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Mexicans Get NYC Education Lift From Deutsche Bank's Foundation

By Amanda Gordon - Mar 27, 2014

Deutsche Bank Americas Foundation, which distributes as much as \$12 million in grants annually, has set its sights on helping Mexicans and Mexican-Americans get ahead in New York City.

As a fast-growing population with high labor-participation rates in low-wage jobs and low school-enrollment rates, the community is at risk of breaking New York's rich history of immigrant mobility, according to the regional philanthropic arm of Germany's biggest bank. The foundation is funding five projects designed to deliver education and social services to 3,500 young learners and teenagers as it seeks to prevent permanent inequality.

The financial commitment is \$500,000 a year for three years, about half of the foundation's allocations to education. The goal is to serve as a catalyst and model to attract other funders.

"So many education issues are so large and overwhelming -- as a donor, you could feel inhibited," Gary Hattem, president of the Deutsche Bank Americas Foundation, said in a telephone interview. "In this instance, we thought we could be a good convener, donor and thought partner that would have lasting benefits for New York and Mexicans."

The endeavor started with commissioning a report from the Community Service Society, which led to a request for proposals issued 14 months ago. Out of 20 submissions, the foundation funded 10 for further development, from which the final five were selected. The funding comes with outside technical assistance and evaluation.

Literacy Focus

The projects are located in each of the five boroughs, in areas with concentrated populations of Mexicans. They're led by "neighborhood networks," coalitions of nonprofits and other institutions. Engaging parents was another criterion.

"The well-being of this new immigrant population depends on their building ties with the city's educational and community-based institutions," Mitchell L. Moss, a professor of urban policy and planning at New York University, said in an e-mail.

In Bushwick, Brooklyn, the focus is on steering out-of-school young adults to job training and education with a combination of counseling, academic support and mentoring. In Mott Haven, the Bronx, local groups will organize toddler/parent play groups, provide individualized tutoring for school-age children and work to connect families with housing, legal and employment assistance.

Science, Math

The Port Richmond, Staten Island program will focus on literacy for students in kindergarten through the third grade enrolled at P.S. 20. Its partners are Project Hospitality, Wagner College, El Centro del Immigrante and Make the Road New York, whose board members include John McMonagle of Glenview Capital Management LLC.

Make the Road New York, whose policy advocacy and direct services focus on low-income and immigrant populations, is also a partner on a new high school in Queens. It joins with the City University of New York and the International Network for Public Schools, whose board chairman is Oliver Frankel, a managing director at Goldman Sachs Group Inc.

Opening later this year, the school will serve Elmhurst and Jackson Heights, catering to students who have been out of school, with the goal of high school completion and the earning of college credit. Teachers will be trained to work with English language learners, and the curriculum will have a science, technology, engineering and math focus. Parent classes will include English as a second language and computer literacy.

Population Surge

"Deutsche Bank brought us together, they went through a long period of listening, they came to our sites and talked to folks prior to this project being launched," said Javier Valdes, co-executive director of Make the Road New York, in a telephone interview. "They were very diligent."

The number of individuals who identified as Mexican in New York in 2010 was 324,349, an increase of 472 percent since 1990, according to data collected from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey.

"The Mexican community is going to be one of the most powerful constituencies in the city in the next decade, so it's to our benefit for Mexicans to be educated and succeeding," Valdes said, noting the election in November of Carlos Menchaca, the first Mexican-American to serve on the New York City Council and now chairman of the council's immigration committee.

By several metrics, young Mexicans underperform other nationalities in New York's Latino population. Fourteen percent of Mexican youth in New York do not speak English, compared to 3 percent of Dominican youth. Thirty-seven percent of Mexicans ages 16 to 24 are enrolled in school, compared to 59 percent of Dominicans in the same group. Fifty-nine percent of Mexican male youth are employed and not in school.

'Invisible Population'

"Who are the dishwashers, the delivery guys? Who's selling flowers on the street corner?" said Hattem. "You get the sense that this is a hard-working population New York relies on, and in some ways it's an invisible population."

At Deutsche Bank, which is headquartered in [Frankfurt](#), the Anchoring Achievement in Mexican Communities Initiative is being used to engage employees and clients in both New York and [Mexico](#). "The idea is to build social solidarity," Hattem said.

Hattem has led the foundation for 12 years and has also spent 24 years running Deutsche Bank's global social investments group, which has a \$1 billion portfolio ranging from clean heat financing to loans for the development of affordable housing to microfinancing.

The foundation devotes 10 percent of its funding to education, another 10 percent to the arts, and most of the rest to community development. Jacques Brand, the chief executive officer of the company's North American unit, is chairman of the foundation's board.

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