

# MEMO:

TO: Whatcom County Council

FROM: Satpal Sidhu, County Executive

DATE: July 21, 2022

RE: **Commerce Funding for Refugee Stabilization Grants**

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## **Background.**

During the 2022 legislative session, through bi-partisan efforts, nearly \$20 million was set aside in the State budget for aid to Ukrainian refugees. This included \$2,223,000 for FY 2023 for grants to counties to stabilize newly arriving refugees from the 2022 Ukraine Russia conflict.

Prior to applying for the grant, the County Executive's Office consulted with World Relief Western Washington to gauge the need in Whatcom County. The organization estimated (and later confirmed) that approximately 40 households (~110 individuals) have recently arrived in Whatcom County from Ukraine due to the conflict.

While these refugees are "housed" in the sense of having a roof over their heads, their situations are precarious and, in many cases, unsustainable. There are reports of a dozen or more people living under one roof, families living in trailers out in the woods, in garages, etc.

## **Commerce grant.**

After assessing the need, the County Executive's Office submitted an application for FY 2023 funds and subsequently was awarded \$250,000. The funds are to be used for stabilizing newly arriving refugees. 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 aid will be distributed as direct monetary assistance. The grant contract provides the following parameters:

Assistance can include but is not limited to paying for rent and housing needs, transportation, healthcare needs, employment needs, a telephone or computer, school needs (like supplies or books) food, clothing and other essential items or services that the Grantee deems necessary to help stabilize the Refugees.

Upon budget and contract approval, the Administration intends to identify a subcontractor to distribute the funds in accordance with our contract procurement procedures.

Refugees from the Ukrainian conflict continue to arrive, and we anticipate that the number of refugees will be higher than the current estimate of 40 households. Prior to launching the program, there will be a reassessment of the need and aid distribution plan. A preliminary outline is as follows.

# Households	Monthly Assistance	# of months	Staff and Admin	Program Total
45	\$1200	4	\$34,000	\$250,000

The final parameters will be more nuanced and vary according to household size and assessed level of need. After a four-month period, the newly arrived refugees may be able to either connect with other state and federal assistance or find employment opportunities, if their immigration status allows.

The Commerce grant will be managed by the Executive's Office. If you have any questions, please contact Jed Holmes ([jholmes@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:jholmes@co.whatcom.wa.us)).