



**Date:** October 17, 2022

**To:** Wanda S. Page, City Manager  
**Through:** Bertha T. Johnson, Deputy City Manager  
**From:** Robert D. Morales, Senior Grants Manager  
**Subject:** American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Project – Durham: The City of Books

**Executive Summary**

On November 3, 2021, Book Harvest submitted proposal “Durham: The City of Books” for funding in the amount of \$489,642 from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. This funding will be used to obtain 62 Book Boxes to fill Durham neighborhoods that have been most affected by COVID-19. The goal is to transform the community into a City of Books; a place where every child has a path to book ownership. This will lay the foundation for childhood language and literacy, which is essential for school readiness and academic success. On May 18, 2022, City Council approved \$342,749.40 funding for this entity. Staff has reviewed the revised proposal and recommends funding.

**Motion**

To authorize the City Manager to execute an ARPA sub recipient grant agreement with Book Harvest in an amount not to exceed \$342,749.40.

**Background**

The original proposal from Book Harvest requested \$489,642 from the ARPA funds under the core category of addressing educational disparities. Proposal "Durham: The City of Books" targets children and families living in communities with a history of economic inequities and for whom the pandemic exacted the direst economic and academic consequences. Book Harvest will use a unique measure developed with Duke University Interdisciplinary Social Innovators Team to target these neighborhoods. The entity Book Access Index (BAI) is a standardized, GIS-driven measurement tool that maps book access points and indexes neighborhoods on their ease of access to children’s books. Against this book desert data from the BAI, the entity has identified lowest performing Durham Public Schools (DPS) with the highest percentage of children receiving Free/Reduced lunch. Currently, those include the following tracts: 4.02; 6; 10.01; 13.03; 13.04; 16.03; 18.01; 18.09; 20.09; 20.13;.20.33. Book Harvest has a Memorandum of Understanding with DPS enabling each of its 30 elementary schools to install a Book Harvest Book Box.

**Issues and Analysis**

Access to books and educational material is the single biggest barrier to literacy development in the United States and beyond (Neuman, S. B., Celano, D. 2012). "Durham: The City of Books" targets children and families living in communities with a history of economic inequities and for whom the pandemic exacted the direst economic and academic consequences. Durham Public Schools (DPS) is providing all the necessary insurance, permissions, and school Administrators have the ability to bring Book Boxes to their campuses. Book Harvest has the tools in place to transform Durham into a book-rich city, with Book Boxes in the locations that need them most.

In June, 2021, Book Harvest was awarded \$40,184 through Durham's Participatory Budgeting (PB) Cycle 2 process. These funds are being used to hire Parent-To-Parent Leaders, as a network of families who have been program participants and know firsthand the benefits of having access to resources for their children. Benefits include establishing books in homes from birth, regular shared reading routines, early language activities and experiences, engagement in pre-K programs, and advocacy in formal school settings. With training, tools, and support Parent Leaders know how access changes children's outcomes and how information transforms parent power. This organization provides excellent support to the Durham community.

This funding will be used to add 62 Book Boxes to Book Harvest's existing 12 Book Boxes. By strategically planting these 62 Book Boxes across Durham, Book Harvest will create a community-wide culture of childhood literacy and a community-wide path to book ownership. Every child will experience an immersion in words and language, books, and shared reading; every child will have the key to unlocking the fundamental building blocks to learning and school success. This model City of Books is unprecedented in our country.

Book Box construction costs and many of the new books provided in the Book Boxes will be paid for via ARPA funds. Book Harvest will subcontract with families who are program partners (i.e. parents of children enrolled in our Book Babies program) who will provide the labor of installing Book Boxes.

The books provided in the Book Boxes will be a combination of brand new and gently used books. The brand-new books will be purchased through vendors with whom we have a long-standing and relationship that affords us extraordinarily competitive purchasing options (e.g. First Book, Scholastic). Book Harvest will purchase 48,360 new books for a sum of \$193,440 in total over three years for the 62 Book Boxes:

- 2023: 18 new Book Boxes/14,040 new books
- 2024: 20 new Book Boxes/15,600 new books
- 2025: 24 new Book Boxes/18,720 new books

The installation of these Book Boxes includes a total of 161,200 books over 36 months: 35 used books and 15 new books per Book Box per week for *one year* of each Book Box.

### **Alternatives**

The City Council can choose not to accept the staff recommendation.

### **Financial Impact**

\$342,749.40 is available for this purpose from the funding source of the American Rescue Plan Act federal funds. The City of Durham received \$51,881,733 in two distributions; the first distribution was received on June 1, 2021 in the amount of \$25,940,866.50; the remaining was received May 2022. The City will have until December 2024 to obligate the funds. Recipients have until December 2026 to spend the funds.

### **Equal Business Opportunity Summary**

Due to the nature of this agenda item, a review by the Finance Department was not required.

### **Contractor Workforce Diversity & Hiring Practices**

Due to the nature of this agenda item, obtaining Contractor Workforce Diversity & Hiring Practices information is not applicable.

**Attachments**

Book Harvest Agreement