CITY OF TACOMA, WASHINGTON
OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL
COUNCIL CONSIDERATION REQUEST

TO:	Mayor & City Council
FROM:	Council Member Sarah Rumbaugh and Senior Council Policy Analyst Lynda Foster
COPIES TO:	Hyun Kim, City Manager; Allyson Griffith, Deputy City Manager; Chris Bacha, City Attorney
SUBJECT:	**Resolution – Food Access – July 21, 2026**
DATE:	July 15, 2026

I ask for your support for a Council Contingency Expenditure of $15,000 in support of St. Leo Food Connection's pilot partnership with the Tacoma Public Library.

LEGISLATIVE INTENT:
This resolution will allocate $15,000 in Council contingency funds to support St. Leo Food Connection's pilot partnership with the Tacoma Public Library. Funding will be used to purchase food and snacks for distribution through the library-based programs, expanding access to food for children and families while evaluating the effectiveness of this community-based service model.

As discussions regarding this pilot partnership occurred after St. Leo Food Connection finalized its FY 2026–2027 operating budget, this pilot is not included in its budget. An allocation of $15,000 provides the flexibility needed to implement and evaluate this pilot. These funds can be used retroactively to support the 2026 pilot or continuation of the pilot into 2027. This support would serve as an important demonstration of local investment, strengthening St. Leo Food Connection's ability to secure additional funding to sustain and expand its network of neighborhood-based food access programs beyond the pilot period.

Background
St. Leo Food Connection, established in 1982 as a ministry of St. Leo Parish, is one of the largest providers of supplemental food assistance in Pierce County. While many residents recognize the organization's downtown food bank, St. Leo Food Connection operates a network of neighborhood-based programs: mobile food banks, pop-up pantries, high school pantry-style delivery programs, a weekend Backpack Program serving over 72,000 student backpacks per school year, and a Summer Meals Program that provides daily lunches at 16 community sites.

Demand for food assistance has increased following reductions to federal SNAP benefits that began in 2025. Over the past year, visits to St. Leo Food Connection's mobile food bank sites increased by 44 percent. The Backpack Program grows annually by 6 to 10 percent. This year's Summer Feeding Program started with an 80% increase in children served and six new sites. At IDEA High School, participation in the pantry-style delivery program doubled between 2025 and 2026 and served approximately one-quarter of the school's student population in that school year.

Recognizing an increasing need for accessible food resources for children and families, Councilmember Rumbaugh engaged in discussions with St. Leo Food Connection regarding

opportunities to expand services in Tacoma leading to a pilot partnership between St. Leo Food Connection and the Tacoma Public Library. Library staff had identified a growing need for food among youth visiting library branches and had been purchasing snacks with their own resources to support children experiencing food insecurity.

As a result of this collaboration, St. Leo Food Connection has launched a pilot partnership with Tacoma Public Library that includes serving Summer Meals at the Main Library, providing healthy snacks at three library branches, and exploring the feasibility of a pop-up pantry at the Main Library to increase access to nutritious food for children and families.

DESIRED RESOLUTION DATE: August 4, 2026

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ (CUSTOMER RESEARCH):
Ensuring food access has always been a priority for the Tacoma community, but since the COVID pandemic the need for food access has skyrocketed. This need has exacerbated in recent years as federal funding cuts have impacted our food providers. Sponsors have met with community partners and nonprofit organizations to learn about Pierce County's food distribution systems and brainstorm ways to provide food primarily to children in safe spaces where children already spend time.

2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:
Equity and Accessibility:
According to St. Leo's Food connection, childhood hunger is a devastating condition that pervades our community. At many of our schools, more than 80% of children rely on Free and Reduced Meals programs to get the nutrition they need. Tacoma Public Schools has offered free lunches to all students since 2022 under the Community Eligibility Provision of the USDA because the need is so high. Free breakfast and lunch during the school year is not just helpful to low-income families, but to ALICE families (asset limited, income constrained, employed) and amplifies the need for free summer meals.

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
Increase positive public perception of safety and overall quality of life.

Explain how your legislation will affect the selected indicator(s)?
This pilot program will enhance food access at locations where children already gather.

ALTERNATIVES:

Alternative	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts
1. Take no action	Preserve resources for other Council priorities	Do not expand necessary food access
2. Award funds through existing competitive funding processes.	Funding is prioritized and awarded in the larger context of community need.	Not responsive to this emergent situation.
3.		

EVALUATIONS AND FOLLOW UP:
St. Leo's Food Connection should report out the results of their pilot program to the Tacoma City Council. This is one-time contingency funds for this program and future requests for funding should go through the City's standard application processes.

SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION:
Sponsors recommend supporting St. Leo Food Connection's pilot partnership between St. Leo Food Connection and Tacoma Public Library

FISCAL IMPACT:
This resolution would allocate $15,000 from the Council Contingency Fund.

If you have a question related to the Council Contingency Fund Request, please contact Lynda Foster at 253.591.5166 or lfoster@Tacoma.gov.

SUBMITTED FOR COUNCIL CONSIDERATION BY: Sarah Rumbaugh
Council Member Rumbaugh

SUPPORTING COUNCIL MEMBERS SIGNATURES (2 SIGNATURES ONLY)
(Signatures demonstrate support to initiate discussion and consideration of the subject matter by City Council for potential policy development and staff guidance/direction.)

1. _____ **POS#** **1**

2. _____ **POS#** **3**

Mayor's initials Andy Ibsen
(Mayor's initials for awareness only to ensure alignment and coordination of emergent policies.)

Contingency Commitments 2026

Resolution Number	Funding Amount
Resolution 41859	
Oasis Center	**$30,000.00**
Council Contingency Fund request of $30,000 to fund the Oasis Youth Center's HIV and STI self-testing for LGBTQ+ youth ages 14 and older in Pierce County.	
Resolution 41864	
True Vine Community Church of God in Christ	**$25,000.00**
Council Contingency Fund request of $25,000 to sponsor the 5th Annual Citywide Block Party.	
Resolution 41881	
Northwest Immigrant Rights Project 2026 Gala Sponsorship	**$15,000.00**
A Council Contingency Fund expenditure of $15,000 to sponsor the Northwest Immigration Rights Project's 2026 Gala and make a public declaration of solidarity with Northwest Immigrant Rights Project's values	
Resolution 41904	
Tacoma Film Task Force Sponsorship	**$10,000.00**
Council Contingency fund expenditure of $10,000 to sponsor the Tacoma Film Task Force.	
Resolution 41932	
Ride Transit Month Sponsorship	**$10,000.00**
Resolution authorizing the one-time use of Council Contingency Funds, in the amount of $10,000, to sponsor Downtown on the Go's Ride Transit Month.	
Resolution 41933	
NextGen GM Sports Executive Internship	**$20,000.00**
A Council Contingency fund expenditure of $20,000 to sponsor the "NextGen GM Sports Executive Internship" pilot program.	
Resolution 41940	
Juneteenth Prayer Breakfast Sponsorship	**$1,000.00**
A one-time Council Contingency fund expenditure of $1,000 to sponsor the Juneteenth Prayer Breakfast	
Resolution 41957	
Savor Fest PNW	**$16,000**
A resolution allocating $16,000 in Council Contingency Funds to support the 2026 Savor Fest PNW	
Resolution 41959	
Beyond the Block	**$10,000.00**
A resolution allocating $10,000 in Council Contingency Funds to support the Beyond the Block program.	
Going to Council on August 4, 2026	
Grit City Gala	**$7,000.00**
A resolution allocating $7,000 in Council Contingency Funds to support the Tacoma Farmer's Market Grit City Gala	
Going to Council on August 4, 2026	
Wayfinding Signs to Eastside Community Center	**$1,225.00**
A resolution allocating $1,225 in Council Contingency Funds to support the production and installation of up to three wayfinding signs for the Eastside Community Center	
Going to Council on August 4, 2026	
Food Access	**$15,000.00**
A resolution allocating $15,000 in Council Contingency Funds to support St. Leo Food Connection's pilot partnership with the Tacoma Public Library.	
Starting Balance	**$259,328.56**
Allocated Funding	**$160,225.00**
Remaining Balance	***$99,103.56***