



# City of Bellevue

## MEMORANDUM

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**DATE:** August 12, 2020

**TO:** Human Services Commission Members

**FROM:** Alex O'Reilly, Human Services Manager, 425-452-2824  
Human Services Division  
Parks & Community Services Department

### **Agenda Item for August 18, 2020 Commission Meeting**

### **Discussion: Endorsement of CARES ACT Funding Recommendations for Food Scarcity**

#### **Background**

On March 27, 2020, the federal government passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act ("CARES Act"). The CARES Act established the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) which allocated a total of \$150 billion to state and local governments. The Washington State Department of Commerce administers CRF dollars to local governments in the state. Under the CARES Act, these funds may be used to cover costs that 1) are necessary expenditures incurred due to the public health emergency with respect to COVID-19, and 2) are not accounted for in the budget most recently approved as of March 27, 2020. Under the requirements set by the Department of Commerce, funds may only be used for costs incurred during the period of March 1, 2020 through October 31, 2020. All final requests for reimbursement must be received by the Department of Commerce no later than November 15, 2020. The State of Washington was allocated approximately \$2.9 billion in CARES Act funds, \$785 million of which was assigned to eligible units of local government with populations greater than 500,000. On April 27, 2020, Governor Inslee set aside \$300 million for local jurisdictions within the State of Washington with populations under 500,000. Based on the funding formula developed by the Office of Financial Management, the City of Bellevue was allocated \$4,359,000 in CARES Act funds.

To access the funds, the City must enter into an interagency agreement with the Washington State Department of Commerce. The intent of these funds is to help jurisdictions cover the immediate impacts of the COVID-19 emergency – both direct costs to the jurisdictions and costs to their communities. Since the passage of the CARES Act, the Treasury Department has issued additional guidance that expands the definition of eligible reimbursable expenses to allow for services that were budgeted yet have been substantially reallocated to COVID-19 response such as police, fire, and emergency operations. The City will seek reimbursement for costs associated with the COVID-19 response of \$3.8 million. These costs include the public health and safety efforts to mitigate the impact of COVID-19.

With the total grant award of \$4.3 million, an additional \$500,000 is available for human services costs associated with the COVID-19 response. While the impacts of COVID-19 have generated a wide variety of needs, community members and human service agencies are identifying the needs tied to basic survival as the most urgent at this time: food and housing. If these critical needs are not immediately addressed, an

increasing number of children and families may go without food. At their August 3, 2020 meeting, the Bellevue City Council voted to approve \$500,000 for Human Services Needs; \$300,000 of that total will be allocated to food scarcity from the total grant award for COVID-19 response.

Food scarcity has a disproportionate impact on several specific populations: low-income students and their families, older adults and low-income adults. As the pandemic continues and people are either still unemployed or just getting back to work, food scarcity has increased for these populations as many need to prioritize limited funds to pay for rent to keep a roof over their heads rather than buy food. A number of those accessing food programs are refugees and immigrants who may not be documented and fear going out in the community for services where there are large groups of people or where they perceive they may be asked for identification. For some there is an element of shame to ask for help.

#### Staff Recommendations for the agencies to be funded with the CARES Act Allocation

Human Services staff participate in a number of community meetings in which needs are discussed. The following data has been obtained from providers and community members who meet weekly for the Bellevue Nourishing Network virtual meeting and forms the basis for the staff recommendations for the agencies recommended below for grants to address food scarcity.

#### Bellevue School District

Food scarcity and supplies for basic needs (i.e. hygiene, cleaning, etc.) for some families has been an ongoing issue reported by the Bellevue School District. During the 2019-2020 school year, 17 percent of students qualified for the free and reduced lunch program and many participated in programs that provide food in backpacks for students on weekends and school holidays. Family Connection Centers (FCCs) located in the Bellevue School District have traditionally maintained small food pantries during the school year to supplement food needs for families but since the pandemic closed schools in March, the demand for food, hygiene supplies and cleaning supplies has increased enormously. Between March 16 and June 19, the number of families coming to the FCCs for this kind of assistance increased from roughly 250/week to about 600-650/week. The school district does not maintain a budget to supply food in the FCCs. The small grant that the FCCs have used to purchase supplies is soon to be depleted. FCCs conduct food drives but this option produces inconsistent results, and is insufficient to meet the demand. A grant will enable FCCs to purchase large supplies of shelf stable food that can be stored in their warehouse for use over the next several months. A portion of the funds will be used to provide vouchers to families to use at a series of food trucks that are stationed on various days on the grounds of local churches. The voucher allows the family to get a hot meal with the option of food relative to their culture, and also allows the food truck operator to continue to run his business. More information about the Mobile Meal Alliance can be found on this link to the Nourishing Networks website: <http://www.nourishingnetworks.net/>

#### Hopelink Food Bank and Renewal Food Bank

Food banks in Bellevue report steady or increased numbers seeking food assistance, with some new participants who have never had to ask for help before. For example, the Bellevue Hopelink Food Bank distributed 66 percent more food in the second quarter of 2020 compared to the same quarter last year. Hopelink staff report that at the Bellevue site, they distribute 900 boxes of food each week, which costs about \$6,000 per week, or \$24,000 per month. This far exceeds their typical budget previous to the onset of the pandemic. A grant to Hopelink will allow them to purchase large quantities of food, especially protein and fresh produce. Recently, Hopelink received a grant to purchase several large refrigerators so that they will be able to purchase items in bulk and keep them fresh.

Renewal Food Bank has reported a smaller increase in need, but recently, their source of fresh produce from Food Lifeline was shut off for two weeks as that organization had to close due to a staff person testing positive for the coronavirus. Renewal will use this grant for these contingencies to insure they can always offer a variety of foods to their consumers.

### Salvation Army Meal Program

The Salvation Army in Bellevue has typically offered a hot meal program to anyone in the community, onsite Monday through Fridays serving about 70 people. With the onset of the pandemic, the numbers have surged to about 230-270 per day. Salvation Army staff report that the funds to purchase the food for the dinners is not budgeted so they rely on donations from individuals or faith communities. The program model has been modified to include a snack bag, a beverage and a container with a hot meal that is handed to people to take with them to comply with social distancing. These funds will ensure that the program can purchase food that their staff can prepare in the event they do not have a dinner sponsored by an outside donor.

The recommendations listed below have been vetted with a representative from each agency who have verified the need and their ability to spend the grant within the parameters of the grant.

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Program</b>	<b>Recommended Grant Amount</b>
Bellevue School District	Family Connections Center	\$160,000
Hopelink	Bellevue Food Bank	\$127,000
Salvation Army	Hot Meal Program	\$10,000
Renewal	Food Bank	\$ 3,000
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$300,000</b>

### Action

Staff request that Commissioners vote to endorse these funding amounts to the agencies described.

### Next Steps

If endorsed, staff will contact these agencies and begin the contracting process which will include a scope of work and a schedule by which the agency will be required to submit a monthly report including number of clients served, outputs (i.e. number of meals provided, boxes of food distributed which will be slightly different for each organization), and the amount of the grant that has been spent. The grant must be spent by 12/31/20.