



MEMO:

TO: Whatcom County Council
FROM: Satpal Sidhu, County Executive
DATE: November 15, 2022
RE: **Commerce Funding for Refugee Stabilization Grant**

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.

The County Executive's Office consulted with World Relief Western Washington to gauge the need in Whatcom County. The organization has confirmed that approximately 60 households (~180 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.

The County Executive's Office applied for FY 2023 funds and subsequently was awarded \$250,000. Since that award and after closer assessment of the need in this county relative to the need in other counties the grant award was reduced to \$150,000. The County will contract with World Relief Western Washington to facilitate the distribution of those funds to households following all eligibility guidelines. The contractor will also ensure all funding requirements are fulfilled.

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.

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).