

Community Advisory Council Meeting

Meeting Minutes



Federal Reserve
Bank of Dallas

September 23, 2024

Committee Attendees:

Carine M. Feyten, Texas Woman's University (Chair)

Awais Azhar, HousingWorks Austin

Peter Beard, Greater Houston Partnership

Rashida Dawson, United Way of Northwest Louisiana

Kathy Flanagan-Payton, Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation

Dawn Hommer, Community Action Agency of Southern New Mexico

Laura Murillo, Houston Hispanic Chamber

Bill Schlesinger, Project Vida

Kara Waddell, Child Care Associates

Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas Directors in Attendance:

Cynthia N. Colbert, Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston

Thomas J. Falk, Retired Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Kimberly-Clark Corp.

Leila H. Melendez, Workforce Solutions Borderplex

William Serrata, El Paso Community College

Federal Reserve Bank Staff in Attendance:

Lorie Logan, Morgan Ackley, Kseniya Benderskaya, Donald Bowers, Stephen Clayton, Roberto Coronado, Marycruz De Leon, Molly Hubbert-Doyle, Kassandra Huhn, Deborah Kilroe, Pia Orrenius, Emily Perlmeter, Patrick Pruneda, Jane Santa Cruz, Alison Schmidt, Elizabeth Souder, Jody Stanley, Xiaohan Zhang

Administrative:

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 PM. Bank senior leadership made introductory remarks.



Advancing Digital Inclusion Presentation:

Marycruz De Leon, Senior Outreach Advisor and Cassandra Huhn, Outreach Advisor shared a presentation on the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas' Advancing Digital Inclusion initiative. Discussion centered on lessons learned from the Advancing Digital Inclusion initiative round 1 pilot, ongoing community challenges and Advancing Digital Inclusion initiative round 2 focus areas.

Labor Market Insights:

Most council members indicated that jobs were available but were mixed on whether they were plentiful.

Many council members shared concerns regarding navigating and applying for employment without wraparound services as a barrier to enter the workforce. Many council members also shared that wraparound services are needed, especially for low-to moderate income individuals to access the labor market, but pool of available grant capital has diminished.

Council members noted that employers' job posting requirements for skills or certifications continue to be a barrier for entry level employment, but they are beginning to see a trend of employers lowering barriers such as required certifications to apply for entry level positions.

Industry Insights:

Several council members shared that the affordable housing market continues to struggle due to increases in operating and insurance costs, and housing supply in Houston is diminishing due to repeat natural disasters and increasing housing costs.

Many council members also noted that with American Rescue Act funding drying up, their communities and non-profits are unable to sustain the programs and services for low to moderate income communities.

Several council members shared that there were significant challenges for low- to moderate-income students regarding the roll out of the new FAFSA application, which resulted in additional barriers for those students to enter college.

Policy Insights:

Many council members shared challenges related to affordable housing and access to quality public education. Concerns included increased migration of families with school-aged children out of cities and into the suburbs, which could further worsen decreasing student enrollment, quality of schools, and overall funding for inner city public schools.

Several council members also indicated that while there are programs established to provide free tuition for low-to moderate-income individuals to attend post-secondary education, funding for

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wraparound services to support basic needs are needed for students to afford to stay and remain in post-secondary education.

New, Notable Observations:

A council member shared that generative AI is helping the non-profit sector with reporting and grant writing.

Council members discussed that there is a need to study the change in demand for childcare 10-20 years from now and they were interested to understand if there was a connection between research around birthrates and migration of families in Texas and future implications to the childcare industry.

A council member was hopeful to see that interest rates were declining but noted that they anticipate prices for affordable housing in the Austin area to increase due to an already limited supply and underbuilding of affordable housing.

Council members shared that there is a need to accelerate employer engagement with post-secondary training and education to improve outcomes and job placement for students.