



La
Colaborativa

2023

Annual Report



La
Colaborativa



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To our supporters,

2023 has been an inspired moment of triumphant expansion! As an organization, we served a record number of immigrants, Latinx residents, and low-income families this year while moving forward with the reconstruction and renovation of our Chelsea Survival Center. As the only Latina-led organization in Chelsea, we prioritize serving our community which is primarily made of immigrants, 80% of whom identify as Latinx. The pandemic devastated our community, but through this devastation, we dedicated ourselves to doing whatever it takes to heal and unite our community to ensure we would not be left behind.

Some of the highlights of our work over the last year --

- We helped over 300 youth find work and provided wrap around services for their needs including the expansion of our mental health program.
- Our triage team has hunkered down to provide wrap-around services for over 2,000 new arrivals to the state of Massachusetts.
- Our Economic Development Department assisted over 1,000 residents in finding job placements and expanded our childcare cooperative training.
- Our academic programs provided 500 members with ESOL classes that helped over 65% of participants obtain better jobs.
- Our food pantry has become a pillar within our beloved community of Chelsea serving 7,000 people a week.
- We stabilized 2,200 households through free legal aid and workshops that empower our community to know their rights.

Because of your help, we have been able to come so far in providing aid and justice for the people of Chelsea, and will continue to do so this upcoming year with the opening of our brand new state of art Chelsea Survival Center! We look forward to continuing our mission of serving, empowering, and uplifting the immigrant and Latinx communities and sharing this powerful work with you. Alongside your unwavering support, it is an honor to continue to foster holistic and revolutionary change in the lives of our members and beyond.

Rosalba Medina
Board President

Gladys Vega
Executive Director

Dinanyili Del Carmen Paulino,
Chief Operating Officer

Our Mission

La Colaborativa empowers Latinx immigrants to enhance the social and economic health of the community and its people; and to hold institutional decision-makers accountable to the community.

What We Do

We are a community of long time residents and recently arrived immigrants, each facing systemic barriers to economic opportunity, healthcare, nutrition, and housing. La Colaborativa was founded 35 years ago to break those barriers. Since its inception, La Colaborativa has worked alongside immigrants in the gateway cities of Greater Boston; Chelsea, East Boston, Everett, Lynn, Revere and Malden. Our hands-on grassroots approach allows us to connect deeply to the communities we serve to deliver an array of programs, initiatives, and community organizing campaigns that serve, protect, celebrate, and uplift our people.





Our Goals & Outcome

Three pillars of support drive our work: Survival, Stability, and Empowerment. To address this three step process, we expanded our organization to provide more robust services to ensure basic needs like nutritious food and safe housing.

Through this journey, we have been able to build economic development programs to serve our community and help them find good jobs that provide a living wage and benefits. We continue to work alongside 300 youth to build a culture of hope for the future through career exploration and leadership opportunities. All of this and more is provided with the dignity and respect that our immigrant community deserves.

Survival

Food Distribution

Emergency Housing

Case Management & Referrals

Legal Aid

System Navigation

Accessing healthcare, benefits, technologies, schools, courts, etc.

Stability

Education

ESOL, computer, literacy, citizenship classes

Job Training

Job readiness, OSHA, industry certification

Job Placement

Youth Employment & Development

Case Management & Referrals

Empowerment

Leadership Institutes

Focused on immigrant and women leaders

Democracy Hub

Year-round voter education, Census

Know-Your-Rights

Workers' rights, tenants' rights, immigrant rights

Policy, Change & Community Organizing

Spotlight: Triage Team

Our triage team is a community-based team of case managers who are the first line of defense for community members seeking support on a variety of issues that impact their survival, stability, and empowerment. This team is fully bilingual, multicultural, and equipped to guide our members as they navigate some of the most challenging days of their lives. Depending on the situation, triage connects members to food, housing stability supports, applications for benefits (DTA, WIC, RAFT, etc.), job training, educational opportunities, medical providers, mental health supports, insurance enrollment, youth programs, and legal referrals.

Emergency Cases: We connected 2,464 individuals to life-giving resources and services through intense triaged case management.



Josenia's Story

A major issue that many incoming migrants face upon arrival to Chelsea is the housing crisis. Around the country residents are finding it more and more difficult to secure a safe and stable place to live and keep their families safe. The housing struggle in Chelsea is no different. Here, new migrants face abuse, mistreatment, fraud, and irreparable trauma in the struggle to simply have a place to sleep at night. Rogue landlords misuse their power over knowingly undocumented communities and charge too much for illegal living capacities. This struggle is what led single mother Josenia into our offices. Josenia, fled domestic violence in her home country and was desperate to find safety in a shelter for her family. Upon arriving at La Colaborativa she was able to meet 1 on 1 with her assigned case manager, share her story and get the help that she needed.

La Colaborativa was able to help Josenia find temporary housing, where she and her children could be immediately safe. This empowered Josenia and continued on her pathway out of survival mode towards long-term stability. She was then able to engage with our economic development team to build job readiness skills and find a good job. She began thinking about her future with excitement, not fear. Today Josenia and her children are living in long-term affordable housing and she is pursuing her dream of becoming a nurse.

Rental Assistance

\$900k

Dispersed to community members
with RAFT assistance, rental
assistances and more.

300

DTA

Families have been helped by La
Colaborativa to complete DTA
applications.

**"La Colaborativa has given a
voice to so many voiceless
people"**

-Lina Tabar, Director of Citizenship & Organizing



Economic Stability *for all*

The individuals and families who immigrate here come mentally and physically prepared to hit the ground running and build the economic future they dreamed of for themselves and their families. Most of the immigrants who come to Massachusetts are highly skilled workers looking for new opportunity. The pandemic saw unprecedented job loss and an unemployment rate of 12.8% which was over three times higher than the state average.

La Colaborativa's rapid reemployment model was created as a chance to offer a cohesive and holistic pipeline for individuals to build basic work readiness skills, improve english fluency, access education and training opportunities, apply for jobs, start their own business, network with employers and get back to work quickly.

1,000+

Adults were supported with job search services like resume and interview prep and completing job applications.

The Triumph of Marciela Landaverde

The English language barrier continues to be an obstacle for our members who are ready and eager to join the job market. Maricela, a long time patron of our community, was born and raised in El Salvador. Over a decade ago, she moved to the United States and started her family here in Chelsea.

For many years she worked in different companies and positions focused on environmental services, housekeeping, and laundry services without a clear pathway. With her language challenges at the forefront of her job search journey, Marciela only had access to a small pool of economic opportunities. Hearing about our Job Search Program, she stopped by La Colabroativa.

Here, she was met by our highly focused Economic Development team, who learned about her background, assisted her in the creation of her resume and helped Maricela apply for different positions using online platforms. The members of our team walked her through the process of submitting forms in English and even helped her to curate her first ever cover letter. In a matter of weeks, Marciela received a call back from the Executive Office of Health and Human Services looking to interview her.

Our economic development team helped her to schedule and confirm her interview date, practice mock interviews, and even functioned as interpreters during the job interview.

It has been 5 months since Marciela started working at the Chelsea Veteran's Home, where she is excelling at a job that is offering great opportunities to grow, expand her horizons, with better benefits and plans for future and a dignified retirement. We are very proud of Maricela, admire her resilience, determination, and unmatched enthusiasm to accept challenges for a better quality of life and wellbeing for her and her family.

ESOL & Entrepreneurship



500

This year we provided ESOL classes, Spanish literacy classes, and computer literacy classes to over 500 members and counting. Our computer class curriculum has expanded to partner with **Tech Goes Home**. Now, upon graduation, each student will receive a free Chromebook and a hotspot with free service for one year.



¡Levantando al pueblo!

On food distribution days at our pantry, you'll find the line full of mothers and grandmothers, and those in need waiting for food they can serve their family. We can feel the sense of pride these women feel knowing that their effort will ensure food on the table for those they care for. Pride can often be hard to find in a low-income, immigrant community where just getting by is a struggle. Immigrants and non-native speakers often encounter barriers to establishing new relationships and connections, leaving them vulnerable to social and emotional loneliness. As we enter our fourth year of operating a large-scale food security and nutrition initiative, La Colaborativa has solidified the pantry as a key pillar of our organization and permanent program for our community. Our food pantry often serves as the first contact for individuals and families who are in need of multiple supports to keep them stable. Our common goal is to get food into the hands of people that need it the most. Our food distributions are a lifeline to residents struggling to feed their families and a key opportunity for connection and communication with residents.

Food distributions
take place twice
weekly and have fed
7,000 households

This year our Food and Nutrition department was able to partner with two local farms: *Gaining Grounds* in Concord, MA and *Aurelia's Garden*, in Wayland, MA. These partnerships increased the availability of locally grown organic food at our pantry.

Lifting people up!

Health Equity

La Colaborativa views food disparity as a matter of health equity. Our Food and Health departments have been structured to complement one another and build momentum towards improved health for our people; rooted in access to healthy, quality, and culturally familiar foods, nutrition education, physical activity, healthcare navigation, vaccines and basic health screenings.

and an estimated
20,000 residents
over the past year.

Health Promoters

Everyday our health promoters head into surrounding neighborhoods to conduct wellness checks, share important information about public health guidelines and rights, and identify individuals or families in need of additional support - including housing, employment, medical, or mental health support.





La Colaborativa serves as a vibrant hub for youth engagement and opportunity in the City of Chelsea. Our youth development programs serve youth aged 14-21, emphasizing community involvement, civic participation, leadership cultivation, cultural identity, and career exploration. We offer comprehensive services, including work and career readiness training, academic tutoring, college preparation, mental health support, and additional wraparound services with personalized case management.

La Colaborativa's youth-centered approach, characterized by cultural relevance and bilingual support, has consistently demonstrated its effectiveness in engaging immigrant youth and guiding them toward economic self-sufficiency.

Within our organization, youth take on leadership roles, with abundant opportunities to acquire new skills, voice their concerns on issues that impact their lives, and explore and celebrate their diverse cultural backgrounds. We also extend wraparound support to both youth and their families, fostering family stability and enabling young people to thrive as both learners and leaders.

The goal of this program is to:

- Increase job opportunities for low-income youth ages 16-24
- 90% of youth will complete the year-long program.
- 85% of completers will document a positive outcome upon exiting the program (enter employment, education, or training).
- Uplift Latinx youth through new knowledge, skills, network, and access to close opportunity and earning gaps by connecting them to a continuum of training, classes, career advising, and job placement.
- 85% will earn their secondary education credentials.
- 95% will demonstrate increased literacy proficiency and job readiness.

300

Over the last year we supported 300 youth with career exploration, offering diverse work placement for career exploration.

The Youth Carpentry Pre-Apprenticeship program continued in partnership with the local Carpenters' Union, providing 13 youths with direct training and work experience in the building trades and successfully entering 5 of the new carpenters into the union.



300

300 youth receive a weekly mental health session.
At least 40 youth are able to receive 1 on 1 counseling and case management.



Youth Cohorts 2023

- STEAM
- Riot Squad (policy and organizing)
- Arts & Culture
- Photography & Graphic Design
- Carpentry
- Community placement
- Acting
- Business
- Jr Police Academy
- Computer Science & Design
- Pre-med & Biology
- Government Law & Office
- Soccer without borders
- Education recreation & childcare
- Parks & Rec in collaboration with Chelsea Parks & Rec
- Community organizing and social justice
- Chelsea Reach



Policy & Organizing

At our core, we are grassroots community organizers. In a city that is largely made up of immigrants, people of color, and low-income residents, we pride ourselves on staying up to date on all new policy and codes that will affect our community and offer our members the education and resources needed to create a safe space for all voices to be heard and all members of our community to be involved in shaping our city. We support our members to identify and address the social and economic justice issues impacting their lives. The importance of civic engagement and the power of organizing as a united front is a cornerstone of our mission and daily work.

Our legislative agenda:

- An Act establishing basic needs assistance for Massachusetts immigrant residents (H.135/S.76)
- An Act promoting housing opportunity and mobility through eviction sealing (HOMES) (H.1690/S.956)
- An Act promoting access to counsel and housing stability in Massachusetts (H.1731/S.864)
- An Act to prevent wage theft, promote employer accountability, and enhance public enforcement (H.1868/S.1158)
- An Act to protect injured workers (H.2032/S.1165)
- An Act to end discriminatory outcomes in vocational school admissions (S.257)
- An Act banning legacy preferences in higher education (S.821)
- An Act to ensure equitable health coverage for children (S.740)
- An Act to advance health equity (H.1250/S.799)
- An Act to expand access to family, friend, and neighbor-provided childcare (H.456)

2,200

La Colaborativa helped 2,200 households stabilize through free legal aid, emergency housing placements, housing assistance application support like RAFT, utility assistance, cash assistance, housing inspections, eviction prevention, landlord mediation and informing our population of Made: Up to Code, which teaches tenants how to perform self-inspections of their homes.

\$850,000

workers rights settlement in collaboration with Greater Boston Legal Services

78%

of housing clients report continued housing stability 6 months after receiving our services.





The reality of *immigration*

When individuals and families immigrate to Chelsea from their home countries, they often face a race against time to meet the documentation requirements for obtaining employment authorization and navigate the complex immigration processes. These newcomers not only bring with them a multitude of challenges from their home countries but also carry the heavy burden of profound fear when dealing with immigration authorities, which can hinder their aspirations and dreams.

Our mission goes beyond merely helping them identify the next steps; it is about providing guidance and empowerment, enabling them to overcome these obstacles and work toward achieving their ultimate goals. We offer a welcoming and supportive environment for newcomers and are dedicated to reinforcing a place where immigrants can find orientation and assistance as they embark on their journey to obtain US citizenship. Additionally, we provide driver's license orientation, translation services, and assistance, equipping community members with the necessary tools for long-term success.

Citizenship Classes

25

25 former students have successfully achieved their goal of becoming new US citizens. Our program is meticulously designed to meet the specific needs of non-fluent English-speaking students, who are required to take the Naturalization test in English

Driver's License Assistance

300+

Thanks to the enactment of the Work and Family Mobility Act, we have facilitated the acquisition of driver's licenses for over 300 individuals. Our support includes document translation, appointment scheduling, and assistance with necessary materials, greatly enhancing their mobility and job opportunities.

Newly Arrival Clinics

40+

During these events, we've been able to provide a wide range of services, including vaccinations, assistance with school enrollment, immigration consultations, guidance on housing rights, and more. These services have had a positive impact on more than 40 families during each clinic.

Into the future *Survival Center*

Looking back on the last year here at La Colaborativa the excitement brews as we open the doors to the future. The next phase in our mission to develop a welcoming, culturally familiar hub for community life is the opening of the Chelsea Survival Center. Here, residents of Chelsea will have one central location to access lifesaving resources including a large-scale food pantry, emergency housing stabilization programs, rapid re-employment, education initiatives, and a robust health equity program to support their mental health, nutrition, and fitness needs.

None of this could've been possible without your support to our community! Not only has your generosity allowed us to expand beyond our greatest belief, it has allowed us to mobilize to serve as many people as possible. The Chelsea Survival Center will serve as the best optimal home base to serve the immediate and dire needs of the Latinx and immigrant communities here in the heart of Chelsea and the surrounding areas.

Thank you!





Board of Directors

Rosalba Medina, Board President

Detective, Domestic Violence Unit, Chelsea Police Department

Carol Resnek, Board Vice President

Teacher, Chelsea High School

Magaly Valentin, Board Clerk

Human Resources Partner, Massachusetts General Hospital

Joseph Betancourt

President, The Commonwealth Fund

Anthony Quiles

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Lee Staples

Macro Professor, Boston University School of Social Work

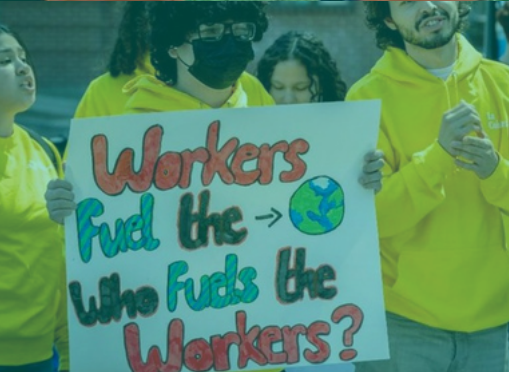
Stacey Pichardo

Criminal Bureau Deputy Chief, Massachusetts Attorney General's Office

Ellen Rovner

Anthropologist, Brandeis University Women's Studies Center







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**¡Levantando al Pueblo!
Lifting People Up!**



318 Broadway
Chelsea, MA 02150
617-889-6080

63 Sixth Street
Chelsea, MA 02150
www.la-colaborativa.org