



MEMORANDUM

Date: October 11, 2021

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To: Snohomish County Councilmembers

From: Lacey Harper, Executive Director, Executive Office

Re: **REQUEST TO REAPPROPRIATE FUNDS**

Request

The Executive Office and Office of Social Justice are requesting the ability to reappropriate \$250,000 of General Fund dollars in the Non-Departmental Fund to address an urgent service need.

Originally, \$150,000 was appropriated in the 2021 budget for social justice initiatives developed between the County Council and Executive Office and an additional \$100,000 was appropriated for an underserved community analysis.

The Executive Office and Office of Social Justice, in collaboration with the Human Services Department, requests that these funds be reappropriated to support local efforts to resettle Afghan refugees who began arriving in Snohomish County on or after July 31, 2021.

Background

On April 14, 2021 President Biden announced the withdrawal of remaining U.S. troops in Afghanistan by September 11, 2021. By May 2021, the Taliban began to gain control in the northern regions, and in July 2021 American troops left the Bagram Airfield.

In early August 2021, the Taliban seized control of key cities and provinces within only a matter of days. The only major city that was not under the Taliban's control was Kabul. President Ghani fled the country, the Afghan government collapsed, and Kabul came under the Taliban's control on August 15, 2021.

The area surrounding Hamid Karzai International Airport erupted into chaos as thousands of Afghans desperately attempted to leave the country.

Immediately following these events, Afghans began arriving in the United States. Additionally, over the coming year, thousands of Afghans are expected to arrive. Many of the new arrivals include people who assisted the U.S. military as translators, security forces, intelligence experts, and facilitators as well as teachers, human rights activists, journalists, and other professional occupations. Without the ability to leave Afghanistan, their lives and the lives of their families were at great risk.

Newly arrived Afghans are entering the United States under four immigration statuses. A description of these statuses and anticipated number of arrivals as of early September are included below. Please note that since the Governor's Office provided these estimates, various resettlement agencies have reported that the number of anticipated arrivals has increased.

- **Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs)** – This is available to Afghans who worked for the U.S. government or government contractors for at least one year. As of early September, 7,000 people had arrived in the US and 20,000 were projected to arrive.
- **Refugees (Priority 1, Priority 2)** – People with this status designation must be processed outside of Afghanistan and in a second country. This includes individuals who worked for the U.S. government or government contractors for less than one year, or who worked for U.S.-funded program or projects and meet the credible fear criteria. There were no projections available as of early September.
- **SQ/SI Parolee** – This status is reserved for individuals that are arriving with a pending SIV application. There were no projections available as of early September.
- **Humanitarian Parolee** – This status is reserved for individuals that are arriving to the U.S. without a SIV application pending but are likely eligible to apply for asylum. As of early September, there were projections that 50,000 people would enter the country under this status.

As of September 1, 2021, we have been notified by local resettlement agencies that they estimate Snohomish County will receive at least 1,200 Afghan refugees in the coming months. Individuals and families have been steadily arriving in Snohomish County since August.

Currently, individuals and families are arriving with little to no resources available to them. Many of the individuals and families who have arrived lack access to shelter, food, clothing, assistance with their immigration process, and employment. Snohomish County and the local agencies we partner with have been working diligently to meet these needs but have not yet received assistance from the state or federal governments.

To prevent newly arrived Afghans from entering homelessness in Snohomish County upon their arrival, the Executive Office and Human Services Department began reaching out to local organizations to ask how we might collaborate to fill immediate basic needs in mid-August. Refugee and Immigrant Services Northwest, Volunteers of America Western Washington, Medical Teams International, Workforce Snohomish, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Snohomish Health District, Sea Mar Family Medicine, Community Health Centers, City of Everett, Snohomish County Sheriff's Office, and Edmonds College all responded with enthusiastic support in filling the needs of arriving Afghan people.

Together, we opened a welcoming center to connect Afghan refugees to services, resources, and benefits earlier this month. Through the center, Afghan refugees can access help with housing, employment, education, basic immunizations (including COVID-19 vaccines), food, dental services,

clothing, hot meals, immigration services, and direct access to 2-1-1. Jurisdictions and resettlement agencies around the region have reached out and visited the center to learn more about how we've been able to establish the center so quickly.

Many of the new arrivals have not been eligible for many federal and state government services, although that situation is in the process of being corrected. In the interim, to provide this level of service for up to one year, we are requesting the reappropriation of the \$250,000 identified above for the following:

- This amount will fund limited-term rapid rehousing and associated resettlement services delivered by Volunteers of America Western Washington and Refugee and Immigrants Services Northwest to ensure the new arrivals are safely housed during the initial resettlement period. In addition to rental assistance and move-in costs, these funds may include the provision of other basic needs that may arise such as copays for medical and behavioral health treatment, transportation, and food.