy, and making the case for government-funded GI. Given the September 6 expiration date and the looming housing crisis, we need to mobilize $1M in funds quickly to get GI payments to workers as soon as possible.

Background

In June 2020, Venorica “Vee” Tucker, a community member in if’s (formerly the Consumer Health Foundation’s) network and a worker leader for Restaurant Opportunities Centers of DC (ROC-DC), approached the foundation about investing money on behalf of a group of COVID-displaced hospitality workers who launched a GoFundMe page to raise money for rents. The idea was to invite if to invest half of the money they raised to create residual income for workers—many of whom are supporting families with children—whose jobs as banquet servers and other hospitality staff would not likely return.

Though the workers could not raise enough capital for the level of investment needed to achieve their goal, inspired by Vee’s idea, if, Greater Washington Community Foundation (GWCF), ROC-DC, Washington Regional Association of Grantmakers (WRAG), Amalgamated Bank and Amalgamated Foundation designed a 5-year double bottom-line GI pilot that will:

- Rally foundations to raise and disburse capital (a proposed $30 million) for a local impact investment (e.g., affordable housing, Black enterprise development);
- Use the interest earned on the impact investment to provide guaranteed income (GI) of $1,000 per month to 75 hospitality workers in the DC region who lost jobs due to COVID-19;
- Join forces with other advocacy efforts, such as the DC UBI Coalition driven by Mothers Outreach Network, to make the case for local government-supported GI programs.

Until the impact investment yields the interest needed to make and sustain GI payments, we are seeking $1M in grant support from local and national funders to cover the first year of payments to the workers.
Core Values and Partner Contributions

The core values for this project are radical systems change, centering and building worker power, continuous and simultaneous learning and action, solidarity and collectivism, and healing and liberatory practice. If plays the coordinating role on this project, and each partner at our table brings a commitment to these core values and contributes critical resources needed for the pilot. If, GWCF and WRAG all bring deep knowledge of the local philanthropic landscape and experience with impact investing. If has experience in community-centered power-building. WRAG has experience raising impact investing dollars from local philanthropy. GWCF has experience in raising philanthropic funds and with direct cash transfer programs. ROC-DC has experience with direct cash transfer programs and with organizing workers. Amalgamated Bank and Amalgamated Foundation augment our local knowledge and connections with national impact investment and GI expertise and experience.

For 2021, Amalgamated Foundation, If and GWCF have contributed grant funding to support program infrastructure. This includes stipends for worker organizers, Venorica Tucker and Glenda Rodriguez, who are leading advocacy with their fellow restaurant workers; grant dollars to ROC-DC, WRAG, and DC UBI Coalition to support their efforts and expertise; robust storytelling around the pilot; and popular education and strategic communications to invite the larger community into this racial equity and economic justice change strategy.

The Ask of Funders

There are three critical ways funders (e.g., foundations, individuals, corporations) can contribute to the project’s success:

- **GRANT**: Make a grant NOW to support the first year of guaranteed income payments to hospitality workers displaced by COVID.

- **INVEST**: Engage in discussions with us about providing the capital needed to generate the return that will finance years 2 through 5 of the pilot.

- **ADVOCATE**: Join the urgent movement for guaranteed income and economic justice that will ultimately benefit everyone in our region.

For more information, contact Hanh Le, Vice President of Strategic Partnerships, if, at hanh@iffdn.org.