

## Simón Bolívar Foundation Refutes False Grant Allegation

Internal audit identified an erroneous disclosure, terminated the grant, recovered unspent funds and confirmed remaining dollars supported meals for Venezuelan families



**HOUSTON, June 16, 2026** — The Simón Bolívar Foundation wishes to set the record straight regarding a false allegation that it paid \$75,000 to the family of Orlando Viera-Blanco, then ambassador to Canada for the Juan Guaidó Interim Government of Venezuela, and that those funds were used for a family wedding. The allegation is false and, furthermore, the amount in question is incorrect. The Foundation did not make any payment to the Viera-Blanco family, did not fund a wedding and found no evidence that any individual improperly benefited from the grant.

The facts are straightforward and a detailed analysis is available [here](#). In 2020, the Foundation awarded a \$50,000 grant to the American Venezuelan Engagement Foundation Inc. (AVEF), a registered U.S. charity, to support a food-relief program for malnourished Venezuelans. The grant was awarded through the Foundation’s open, impartial COVID-19 Small Grants Program and was paid directly to the organization and not to an individual.

Months after the grant was awarded, a routine internal audit identified erroneous information in AVEF’s eligibility questionnaire. AVEF’s president had not disclosed her marital relationship with Mr. Viera-Blanco, which would have disqualified the organization from receiving the grant. However, the Foundation’s assessment was that AVEF made an honest misinterpretation of the questions, not an attempt to conceal the relationship.

As a result, the Foundation’s Board unanimously voted to terminate the grant agreement and recover the portion of the \$50,000 grant that had not already been spent or committed to the charitable program. The Foundation confirmed that roughly \$22,000, or a little under half of the

grant, was used for the Feeding Smiles food-relief program, delivering more than 368,000 meals to hungry families across Venezuela, and the remaining \$28,000 was returned to the Foundation.

“The record is clear: this was not a payment to an individual or family, and it did not fund a wedding,” said the Foundation. “Our oversight process identified an inaccurate disclosure, the grant was terminated, unspent funds were recovered, and the funds already used were verified as used for supporting meals for families in need.”

The Foundation also strengthened its safeguards following the review by clarifying eligibility criteria for future grants involving any director, officer or employee who is employed by, or related to someone employed by, CITGO, PDVSA or their affiliates, or the government of Venezuela in a broader sense.

**About the Simón Bolívar Foundation:**

The Simón Bolívar Foundation is a 501(c)(3) private charitable foundation associated with CITGO Petroleum Corporation. The Foundation operates as its own legal entity, separate from CITGO and the Venezuelan government, reports its activities and expenditures to the Internal Revenue Service and submits to external audits.

To learn more about the Foundation’s charitable work, please visit [www.simonbolivarfoundation.org](http://www.simonbolivarfoundation.org).