



MEMORANDUM

TO: Whatcom County Council

THROUGH: Tyler Schroeder, County Executive

FROM: Jed Holmes, Community Outreach Facilitator

RE: Commerce Funding for Refugee Stabilization Grants

DATE: November 27, 2023

In 2022, Whatcom County received a grant from the State Department of Commerce to provide stabilization services for newly arrived refugees from the conflict in Ukraine. The County subcontracted with World Relief Western Washington, which provided services to 57 households (200+ individuals). This assistance was primarily provided in the form of rental assistance and the entire \$150,000 grant was fully expended by May 2023.

During the 2023 legislative session, the State Legislature allocated \$4.5 million in FY2024 and \$4.5 in FY2025 for grants to counties to stabilize newly arriving refugees, including those fleeing conflicts in Afghanistan and Ukraine.

Recognizing the continued need to provide stabilization services to newly arriving refugees, the County Executive's Office submitted an application to Commerce and was awarded \$150,000 for each of the state fiscal years. It is important to note that this not a resettlement program but rather a stop-gap measure to address the immediate needs of refugees who have already arrived. The grant contract provides the following parameters:

Assistance can include but is not limited to paying for rent and housing needs, transportation, healthcare, food, employment barrier-removal, clothing and other essential items or services that the applicant deems necessary to help stabilize the refugees.

The funds must be targeted to reach households with the highest need. Funding for households without housing, food, clothing and basic essentials will be prioritized before others.

Whatcom County intends to continue partnering with World Relief Western Washington (WRWW) to deliver services under this grant. The subgrantee will maintain intake documents that include justification of client or family qualification for these services. If you have any questions, please contact Jed Holmes (jholmes@co.whatcom.wa.us).