

Mayor and Council Communication

DATE: 05/23/23

M&C FILE NUMBER: M&C 23-0422

LOG NAME: 19TAFB RED BUS

SUBJECT

(CD 2, CD 3, CD 5, CD 8, and CD 9 / Future CD 2, CD 3, CD 5, CD 6, CD 8, CD 9, and CD 11) Authorize Change in Use and Expenditure of Up to \$242,000.00 of Prior Year's Unprogrammed Community Development Block Grant CARES Act Funds for the Tarrant Area Food Bank Resources and Education Delivered Bus Program, Authorize the Execution of a Contract for Up to Three Years, Authorize a Substantial Amendment to the City's 2019-2020 Action Plan, and Authorize the Substitution of Funding Years

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Authorize a change in use and expenditures of up to \$242,000.00 of prior year's unprogrammed Community Development Block Grant CARES Act funds to the Tarrant Area Food Bank Resources and Education Delivered Bus Program;
2. Authorize the City Manager, or his designee, to execute a contract with Tarrant Area Food Bank in an amount up to \$242,000.00 for the Resources and Education Delivered Bus Program with a term not to exceed three years;
3. Authorize a substantial amendment to the City's 2019-2020 Action Plan; and
4. Authorize the City Manager, or his designee, to substitute funding years in order to meet United States Department of Housing and Urban Development commitment, disbursement and expenditure deadlines.

DISCUSSION:

The purpose of this Mayor and Council Communication (M&C) is to reallocate available unprogrammed CDBG-CV funds to provide additional funding for a targeted food assistance program.

The COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing economic crisis has disproportionately affected communities of color and the poor, worsening already poor health outcomes. Feeding America, the national association of food banks, has indicated that the percent of Tarrant County residents who are food insecure has risen from 13.9% to 17.5% during the pandemic.

Tarrant Area Food Bank (TAFB) is renewing its focus on underserved communities within the City of Fort Worth and is working on strategies to make a long-term impact in these neighborhoods. In a concerted effort to address food insecurity and the number of identified food deserts within Tarrant County and Fort Worth, in particular, TAFB has a partnership with the City of Fort Worth to serve the most impacted communities, including neighborhoods in the following zip codes: 76104, 76105, 76106, 76107, 76116, and 76119. The services of TAFB are a critical first step in positioning families for success. Access to healthy, nutritious food is a basic need that must be paramount in the quest to alleviate poverty and transform the lives of Fort Worth's most vulnerable residents. The Resources and Education Delivered (RED) Bus Program has played a critical role in TAFB's efforts to remediate these effects.

The RED Bus Program takes the food bank's service directly to those most in need. At the heart of the program is a mobile service delivery unit - a specialty built vehicle, which provides space for the display of grocery items and office space for staff. Utilizing this vehicle, TAFB has provided (1) emergency food distribution; (2) nutrition education; and (3) assistance for enrollment of eligible families into federal benefits programs such as SNAP, TANF, CHIP and Medicaid. TAFB has been successful in customizing the unit to allow for half of it to be designed as a grocery store, providing clients with a selection of fresh foods to select and take home. The remainder of the vehicle is equipped with computer space for TAFB's staff to assist clients with applying for benefits. As a one-stop shop, the unit has traveled throughout the community to help eliminate barriers to food access. There are no fees assessed to the individuals and families benefitting from the RED Bus Program for any services or benefits. An estimated number of 500 persons per month (6000 persons annually) will be served through the program at an estimated cost of \$33.00 per person.

The funds will enable the number of mobile service delivery staff to increase by reimbursing the TAFB for the compensation of up to three (3) full-time equivalent positions for a term not to exceed three years. Provision of these funds to TAFB constitutes a proposed change in use of unprogrammed 2019-2020 CDBG-CV funds received from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). These funds will be used to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the benefit programs. This will aid the preservation of health for vulnerable populations by improving access to healthy food while increasing social distancing and reducing potential exposure to the virus for the elderly and disabled by reducing need to go to the grocery store or public benefits facilities.

A public comment period on this proposed substantial amendment to the 2019-20 Action Plan was held from March 27, 2023 to March 31, 2023. All comments received are maintained by the Neighborhood Services Department.

Funds will be allocated as follows:

General Operating Expenses - \$242,000.00

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