



**City of Seattle**  
Human Services Department

May 18, 2011

TO: Councilmember Licata, Chair, Housing, Human Services, Health and Culture Committee; Councilmember Bagshaw; Councilmember Burgess; Councilmember Clark; Councilmember Conlin; Councilmember Godden; Councilmember Harrell; Councilmember O'Brien; and Councilmember Rasmussen

FM: Dannette R. Smith, Director, Human Services Department

RE: Response to Green Sheet 73-1-C-1

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**Background:** As part of the Mayor's 2011 - 2012 Proposed Budget, the Mayor added \$150,000 to fund a new program serving refugee and immigrant youth to be developed by the Seattle Human Services Department (HSD) in conjunction with community members and other City and nonprofit partners. In Green Sheet 73-1-C-1 approved by the budget process, the City Council requests additional information about the program before considering approval of \$150,000 in funding for a new HSD refugee and immigrant youth program as part of the 2012 budget. The following information is provided in response to the Council's request:

- **A formal response to SLI 76-1-A relating to the New Citizens Initiative outlining the department's approach to mitigating the impacts of state funding reductions.**

The formal response to Statement of Legislative Intent (SLI) 76-1-A will be presented to City Council by June 20, 2011 as specified in the SLI.

- **Draft Request for Investment (RFI) document outlining the goals and desired outcomes for the proposed \$150,000 to be allocated to community-based organizations for refugee and immigrant youth—this should include clearly articulated program expectations and deliverables.**

The focus of the proposed RFI is an integrated family-based approach to job readiness training for recently arrived Immigrant/Refugee (I/R) youth with limited English skills that also ensures support and literacy skills for parents. Over a nine-month period, youth with limited English skills will receive bilingual/bicultural job readiness training and

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career exploration through a community-based organization. The elements of the youth program are coordinated with family support efforts so parents gain the same knowledge of job readiness, career exploration, postsecondary education and training, financial aid, and career pathways. Parents will then begin to develop the skills and information to support, encourage and advocate on behalf of their children as well as progress toward self-sufficiency. In addition, both youth and parents can access vocational literacy classes to strengthen their readiness for employment. This pilot requires combining the \$150,000 I/R Youth Program dollars with existing HSD I/R Family Support dollars (\$315,361) to fund innovative holistic services that address the unique and challenging needs of this population.

The target population of I/R youth and families to be served are recently arrived youth ages 15-20 years old with limited English skills who are also from low-income families. These youth have the highest high school drop-out rate in Seattle Public Schools (SPS), and the need for services for these youth and their families was repeatedly raised in the community forums for the Mayor's Youth and Families Initiative. Currently the five most common languages spoken by newly arriving youth with limited English skills at the SPS Secondary Bilingual Orientation Center (SBOC) are Somali, Vietnamese, Chinese, Spanish, and Amharic. The RFI may fund up to four community-based organizations serving one or more of these communities.

The specific goals and outcomes of the RFI are listed in Table 1 (attached). The goals are aligned with needs for family education and bilingual job readiness training for I/R youth expressed in the Mayor's Youth and Families Initiative as well as milestones outlined in Seattle's Road Map to Success. Key proposed services include:

1. Youth job readiness training including a paid work experience, development of workplace skills, career exploration, and introduction to postsecondary options provided by community-based organizations serving I/R populations.
2. Bilingual family education focusing on high school graduation requirements, postsecondary education and training options, financial aid resources and career pathways to be provided by I/R community-based organizations.
3. Family Vocational Literacy classes for both youth and their parents to be provided by a refugee resettlement organization or multiservice center.

In addition to I/R community-based organizations, other potential partners in the development and delivery of the family-based job readiness training include:

1. SBOC which will refer youth and families to the program and assist HSD with aligning the curriculum of this program with the SBOC curriculum.
2. SPS Department of Bilingual and International Education will serve as the liaison with other SPS departments to access data and other services needed to support the program.
3. Refugee resettlement organizations and multiservice centers are potential providers of the family vocational literacy classes.

4. Seattle University Adult Education will provide expertise on family literacy and vocational ESL programs in addition to consultation on the RFI process.

- **A review and inventory of existing HSD investments focused on refugee and immigrant communities, delineating program area goals and objectives and an evaluation of priorities given current funding constraints.**

While social services provided and funded by local agencies and governments are available to immigrants and refugees in addition to the native-born population, HSD specifically funds services for immigrants and refugees in 32 program areas across all HSD divisions. HSD program areas targeting immigrants and refugees include the following range of services: housing and employment services for homeless persons and families; food assistance; family-centered and individual services to persons of all ages including infants, preschool children, school-age children, youth, elderly and disabled persons; and services to victims of domestic violence.

Table 2 (attached) provides an inventory of these 32 HSD investments focused on refugee and immigrant community programs for each of HSD's Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) goals and the associated objectives for each goal. HSD will be evaluating all programs and establishing priorities in the context of our 2012 budget.

Recognizing that there are current funding constraints, the need for an integrated family-based job readiness training for I/R youth remains high. As previously stated, these youth have the highest high school drop-out rate in Seattle Public Schools, and the need for these services was repeatedly raised in the community forums for the Youth and Families Initiative.

- **Summary information of feedback resulting from community engagement process to identify emerging needs as articulated by refugee and immigrant communities.**

Youth job readiness training, youth employment and more bilingual/bicultural family services are needs that were frequently raised in the Youth and Families Initiative Community Forums. These same needs were expressed in ethnic-specific community caucuses for Vietnamese, Chinese, Khmer/Cambodian, Laotian/Hmong, Filipino, Somali, Oromo, Ethiopian, and Latino families. All the needs listed below were also part of the 37 priority issues identified by the 2,800 Seattle residents attending the five large group workshops, Youth Summit and 131 community caucuses. These same needs were clearly expressed at the April 2011 follow-up workshop on the Youth and Families Initiative that included separate groups for Latino, Oromo, Somali, Eritrean, Ethiopian, Mien, Khmer and Filipino families.

1. **Provide Youth Internships, Job training and Employment.** This includes specific needs of I/R youth such as ESL classes to get a job and more employment options for immigrant youth.
2. **Prepare Youth for Post-Secondary Education.** The caucuses and April workshop identified the need to improve access to financial aid information and help parents understand the value of youth pursuing their career interests. Addressing youth's barriers to post-secondary education may also impact the following education-related needs identified in the community forums: reduce high school drop-out rates; lower language barriers affecting academic performance of newly arriving I/R youth; provide more bilingual counselors and staff; and more support to help youth transition from middle to high school.
3. **Provide parent education and family support.** Immigrant/refugee parents' lack of knowledge of how to raise children in American culture, discipline issues, conflicts between American values and traditional home culture values were specifically called out in caucuses and the April workshop.
4. **Improve Communication between Parents and Schools.** There was an expressed need for more bilingual services including interpreters, counselors and staff for limited-English speaking families.
5. **Increase Family/Community Involvement.** To engage I/R populations in wider community issues, there is the need to provide bilingual support and advocacy for limited-English speaking families.

Participants at the April workshop were specifically asked about the factors the City should consider in selecting organizations to provide services. All ethnic groups wanted organizations that are culturally appropriate, know and respect the community's religion, located in the community's neighborhood, and possess the same ethnic and language background as the participants served.

Additional feedback about the needs of I/R youths and their parents was obtained through HSD's community engagement process for the Department's new strategic plan. HSD conducted focus groups for East African, Latino, and Khmer communities and the Refugee Forum. These groups identified the following needs for youth and their parents, which confirmed and expanded on the needs identified in the Youth and Families Initiative forums:

1. East African youth identified the need for more internships, summer jobs, mentors, parent involvement and bilingual communication with the schools.
2. Latino community members identified the following needs: More youth internships; vocational skills; jobs; money for grassroots direct services; positive activities for youth and families; direct communication with families to learn about needs; RFI review panels that include people from the target community; community meeting where agencies make presentations and community members can vote; and partnerships.

3. The Khmer/Cambodian community has limited access to information and opportunities that strengthen families and community. They need the capacity and support to build leadership for both youth and adults in order to have strong families and healthy communities, and they are concerned about challenges with the diminishing funds to support services to immigrant and refugee families.
4. The Refugee Forum strongly supports efforts to facilitate collaboration and partnership to leverage resources, plus sharing and collection of good data.

- **Data driven analysis for justifying policy rationale for a new program to address emerging need of I/R youth**

The proposed Integrated Job Readiness Training for Youth and Families focuses on newly-arrived I/R youth, ages 15-20 years, with limited English skills. These youth have the lowest high school graduation rates both nationally<sup>1</sup> and in Seattle Public Schools (30.3% on-time high school graduation rate in 2008/9) with few options for pathways that lead to living-wage jobs. McBrien (2005)<sup>2</sup> found that refugee students are among the most vulnerable for school failure. In addition to the stress of migration and adaptation to the American culture, they may have been victimized in their country of origin and often feel more personal and cultural bereavement than non-refugee immigrants. Cummins<sup>3</sup> (1981) found that learning another language, especially becoming academically competent, takes 7-10 years. Consequently, these older youth drop out of school because they cannot pass academic classes when placed in mainstream high schools, and see no hope for their future beyond joining a gang or getting a menial job.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, their parents face the multiple challenges of making a successful transition to a new life in America. Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (2008)<sup>5</sup> found that 60% of SE Asian parents have less than three years of formal education, 46-35% of Asian refugee households have limited English skills, are linguistically isolated, and low-income. Morse (2005)<sup>6</sup> found that I/R parents must obtain a living wage job, overcome language barriers as well as deal with the challenges of parenting a teenager, adapting to American culture and navigating thru the complex American school, police, health and social systems. Currently, most parent education services are focused on parents with younger children, and consequently do not address adolescent issues.

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<sup>1</sup> Morse, A (2005). *A Look at Immigrant Youth: Prospects and Promising Practices*. National Conference of State Legislatures Children's Policy Initiative.

<sup>2</sup> McBrien, J. (2005). Educational needs and barriers for refugee student in the United States: A review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 75, 329-364.

<sup>3</sup> Cummins, J. (1981) "How Long? A Synthesis of Resesarch on Academic Achievement in a Sescond Language." *TESOL Quarterly*, 21(4), 617-641

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid* at 1

<sup>5</sup> Asian American legal Defense and Education Fund (2008). *Left in the Margins: Asian American Students and the No Child Left Behind Act*.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid* at 1

- **Analysis of whether proposed funding could be administered as part of the Neighborhood Matching Fund (NMF) program to ensure that funding is allocated to community-based youth efforts.**

The proposed funding is for ongoing integrated job readiness training for I/R youth and their families. The purpose of Neighborhood Matching Fund (NMF) is to fund one-time capital projects, community events or services. There are restrictions on funding ongoing programs and services. Consequently the I/R youth project is not a good fit with NMF.

An additional barrier is the NMF's match requirement of a 50% cash and/or in-kind match for nonphysical projects. Many small grassroots I/R organizations have difficulty raising this level of cash match given the high levels of poverty in their communities. Their match is often fulfilled through volunteer time, and adequately documenting volunteer time requires more administrative capacity than possessed by these small organizations.

The final reason for administering the proposed funding through HSD is that we anticipate that the organizations selected to participate will need intense programmatic technical assistance from City staff to build their capacity to successfully plan and offer family-based job readiness training for recently arrived I/R youth. This concept also involves partnerships with the SPS SBOC, SPS Department of Bilingual and International Education, Seattle University Adult Education, and refugee resettlement organizations to ensure successful implementation of these new innovative family-based services. Currently most small organizations do not have these partnerships.

In comparison to NMF, HSD has much more experience and expertise with youth employment programs, parent education services, and vocational ESL classes, and also established relationships with SBOC, Department of Bilingual and International Education, Seattle University Adult Education, and refugee resettlement organizations. Consequently, it is more appropriate for HSD's Youth and Family Empowerment Division to provide the required technical and programmatic support.

- **Analysis of whether the proposed program involves measurable academic achievement and therefore should be included for consideration as part of the 2011 Families and Education levy renewal proposal.**

Since the proposed program focuses on bilingual job readiness training and career exploration, the related measurable academic outcomes are an increase in school attendance and a decrease in unexcused absences. Academic outcomes related to the number of students being proficient on state math, reading, science and writing tests and on-time graduation are not relevant to this population of youth with limited English skills who are new arrivals. Given the limited number of academic outcomes, the

proposed program is not a good fit for the 2011 Families and Education Levy renewal proposal. See Table 1 for all academic and nonacademic outcomes.

- **A timeline for program implementation.**

The timelines for program planning and implementation are provided in Figures 1 and 2.

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Empowerment  
Kellie Nakano, Director, Seattle Youth Employment Program

Attachments: Table 1: Program Goals/Impact, Table 2: HSD Programs Focused in I/R Communities, Figure 1: Planning and RFI Timeline, Figure 2: 2012 Program Timeline