



**TO:** Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager  
**FROM:** Council Member Robert Thoms  
**COPY:** City Council and City Clerk  
**SUBJECT:** **Resolution - Building program capacity to welcome immigrants and refugees to Tacoma and Pierce County – September 28, 2021**  
**DATE:** 9/23/2021

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**SUMMARY & PURPOSE:**

A resolution allocating \$25,000 in Council Contingency Funding to assist Lutheran Community Services Northwest in building program capacity to resettle Afghan immigrants and refugees to Tacoma and Pierce County.  
[Council Member Robert Thoms]

**COUNCIL SPONSORS:**

Council Members John Hines, Conor McCarthy, and Robert Thoms

**BACKGROUND:**

**This Council Member's Recommendation is Based On:**

With U.S. forces pulling out of Afghanistan, over a hundred thousand people evacuated from the country for their own safety. These individuals now need to immigrate to other countries as immigrants and refugees. In 2015, with the passage of Resolution 39116, the City of Tacoma dedicated itself to being a Welcoming City, stating we would create a more welcoming, immigrant friendly community to maximize opportunities for economic growth and cultural vitality. Tacoma is poised to welcome Afghans to our community.

The Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) reported that 293 Afghans arrived in Washington state in August of 2021. While it is unknown how many total Afghan immigrants and refugees will relocate to Washington, DSHS anticipates the U.S. will need to resettle nearly 60,000 individuals. In the past two years, Washington has welcomed over 8% of Afghan arrivals to the U.S. through the SIV program. Based on our local resettlement agencies' capacity to provide services and historic programing, we anticipate a significant number of Afghan immigrants and refugees will be relocated here.

Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM), is a premiere military installation in our community and a critical projection platform serving Operation Enduring Freedom Mission (OEF) since its inception. Few communities have deployed more service members for OEF than JBLM. The Tacoma community supports these Afghans who ensured our family members returned safely home. Tens of thousands from Tacoma's community have been deployed to Afghanistan and have much gratitude and concern for their Afghan translators. We want to help them secure a place to call home. Some JBLM service members with connections to Afghans and their families are asking for these families to be relocated to Tacoma so that they can help support them as they settle in the U.S.

Lutheran Community Services Northwest (LCS Northwest) is one of the Washington state agencies that receives funding from the federal government to support refugees seeking to resettle in the US. They are currently resettling immigrants and refugees from Afghanistan in Washington state. As of September 9, they had resettled 6 individuals in Tacoma and 32 individuals to live near their families in South King County. They anticipate the flow of arrivals to pick up in mid-September and will prioritize resettling individuals in Tacoma.



Throughout decades, LCS Northwest has welcomed and resettled over 45,000 refugees in the Northwest. In the past 3 years, the nonprofit organization has helped almost 700 Afghans with Special Immigrant visas (SIVs) resettle, in addition to refugees from other countries. SIVs are provided to Afghan nationals, including those who worked as allies with the United States Armed Forces as translators and interpreters for at least twelve months, and have a written recommendation from a commanding officer. LCS Northwest offers housing navigation and other basic needs support to help these families and allies with their urgent needs. Their staff work quickly to surround each SIV with basic needs like housing, food, clothing, transportation, and monetary assistance. LCS Northwest is receiving an overwhelming number of requests for assistance from community members hoping to bring Afghan family members to safety.

At the start of the pandemic, LCS Northwest lost financial resources and had to reduce staffing. This has added a barrier to their work as their organization rapidly scales up to meet the needs of and influx of Afghan immigrants and refugees, and is responsive to our broader community eager to offer their support.

This funding will be used to assist with LCS Northwest's program capacity to better serve those they will resettle in Tacoma and Pierce County. It will cover the cost of a part time staffer working 20 hours a week for six to eight months. During this time, LCS Northwest anticipate a high flow of refugees and this role (Office Assistant) is considered an integral role to support the daily operations of the program. This role will include the following tasks: assist management and staff by performing a variety of administrative and clerical support duties, such as meeting planning, preparing complex documents, composing correspondence and coordinating activities; collect and compile data, prepare standard and custom reports; understand policies and procedures to complete routine tasks; and be a knowledge source for clients, coworkers, and others.

#### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ (CUSTOMER RESEARCH):**

Since this international crises began, Council Member Thoms has met with congressional offices, Pierce County officials, LCS Northwest, Tacoma Community House, Tacoma's Commission on Immigrant and Refugee Affairs, and other stakeholders. CM Thoms has asked how the Tacoma can act on its welcoming City status to support immigrants and refugees relocating to the City of Tacoma. In these meetings, a number of needs were identified. The most urgent was to increase staff capacity for the agency responsible for relocating Afghan immigrant and refugees to Tacoma. This funding request is a response to the needs identified by direct-service providers.

#### **2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

##### **Equity and Accessibility:**

Afghan immigrants and refugees were forced to leave their home country, leaving behind most possessions, in the hope of a new home where they could be safe. Tacoma is a Welcoming City that is willing to step up and support these individuals. It is also one of the more cost effective locations in the Pacific Northwest that still offers robust resources for immigrants and refugees. LCS Northwest is reporting an immense outpouring of support and civic engagement from the Tacoma community. However, staff limitations are creating road blocks and log jams, slowing down volunteer intake and coordination. This funding will increase civic engagement and will allow residents to have a positive impact in their community. Building program capacity will also free up staff time to focus on the needs of immigrants and refugees, including connecting them to job training, housing options, and health care

##### **Economy/Workforce: Equity Index Score: Moderate Opportunity**

Increase the percentage of people relocating to the city and affordability of housing compared to neighboring jurisdictions.



**Civic Engagement:** *Equity Index Score:* Moderate Opportunity

Increase the number of residents who participate civically through volunteering and voting.

Increase the percentage of residents who believe they are able to have a positive impact on the community and express trust in the public institutions in Tacoma.

**Livability:** *Equity Index Score:* Moderate Opportunity

Improve health outcomes and reduce disparities, in alignment with the community health needs assessment and CHIP, for all Tacoma residents

Improve access and proximity by residents to diverse income levels and race/ethnicity to community facilities, services, infrastructure, and employment.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

Alternative	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts
1. Take no action	Retains funds and staff time for other priorities	Does not contribute to welcoming Afghan immigrants and refugees to Tacoma
2. Fund a different priority area, such as housing or health care access	Provides other needed resources to immigrants and refugees coming to Tacoma	Does not meet the need direct-service providers identified as the most pressing issue
3. Focus only on non-financial support, such as lobbying for federal assistance	Retains funds for other priorities, supports systemic solutions	Longer-term solution that doesn't meet immediate needs in the community, we can do non-financial support while also providing financial support

**EVALUATIONS AND FOLLOW UP:**

This funding is to be utilized by the end of 2022, to pay for a part time staff position for 20 hours a week for 6-8 months. Upon the completion of this funding, LCS northwest should be invited to provide an update to the City Council in person or in writing to share information on their work relocating Afghan immigrants and refugees to Tacoma and the surrounding region. To strengthen the City's efforts to be a welcoming city, LCS Northwest should be asked to provide information on how they coordinated local volunteers to create a welcoming environment for individuals being resettled, and any highlights from their work or recommendations for the City of Tacoma for how the City can be welcoming to all immigrants and refugees they work with in the future.

**COUNCIL MEMBER RECOMMENDATION:**

The recommendation is to invest in the local resettlement agency working with Afghan Immigrants and Refugees to help them build the program capacity they need to effectively serve these individuals and create a welcoming environment for them as they resettle in the Pacific Northwest.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The resolution is for a one-time \$25,000 funding allocation.



Fund Number & Name	COST OBJECT (CC/WBS/ORDER)	Cost Element	Total Amount
1. 1030 Council Contingency Fund	660000	5310100	\$25,000
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$25,000</b>

**What Funding is being used to support the expense?**

**GENERAL FUND/COUNCIL CONTINGENCY FUND**

**Are the expenditures and revenues budgeted in this biennium's current budget?**

**NO, PLEASE EXPLAIN BELOW**

The Council Contingency Fund is expressly set aside for items that are not planned in budgeted in the current biennium.

**Are there financial costs or other impacts of not implementing the legislation?**

**No**

**Will the legislation have an ongoing/recurring fiscal impact?**

**No**

**Will the legislation change the city's FTE/personnel counts?**

**No**

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Council Contingency Tracker

## 2021-2022 Council Contingency Commitments

<b>2021-2022</b>	<b>\$ 250,000.00</b>
	Committed
<b>Council Requested- South Sound Together</b>	<b>\$ 12,000.00</b>
<i>Resolution 40747</i>	
A resolution authorizing the one-time use of \$12,000, budgeted from the Council Contingency Fund, for City membership in South Sound Together, for the year 2021.	
<b>Council Requested- Joint Municipal Action Coalition</b>	<b>\$ 6,000.00</b>
<i>Resolution 40751</i>	
A resolution authorizing the one-time use of \$6,000, budgeted from the Council Contingency Fund, as the City's contribution towards a Joint Municipal Action Committee sponsored Request for Proposal to provide consulting services to better align the work of participating organizations.	
<b>Council Requested- Opioid Task Force</b>	<b>\$ 2,000.00</b>
<i>Resolution 40753</i>	
A resolution directing the City Manager to allocate \$2,000 from the City Council Contingency Fund to the Tacoma Pierce County Health Department to support media and broadcasting for the 2021 Pierce County Opioid Summit.	
<b>Council Requested- Gun Violence Prevention</b>	<b>\$ 25,000.00</b>
<i>Resolution 40767</i>	
A resolution directing the City Manager to allocate \$25,000 from the City Council Contingency Fund in order to hire a facilitator to convene workgroups to determine best practices for funding gun violence prevention efforts, and hire a research team to review best practices to address gun and youth violence reduction.	
<b>Council Requested- Tacoma Reads</b>	<b>\$ 10,000.00</b>
<i>Resolution 40793</i>	
City Council concurrence for a \$10,000 City Council Contingency Fund request to support the 2021 Tacoma Reads Together events	
<b>Council Requested - Alling Park</b>	<b>\$ 1,500.00</b>
<i>Resolution 40792</i>	
Council Contingency Fund expenditure of \$1,500 to support neighborhood outreach around Alling Park to address illegal use of fireworks by the Safe Streets Campaign, a grassroots organization that unites and inspires neighbors, youth, and businesses to build safe, healthy, and thriving communities.	
<b>Council Requested - Accommodations for Korean Delegation</b>	<b>\$ 5,000.00</b>
<i>Resolution 40811</i>	
Council Contingency Fund expenditure of \$5,000 to support the lodging and accommodations of a student group and host from Korea who are participating at the Asia Pacific Cultural Center's 25th Anniversary fundraiser as educational and cultural ambassadors.	
<b>Council Request - Black Lives Matter Mural</b>	<b>\$ 10,000.00</b>
<i>Resolution 40817</i>	
A resolution authorizing a Council Contingency Fund expenditure of \$10,000 to support the Kinsey African American Art & History Collection and installation of a Black Lives Matter mural in Tollefson Plaza.	

<b>Council Requested - South Sound Housing Affordability Partners</b>	<b>\$ 22,000.00</b>
<i>Resolution 40816</i>	
A Resolution authorizing execution of an Intergovernmental Agreement establishing and confirming the City of Tacoma's participation in South Sound Housing Affordability Partners and allocating an estimated \$20,000 - \$22,000 in Council Contingency Funding for startup in 2021.	
<b>Council Requested - Eastside Farmer's Market</b>	<b>\$ 5,500.00</b>
<i>Resolution 40819</i>	
A Resolution authorizing a Council Contingency Fund expenditure of \$5,500 to support the general operations of the Eastside Tacoma Farmer's Market.	
<b>Council Requested - Box Fan Filter Program</b>	<b>\$ 32,407.91</b>
<i>Resolution 40828</i>	
A resolution authorizing the use of \$32,407.91 of Council Contingency funds to supplement the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department's existing box fan filter distribution program with the distribution of an additional 500 box fan filters to East Tacoma, South Tacoma, Central Tacoma, and Northeast Tacoma, based on equity, topography and proximity to pollutants.	
<b>Council Requested - Building Program Capacity to Welcome Immigrants and Refugees to Tacoma and Pierce County</b>	<b>\$ 25,000.00</b>
<i>To Council September 28, 2021</i>	
Council Contingency Fund expenditure for \$25,000, to assist in building program capacity to resettle Afghan immigrants and refugees, including translators and their families, to Tacoma and Pierce County.	
<b>Council Requested - UWT Celebrando Comunidad: Latinx Celebration &amp; Awards</b>	<b>\$ 5,000.00</b>
<i>To Council September 28, 2021</i>	
Council Contingency Fund expenditure to support the inaugural University of Washington Tacoma Celebrando Comunidad: Latinx Celebration & Awards.	

<b>Beginning Balance</b>	<b>\$ 250,000.00</b>
<b>Total Amount Allocated</b>	<b>\$ 161,407.91</b>
<b>Current Balance</b>	<b>\$ 88,592.09</b>