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**Press Contact:** Karen Sodomick, Office of Communications, ksodomick@hcz.org

**Harlem Children's Zone Raises \$26 Million Towards  
National COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Efforts:  
Selected as 2020 Audacious Project Grantee**

***Together—with leading anchor institutions in Minneapolis, Oakland, Newark, Detroit, Chicago, and Atlanta—Harlem Children's Zone will supercharge efforts in Harlem and launch new initiatives in partner cities to address Black communities' most critical needs and support COVID-19 recovery.***

New York, NY July 21, 2020 — For twenty years, [Harlem Children's Zone](#), based in Harlem, NY, has been the global leader in fighting poverty and racial inequities. As the pioneer of a holistic approach—serving an entire neighborhood, comprehensively, at scale—HCZ has received national recognition for its unprecedented results, transforming how we fight poverty and racial inequities across the U.S.

The Audacious Project has committed \$26 million in funding to apply toward HCZ's goal of raising \$50 million to support the implementation of ongoing COVID-19 relief efforts in Harlem and the six U.S. cities. The newly launched William Julius Wilson Institute (WJW) at HCZ will serve as the platform for this national effort.

"Harlem Children's Zone is delivering emergency resources and services designed to address the needs of Black communities disproportionately affected by COVID-19," said Anna Verghese, Executive Director of The Audacious Project at TED. "At a time when efficacy and fast action are critical, their comprehensive approach and deep community ties are paramount to building an equitable recovery and resilient future. We are grateful to be able to support their work both in Harlem and as their model expands across the country."

“The Audacious investment serves as an incredible vote of confidence in the national leadership role of Harlem Children’s Zone and is a testament to the impactful work of our amazing partners,” said Kwame Owusu-Kesse, CEO of Harlem Children’s Zone. “Furthermore, it underscores our model’s critical element - targeting neighborhoods with comprehensive services - which unlocks the great potential in our communities and ensures a pathway to social and economic mobility.”

As the COVID-19 pandemic hit, it became clear that it was disproportionately affecting Black Americans. HCZ swiftly conceived and implemented a comprehensive multi-pronged approach to emergency response and recovery, focusing on five crucial areas to help offset the pandemic’s impact and unfathomable effects on its community.

The five critical areas included:

- Protecting the most vulnerable
- Bridging the digital divide
- Preventing learning loss
- Mitigating the mental health crisis
- Providing economic relief and recovery

“The evidence is clear and indisputable—African American communities are the most vulnerable,” said Geoffrey Canada, Founder and President of Harlem Children’s Zone. “African Americans are most readily susceptible to become infected, suffer more severe symptoms, and die at significantly higher numbers. We must do everything humanly possible to turn this data around.”

The primary effect of this work will be to inject vital resources into communities that have historically faced neglect and disinvestment. HCZ is partnering with six highly respected institutions that are located in areas with significant need, anchored in the communities they serve, and have the capacity to deliver on this effort:

1. Northside Achievement Zone in Minneapolis, Minnesota
2. Oakland Promise in Oakland, California
3. Thrive Chicago in Chicago, Illinois
4. BRICK Education Network in Newark, New Jersey
5. Purpose Built Communities in Atlanta, Georgia
6. United Way for Southeastern Michigan in Detroit, Michigan

HCZ has also engaged a set of national partners—NAACP, StriveTogether, and PolicyLink—with footprints in the seven communities and national reach and who will amplify impact through membership networks, advocacy, and mass communications. Through their direct work on-the-ground, HCZ and its partners aim to reach over 100,000 community members.

This investment will also strengthen a powerful, Black-led partnership that can pool and leverage more resources in order to drive health equity, justice, and social and economic mobility in Black communities across America in the years ahead.

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### **About Harlem Children's Zone**

Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) is breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty with on-the-ground, all-around programming that builds up opportunities for children and families to thrive in school, work and life. From early childhood, education and career programs to community outreach and wellness initiatives, HCZ opens possibilities for more people, in more places. Guided by a generation of evidence, HCZ is rooting out poverty on every front across the nation and around the world. In Central Harlem, HCZ's reach spans 100 blocks, with high-quality programs at more than 30 sites throughout the neighborhood. Through the HCZ Practitioners Institute, more than 500 United States-based community delegations and 186 international delegations — including public officials, educators and nonprofit leaders — have visited to learn about HCZ's comprehensive cradle-to-career solutions. And now, together with national partners and local collaborators, the William Julius Wilson Institute at HCZ will serve as the leading authority on and resource for place-based, people-focused strategies, support services and tools that open pathways to social and economic mobility in communities across America.

Learn more at [HCZ.org](https://www.hcz.org).

### **About The Audacious Project**

Launched in April 2018, The Audacious Project is a collaborative funding initiative that's catalyzing social impact on a grand scale. Housed at TED, the nonprofit devoted to ideas worth spreading, and with support from leading social impact advisor The Bridgespan Group, The Audacious Project convenes funders and social entrepreneurs with the goal of supporting bold solutions to the world's most urgent challenges. The Audacious Project's funding collective is made up of respected organizations and individuals in philanthropy, including the Skoll Foundation, Virgin Unite, The Valhalla Charitable Foundation, ELMA Philanthropies, and more.

The Audacious model was created to be a catalyst for social impact at a grand scale. Key to the mission is being able to pivot rapidly to support where the need is greatest in the moment. In line with that purpose, Audacious is directing funds towards several COVID-19 related solutions tailored to immediate response and recovery. The Audacious Project is proud to support Fast Grants, GiftDirectly, Harlem Children's Zone, Partners in Health, Project Echo, and World Central Kitchen.

Learn more at [AudaciousProject.org](https://audaciousproject.org).

**Additional Links:** [Kwame Owusu-Kesse's TED Talk](#)