



Date: July 9, 2019

To: Thomas J. Bonfield, City Manager
Through: Wanda S. Page, Deputy City Manager
From: Bertha T. Johnson, Director, Budget & Management Services
Erin Parish, Innovation Team Design Strategist

Subject: GARE Implementation and Innovation Fund Grant Award

Executive Summary

In April 2019, the City of Durham's Innovation Team applied for the Local and Regional Government Alliance of Race and Equity (GARE) Implementation and Innovation Fund grant. GARE, a program of Race Forward, awarded the City of Durham a grant of \$20,000 over a one year period. The GARE grant is intended to provide flexible resources for local government to support projects focused on eliminating structural racism. The City of Durham's 2019 GARE grant supports staffing and materials costs for the Welcome Home Program, which provides material and peer support to Durham residents immediately upon returning home from state prison. By quickly connecting residents to available resources and offering personalized support, the Welcome Home program seeks to nurture a sense of belonging in our returning residents and increase public safety through decreasing recidivism.

Recommendation

The Budget and Management Services Department recommends that City Council adopt the GARE and Race Forward Grant Budget Ordinance in the amount of \$20,000.

Background

In April 2019, the City of Durham's Innovation Team applied for the Local and Regional Government Alliance of Race and Equity (GARE) Implementation and Innovation Fund grant. GARE, a program of Race Forward, awarded the City of Durham a grant of \$20,000 over a one year period. The GARE grant is intended to provide flexible resources for local government to support projects focused on eliminating structural racism. The City of Durham's 2019 GARE grant supports staffing and materials costs for the Welcome Home Program, which provides material and peer support to Durham residents immediately upon returning home from state prison. By quickly connecting residents to available resources and offering personalized support, the Welcome Home program seeks to nurture a sense of belonging in our returning residents and increase public safety through decreasing recidivism.

Over 700 people come home from state prison to Durham, NC every year. Many recently released residents struggle to find work, homes, and even the basic items necessary to start their lives anew. The first month home is a particularly vulnerable time. Both recidivism and death rates are highest immediately upon release. In the Welcome Home Program, peer support specialists with lived experience of incarceration help orient people to resources available in our community and provide social and emotional assistance to residents immediately upon release from prison. Local churches and community members also provide a

care package of much needed items to welcome each participating resident back to our community. This project is a partnership with the City of Durham, the Durham Local Reentry Council, the Religious Coalition for a Nonviolent Durham, and the Department of Public Safety with support from NC H.O.P.E., Durham Congregations in Action, Durham CAN, and First Presbyterian Church.

Nearly three-fourths of those returning from state prison to Durham are African-American. As in most communities throughout the United States, people of color are vastly over-represented in Durham's justice-involved population. Working to break the cycle of involvement in the criminal justice system is foundational to dismantling structural racism. The Welcome Home Program seeks to change the power dynamics of local reentry work, placing those affected by the criminal justice system in charge of designing and implementing services. Funds from the GARE grant will support the continued employment of peer support specialists—all with lived experiences of incarceration—who provide direct supportive services to Durham residents returning from prison.

Issues and Analysis

The Welcome Home Program is the result of an intensive year-long community engagement process that prioritized the stories, experiences, and wisdom of justice-involved residents. The City of Durham Innovation Team interviewed over 100 justice-involved residents. Our community outreach coordinator—a justice involved resident himself—helped lead this work. Several key findings from the research shaped the structure of this program:

- **Peer support is important and effective.** Consistently, people coming out of jail and prison noted how meaningful it was to get help from people who had lived through similar experiences and been successful with reentry. Peer-to-peer storytelling was identified as a powerful motivation for change.
- **Many returning residents do not trust reentry services.** Probation was often the only consistent source of reentry support. Yet, for many, this was seen more as a possible source of punishment than assistance.
- **Many returning residents do not know about reentry services.** While a wide network of reentry services exist in Durham, many people could not identify these services or did not know how to access them. Information provided about reentry services, particularly from prison or probation officials, was often inaccurate or out of date.

Welcome Home was designed around these insights, aiming to provide a trusted and knowledgeable guide to help people navigate the resources available to them upon reentry. Peer support specialists provide a level of personalized and non-punitive support that probation officers and case managers are not resourced or trained to offer. Likewise, they give more hands-on support than most service providers are able to offer. Financial support from GARE provides the Welcome Home program with staff capacity to build the collaborative relationships with staff in the Department of Public Safety and supportive services agencies necessary to create a more coordinated, seamless, and relational approach to reentry services for Durham residents.

Alternatives

City Council could choose not to accept the GARE grant.

Financial Impact

The GARE grant will reduce the City of Durham's financial contribution to support the Welcome Home program from \$85,037 to \$65,037.

Equal Business Opportunity Summary

N/A

Attachments

Grant Award Letter

Grant Budget Ordinance