

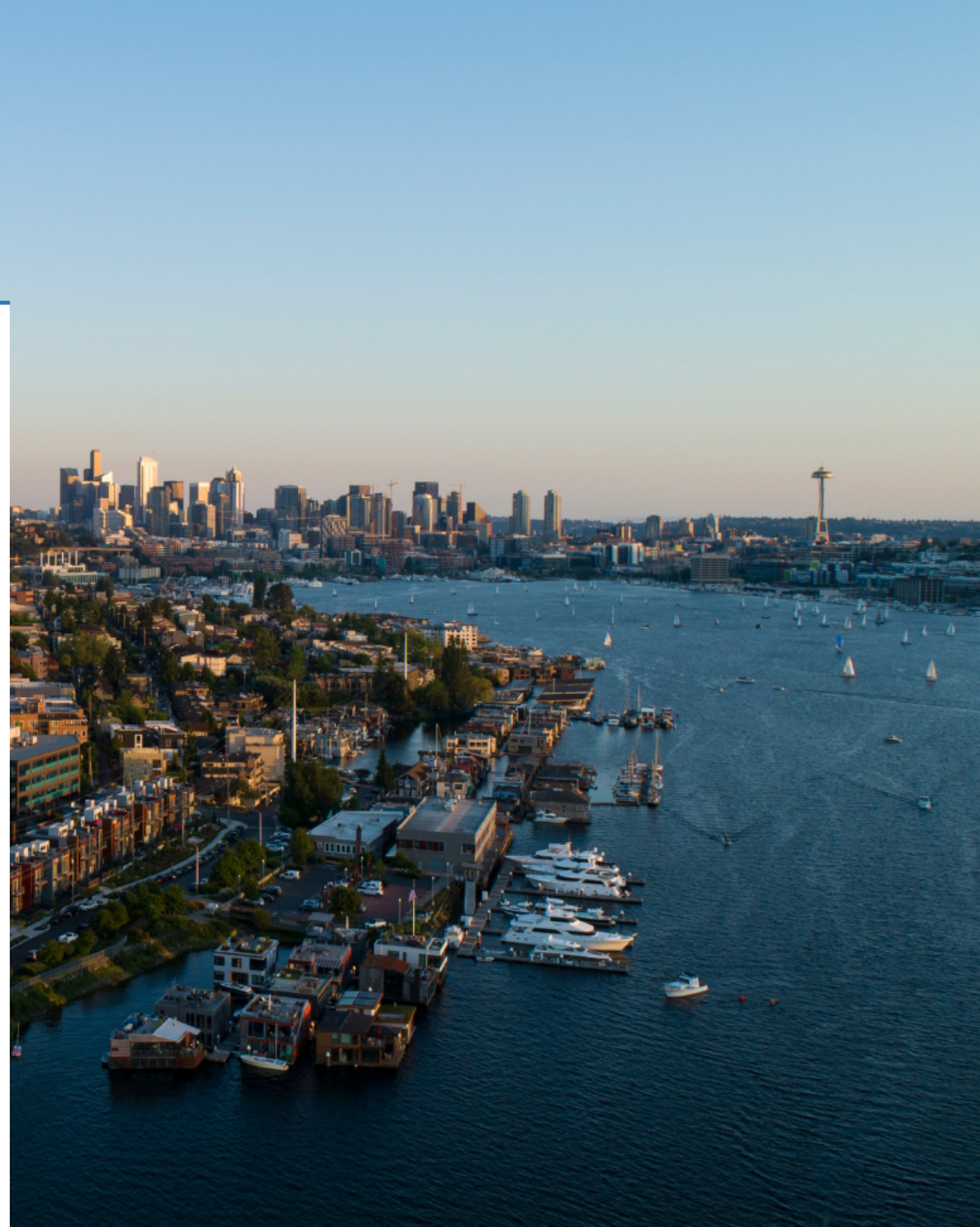


**Seattle**

**City of Seattle, Innovation and Performance**

# **CiviForm Program Evaluation: Informing Outreach Efforts**

April 2023





# Introduction

CiviForm is an easy-to-use application platform that allows residents to apply for multiple City of Seattle discounts and services at once. By making it easier to apply for City benefits, CiviForm aims to reduce barriers for residents to access services, with a focus on eliminating racial and social disparities in access to City benefits.

**CiviForm Vision:** We believe all people should have easy access to City programs that make it possible to live and thrive in Seattle and the surrounding areas.

**CiviForm Mission:** We will do this by building, implementing, and promoting a responsive, accessible, one-stop-shop for Seattleites and their trusted community organizations that reduces the time and effort needed to apply for benefits and discounts.

Between June 2021 and September 2022, there were a total of 10,189 program applicants through CiviForm. 9 City programs have partnered with CiviForm for their online applications between June 2021 and September 2022.

## Evaluation Goal

The goal of this evaluation is to assess CiviForm use by historically underserved populations in Seattle to help inform future outreach efforts and improve program accessibility. This evaluation will help support outreach efforts by providing insight into which communities are accessing benefits through CiviForm at a lower rate than others and may benefit most from more targeted engagement.

The findings from this evaluation will also highlight potential gaps in the data being collected by City programs. Identified data gaps will guide potential improvements to data collection practices for programs, which will improve our ability to measure program reach going forward.

## Research Questions

1. How do utilization rates for CiviForm differ geographically and demographically across Seattle?<sup>1</sup>
2. How do applicants differ geographically across CiviForm’s three most popular programs (Childcare Scholarship Program, Emergency Bill Assistance Program, and Utility Discount Program)?<sup>2</sup>
  - ...the low-income population?
  - ...families with children?
  - ...households struggling with income and/or affordability?
3. How do applicant distributions for those three programs compare to the distribution across Seattle of:
  - ...the low-income population?
  - ...families with children?
  - ...households struggling with income and/or affordability?
4. Where could more targeted outreach improve CiviForm utilization?
  - ...among the low-income population?
  - ...among the BIPOC population?<sup>3</sup>
  - ...in historically disadvantaged neighborhoods?
  - ...among other impacted populations?

1 Utilization rates are a percent measure that is calculated by dividing the total population of potential users by the total number of existing users.

2 These three programs have the highest numbers of applicants among programs that collect geographic data.

3 ‘BIPOC’ stands for Black, Indigenous, and people of color.

## Evaluation Scope

### Timeline

This evaluation was completed using CiviForm application data collected between June 1, 2021, when the application first launched, and September 30, 2022.

### Coverage

Since some programs accepting applications through CiviForm do not require Seattle residence for eligibility, **18%** of applicants between June 1, 2021 and September 30, 2022 lived in zip codes outside of Seattle city boundaries. This percentage is not including the **49%** of applicants who didn’t provide location information. However, the scope of the analysis is limited to applications submitted by Seattle residents.

### Data Sources

- De-identified CiviForm application data (applicant-level)
- 2021 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Data
- 2021 ACS 1-Year Data
- The Seattle Office of Planning and Community Development’s (OPCD) Race and Social Equity (RSE) Composite Index
- 2021 Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) Free or Reduced Lunch Data



# Summary of Findings

## Overall Findings

Much of Seattle's most historically underserved neighborhoods are located in Southeast and Central Seattle. As shown in this report, CiviForm engagement in these neighborhoods is higher than in other regions.

Engagement with almost all the populations included in this analysis could improve with more targeted outreach in **Northeast Seattle** (around **Northgate**, **Wedgwood**, and **Sand Point**) and in **Northwest Seattle** (around **Greenwood**, **Green Lake**, **Licton Springs**, and **Fremont**).

The table on the next page summarizes areas identified as opportunities for more targeted outreach by region and by impacted population.

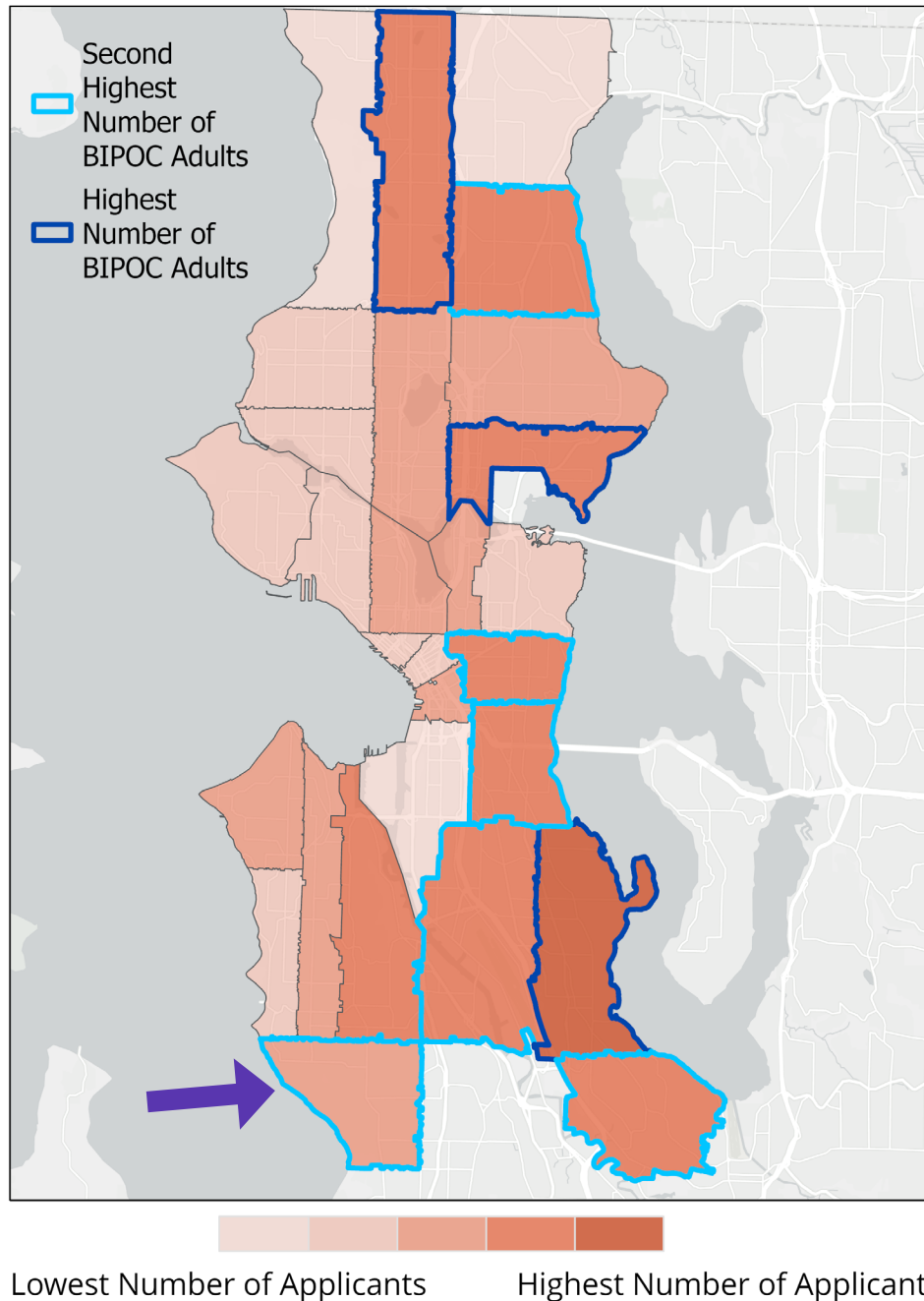
*Community liason testing CiviForm at a 2022 workshop. Source: City of Seattle*

# Opportunities for further outreach by population and neighborhood

	BIPOC Adults	Low-Income Adults	Low-Income Families with Children	Disadvantaged Neighborhoods	Non-English Speaking	Households with No Internet	Households Struggling with Income & Affordability
<b>Central Seattle</b>			X - CSP	X		X	X
<b>Northeast Seattle</b>		X	X	X		X	
<b>Northwest Seattle</b>		X	X	X		X	X
<b>Southeast Seattle</b>							X - EBA
<b>Southwest Seattle</b>	X		X	X			

Orange Xs indicate locations identified only for specific programs. "CSP" stands for Childcare Scholarship Program. "EBA" stands for Emergency Bill Assistance. See the Appendix for a chart showing all areas where targeted outreach has been recommended by neighborhood, demographic focus, and program.

## CiviForm Applicants Compared to BIPOC Population



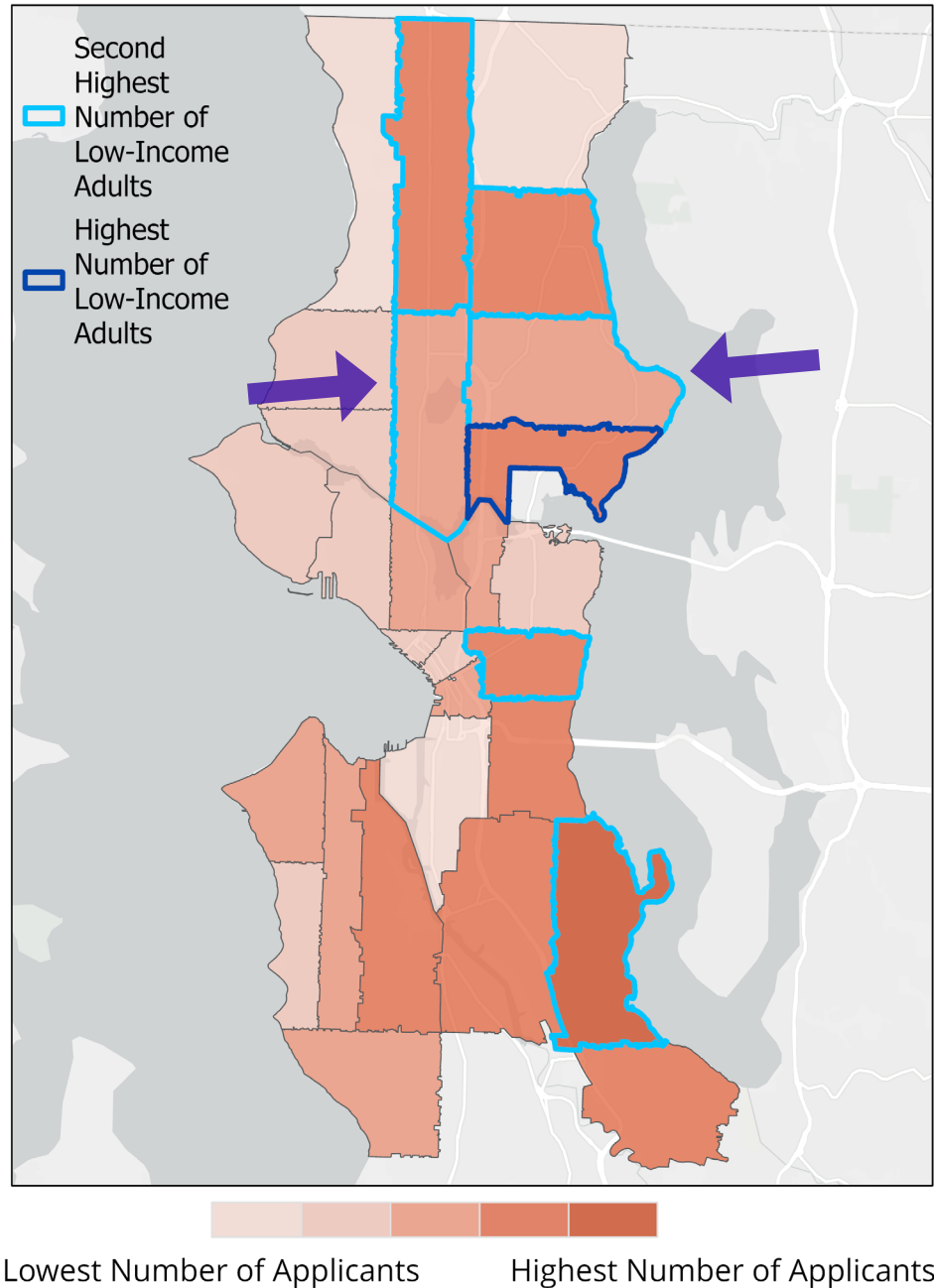
## Race/Ethnicity Analysis

The majority of CiviForm applicants who provided race/ethnicity information identified as BIPOC, and areas with higher concentrations of CiviForm applicants match very closely to areas with higher concentrations of BIPOC adults.

Although approximately 89% of applicants in Seattle provided race/ethnicity information in their applications, the demographic breakdown of applicants may differ if more programs choose to include a race/ethnicity question in their applications in the future. This would improve our ability to identify gaps for CiviForm users in Seattle by providing insight on the 11% that are unreported.

- ← The findings from this analysis indicate that more targeted outreach in **Arbor Heights** could improve BIPOC engagement with CiviForm. This could also improve engagement from low-income families with children.
- The findings from this analysis suggest that more targeted outreach to the **low-income American Indian/Alaskan Native** and **low-income White communities** could improve CiviForm engagement with these population.

## CiviForm Applicants Compared to Population of Low-Income Adults

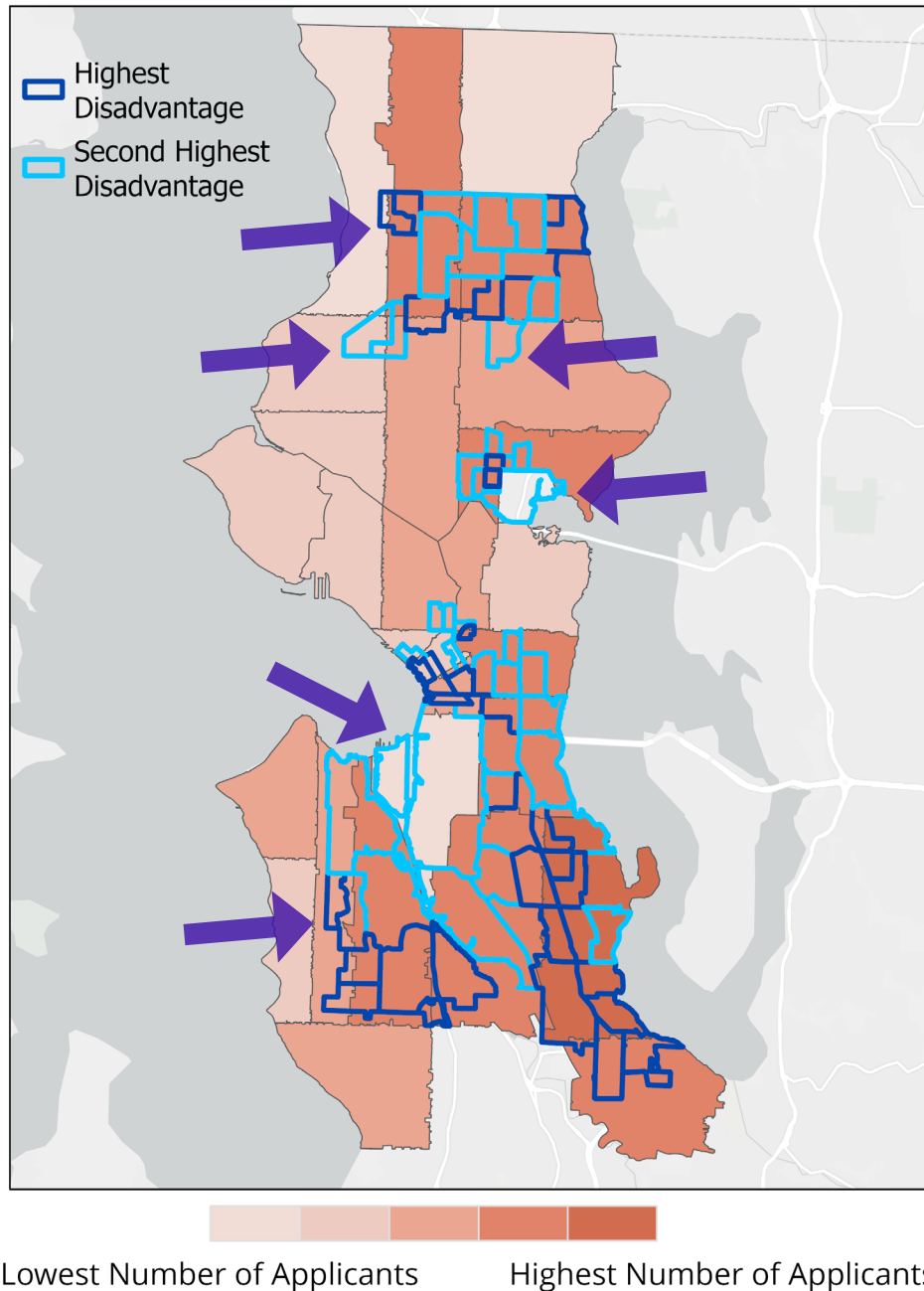


## Low-Income Analysis

Zip codes in Seattle that have high numbers of CiviForm applicants mostly overlap with zip codes that have high numbers of low-income adults and low-income children. However, there are some zip codes in Seattle that have significant low-income populations but lower CiviForm utilization rates.

- ← The findings from this analysis indicate that more targeted outreach in **Northeast Seattle** (around **Northgate, Wedgwood, Sand Point, Ravenna**, and the **U District**) and in **Northwest Seattle** (around **Haller Lake, Bitter Lake, Greenwood, Green Lake, Licton Springs**, and **Fremont**) could improve low-income **adult** engagement with CiviForm.
- The findings from this analysis also indicate that more targeted outreach in the areas listed above, in **Central Seattle** (around **Squire Park** and **Madrona**), and in **Southwest Seattle** (around **High Point, Roxhill, North Delridge**, and **Arbor Heights**) could improve low-income **families with children** engagement with CiviForm, particularly for those applying for the Childcare Scholarship Program.

## CiviForm Applicants with RSE Composite Index



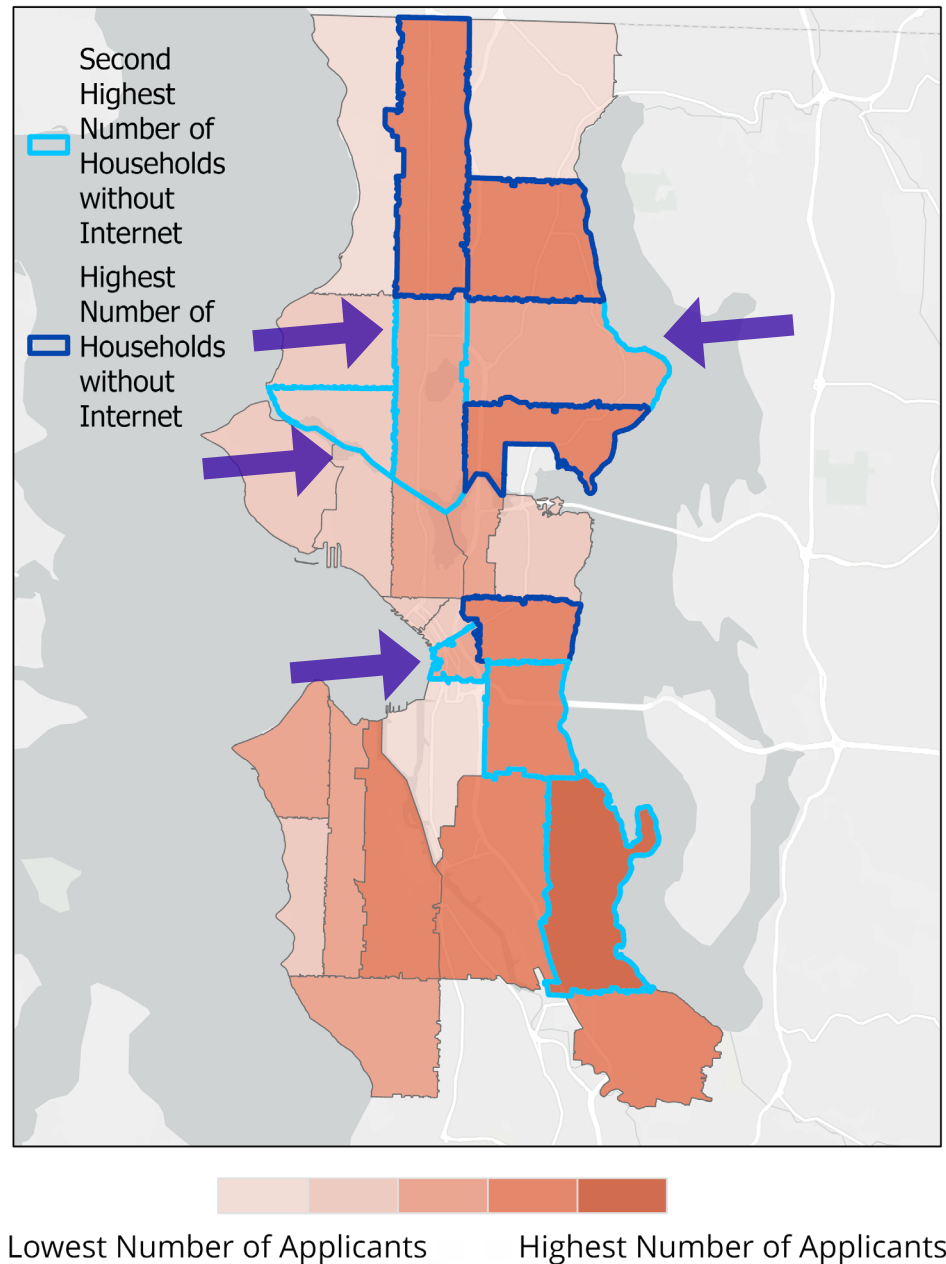
## Disadvantaged Neighborhoods Analysis

The Seattle Office of Planning and Community Development's Race and Social Equity Composite Index boundaries are somewhat consistent with findings from the low-income analysis above. However, since the index takes a number of other factors into consideration outside of race/ethnicity and low-income status (such as immigrant status, English learner status, health disadvantages, and disability), there are areas across the map that have been identified as higher disadvantage despite having lower concentrations of low-income and BIPOC residents when compared to other neighborhoods in Seattle.

- ← The findings from this analysis indicate that more targeted outreach in the **U District**, in **Northwest Seattle** (around **North Beach** and **Broadview**), in **Southwest Seattle** (around **High Point**, **North Delridge**, and **Roxhill**), and in **Central Seattle** (around **Belltown**, **Pioneer Square**, the **Chinatown-International District**, the **Downtown Core**, and **Duwamish/SODO**) could improve disadvantaged neighborhood engagement with CiviForm.
- ← Other parts of the **Northeast** (like **Northgate**) and **Northwest** (like **Greenwood** and **Licton Springs**), which are highlighted as areas for more outreach across several populations in this report, would also improve engagement with this population.



## CiviForm Applicants vs. Households with No Internet



## Other Indicators for Impacted Populations

CiviForm applicant distributions were compared to 5 different indicators for impacted populations.

The impacted population of Non-English speaking adults matched closely with the CiviForm applicant distribution in all areas. The Emergency Bill Assistance and Utility Discount program applicant distributions were compared to indicators that intersect with income and affordability (gross rent as a percent of income, unemployment, and food stamps/SNAP recipients). The Childcare Scholarship Program was compared to an indicator that intersects with families and children (free or reduced lunch recipients).<sup>4</sup> All three programs highlight similar areas for improvement as the overall CiviForm applicant distribution, with a few exceptions.

- The findings from this analysis indicate that more targeted outreach in **Central Seattle** (around **Pioneer Square**, the **Downtown Core**, the **Chinatown-International District**, **Duwamish/SODO**, **South Lake Union**, **East Queen Anne**, **Eastlake**, **Montlake**, and **Madison Park**) and in **Northwest Seattle** (around **Greenwood**, **Green Lake**, **Licton Springs**, and **Fremont**) could improve engagement with **households struggling with affordability**. Engagement with this population could also be improved in **Southeast Seattle** (around **South Park**, **Georgetown**, and **Beacon Hill**) for those applying for the **Emergency Bill Assistance Program**, specifically.
- ← The findings from this analysis also indicate that more targeted outreach in much of the same **Northwest** and **Central Seattle** neighborhoods listed above, along with some neighborhoods in **Northeast Seattle** (around **Northgate**, **Wedgwood**, and **Sand Point**) and in **Ballard** could improve engagement with **households without internet access**.

<sup>4</sup> See Low-Income Analysis section on page 6 for outreach recommendations for the Childcare Scholarship Program.



# Recommendations & Next Steps

The findings from this report show that, in many cases, the CiviForm platform has achieved high levels of engagement in areas with high populations of underserved residents. However, this evaluation also highlights where gaps in program reach exist across Seattle. These findings will support CiviForm's goal to be a responsive platform centered around community needs and will help shape future outreach efforts. Below are a few recommendations to improve how the program assesses engagement with underserved populations through data quality improvements and increased data collection.

**Demographic Data:** Although about 89% of applicants in Seattle provided race/ethnicity information in their applications, only 46% of all applicants (including applicants outside of Seattle) provided this information. A more holistic demographic breakdown of CiviForm applicants could be achieved if more programs include a race/ethnicity question in their applications in the future. This would improve our ability to identify gaps for CiviForm users.

**Geographic Data:** Since geographic address data is currently self-reported and manually entered, many data entry errors were captured in the CiviForm applicant data set. Changing the method of address data entry to something more automated could improve the quality of this data. Additionally, full address data might become more feasible to collect and analyze with a more automated option for applicants to provide this information.

*Community liason testing CiviForm at a 2022 workshop. Source: City of Seattle*

**Internet Access:** Without access to internet at home, some residents may struggle to apply for services through CiviForm. To assess the accessibility of an online platform, asking where applicants are applying from could serve as a proxy for internet access and might be helpful for targeting outreach. This information could be obtained by including a new question in applications, such as “How are you applying for this program?”

**Other Benefits:** Since CiviForm only collects data for programs that have partnered with the platform, it might be helpful to include a question in applications about what other benefits the applicant is receiving. This could also help to broaden the program’s view of services provided both inside and outside of the City, highlighting other government-provided benefits programs and services provided by community-based organizations who may be good candidates for CiviForm onboarding in the future.

**Knowledge of CiviForm:** Asking applicants how they learned about CiviForm could inform the program of which outreach methods are most successful and help the program improve future outreach efforts.

**Follow-up Data:** CiviForm applicant data allows us to see information pulled from the program applications, but there is currently no way to tell which applicants received the services for which they applied from this data. Obtaining follow-up data from City programs could greatly improve how CiviForm approaches engagement with community, highlighting where there are gaps in services received and, potentially, developing new ways to touch base with applicants and learn why they might not have received the services they requested.

## Next Steps

The CiviForm team is designing an outreach plan to increase awareness of CiviForm and Affordable Seattle among social workers and community-based organizations, who spend significant time helping clients apply for programs. This plan will incorporate findings from this report to target communities that are not yet using CiviForm at a high rate. The team plans to onboard 15 community-based organizations and 30 trusted community intermediaries onto CiviForm by the end of 2023, with a goal of assisting 500 clients with applications by the end of the year.

CiviForm is a new tool with a limited number of programs available so far. As more programs are added, data from this report will serve as a benchmark to continuously track progress in years to come.

The CiviForm team has also already made several changes in line with the recommendations listed in this report, including:

- Added application statuses to the system, so that users can track their applications and City staff can better understand outcomes
- Standardized race/ethnicity demographic questions across applications
- Added an address checker and an eligibility checker feature
- Implemented Google analytics to track site use and make improvements
- Started running targeted Google ads for programs on CiviForm

Read the full analysis from this report, including details on methodology and limitations, in the [full CiviForm Program Evaluation report](#).

## Appendix: Opportunities for further outreach by population and neighborhood

	BIPOC Adults	Low-Income Adults	Low-Income Families with Children	Disadvantaged Neighborhoods	Non-English Speaking	Households with No Internet	Households Struggling with Income & Affordability
<b>Central Seattle</b>							
Belltown				X			
Pioneer Square				X		X	X
Chinatown-International District				X		X	X
Downtown Core				X		X	X
Duwamish/SODO				X			X
South Lake Union							X
East Queen Anne							X
Eastlake							X
Montlake							X
Madison Park							X
Squire Park		X - CSP					

## Opportunities for further outreach by population and neighborhood (cont.)

	BIPOC Adults	Low-Income Adults	Low-Income Families with Children	Disadvantaged Neighborhoods	Non-English Speaking	Households with No Internet	Households Struggling with Income & Affordability
<b>Northeast Seattle</b>							
Ravenna		X					
U District		X		X			
Northgate		X	X	X		X	
Wedgwood		X	X			X	
Sand Point		X	X			X	
<b>Northwest Seattle</b>							
Haller Lake		X	X - CSP				
Bitter Lake		X	X - CSP				
Greenwood		X	X	X		X	X
Green Lake		X	X			X	X
Liction Springs		X	X	X		X	X
Fremont		X	X			X	X
North Beach				X			

# Opportunities for further outreach by population and neighborhood (cont.)

	BIPOC Adults	Low-Income Adults	Low-Income Families with Children	Disadvantaged Neighborhoods	Non-English Speaking	Households with No Internet	Households Struggling with Income & Affordability
<b>Northwest Seattle (cont.)</b>							
Broadview				X			
Ballard						X	
<b>Southeast Seattle</b>							
South Park							X - EBA
Georgetown							X - EBA
Beacon Hill							X - EBA
<b>Southwest Seattle</b>							
Arbor Heights	X		X				
High Point			X	X			
Roxhill			X	X			
North Delridge			X	X			

Orange Xs indicate locations identified only for specific programs. "CSP" stands for Childcare Scholarship Program. "EBA" stands for Emergency Bill Assistance.