

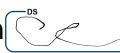






MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 26, 2021

TO: Mayor Troxell and City Councilmembers

THRU: Darin Atteberry, City Manager 
Kyle Stannert, Deputy City Manager 
Caryn Champine, Director of Planning, Development & Transportation 

FROM: JC Ward, Senior City Planner 
Leo Escalante, Community Engagement Specialist 

RE: March 23, 2021 Work Session Summary – Municipal Immigration Legal Fund

At the March 23rd City Council Virtual Work Session, JC Ward and Leo Escalante provided information on municipal immigration legal fund implementation and funding models, local demographic data and unmet needs assessment, and service delivery models for providing assistance to undocumented residents of Fort Collins. All councilmembers were present for the discussion via video conferencing. Funding immigration legal services for Fort Collins residents would advance Council priorities to improve safety, community trust, equity, and livability.

General discussion and direction from the work session included:

Local Unmet Need

- Federal context of the immigration system and the intersection of federal, state, and local interests; the City’s jurisdiction and fundamental questions of the role for the City to play as a convener, catalyst, or funder.
- Challenges of accessing local data on Fort Collins residents in need of immigration legal services due to the different reporting levels and standards at the federal level and from private detention facilities as well as available data released monthly by county but not broken out by city until 12-24 months later.
- Barriers to receiving community input from impacted residents include lack of trust or fear of government entities and the importance of community partners’ work to engage in this space due to those barriers to community engagement by City Staff.
- Discussion on gaining greater clarity on the experience of Fort Collins community members and their circumstances through data and additional community engagement.

Program Comparisons

- Discussion of different models and methodology of funding levels and delivery models for existing municipally funded immigration legal services; comparison to demographics in Fort Collins and request for additional analysis of cities with total population sizes closer to that in Fort Collins.

Potential Fort Collins Models for Funding and Implementation

- Additional community engagement for the general public related to the need and desire for a City-funded immigration legal fund is requested. As COVID-19 public gathering restrictions are lifted and more community members have vaccine access, Staff anticipates in-person engagement opportunities for this program to occur in late Spring/early Summer 2021.
- Establishing program metrics that measure outputs, outcomes, and effectiveness are an important part of concurrent evaluation and iterative improvement. Measuring case or participant numbers will not provide the full picture of program outcomes such as equity or livability.
- Exploration of partnerships with Larimer County, nonprofit community partners, and grantor organizations to fund or expand a City-sponsored immigration legal fund was supported. Partnerships with Larimer County will need to be balanced with the policy of using City funds to benefit City residents, particularly if Larimer County opted to assist with funding, but committed a lower funding amount than the City.
- Discussion of logistics details to understand what services would be offered, who would be eligible for the services, and how that directly supports the local unmet need and City Strategic Outcomes.

Next Steps & Follow-up

- Staff will bring an off-cycle appropriation request for City Council discussion and First Reading on April 20, 2021. The funding level will reflect the guidance to focus on the lower end of the options provided and will be a one-time, pilot program through the end of 2021.
- As part of the off-cycle appropriation request supporting materials, Staff will respond to follow up questions related to unmet needs within Fort Collins (to the extent data is available), peer city comparisons, and a preliminary concept of the service delivery model. For the April 20th Council meeting, Staff will provide information on the universal representation-based service levels for deportation cases and affirmative cases that accompany the budget request so Council priorities may be built into the overall program delivery structure.
- There was interest from multiple Councilmembers for additional research on other types of legal aid for civil cases and a potential role for the City to provide resources for those legal service providers. Service providers, funding sources, and funding models for general civil legal aid are different from those analyzed for this immigration legal fund program. Staff will prepare a memo summarizing the work and timeline involved to explore that concept further and seek Council's direction on whether to proceed.