



Legislation Text

File #: 1821-2024, **Version:** 1

The purpose of this ordinance is to authorize the City Clerk to enter into a grant agreement with Voicecorps Reading Service ("Voicecorps") in support of their free reading services.

The targeted constituencies are adults who have lost the ability to use print due to blindness and vision loss, accident or injury, and veterans who suffered a service-related disability which prevents using print. The US Census estimates that 2.3% of our population is visually impaired or roughly 21,000 Columbus residents. This number does not include those who have some other disability which prevents use of print such as paraplegia, stroke, or other injury. In central Ohio and specifically in Columbus, there is no coordinating agency for the provision of rehabilitation due to vision loss for adults who are past working age. State programs focus on employment and vocational rehabilitation. Once the individual is diagnosed as legally blind, too many vision care professionals send the patient home without referrals to the next step in adapted living.

Voicecorps reading service has provided free reading services to Columbus residents and has been supported by the city for doing so for each of its 46 years. During the pandemic, Voicecorps was able - with support from City Council - to maintain daily transmissions of daily newspapers which contain vital information about COVID-19 safety, curfews, and other information the rest of Columbus had access to through the height of the pandemic. The services involve the efforts of over 200 volunteers in reading the Columbus Dispatch and various other news periodicals over broadcasts, including WOSU-FM and WOSU-TV. The targeted audience is overwhelmingly made up of aging residents, many of whom are low or fixed-income earners and make use of other resources for residents over 60.

Columbus City Council is supporting these services for blind and visually impaired residents with \$105,000.00 in funding from the Neighborhood Initiative subfund.

EMERGENCY DESIGNATION: Emergency action is requested in order to avoid interruptions in services for residents in need.

FISCAL IMPACT: Total appropriation is \$105,000.00 and is available in the 2024 budget within the Neighborhood Initiative subfund.

To authorize the City Clerk to enter into a grant agreement with Voicecorps Reading Service in support of their free reading services; to authorize an appropriation and expenditure of \$105,000.00 within the Neighborhood Initiative subfund; and to declare an emergency. (\$105,000.00)

WHEREAS, Voicecorps has provided free reading services to blind and visually impaired Columbus residents for the last 46 years; and

WHEREAS, the target audience for these services is overwhelmingly made up of aging residents who are either low- or fixed-income earners; and

WHEREAS, Columbus City Council has been an advocate for and supporter of services that account for the needs of our

older residents; and

WHEREAS, \$105,000.00 is available in the Neighborhood Initiative Fund to provide for this need; and

WHEREAS, an emergency exists in the usual daily operation of City Council in that it is immediately necessary to authorize the Clerk to enter into a grant agreement with Voicecorps to avoid interruption in services to residents in need, for the immediate preservation of the public health, peace, property, and safety; **NOW, THEREFORE**,

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBUS:

SECTION 1: That the City Clerk is hereby authorized to enter into a grant agreement with Voicecorps Reading Service in support of their free reading services.

SECTION 2: That the City Auditor is hereby authorized and directed to appropriate \$105,000.00 in the Neighborhood Initiatives subfund, fund 1000, subfund 100018, to Columbus City Council per the accounting codes in the attachment to this ordinance.

SECTION 3: That the expenditure of \$105,000.00 or so much thereof as may be needed pursuant to the action authorized in SECTION 1 of this ordinance, is hereby authorized in the Neighborhood Initiatives subfund, fund 1000, subfund 100018 per the accounting codes in the attachment to this ordinance.

SECTION 4. That the funds necessary to carry out the purpose of this ordinance are hereby deemed appropriated, and the City Auditor shall establish such accounting codes as necessary.

SECTION 5. That the City Auditor is authorized to make any accounting changes to revise the funding source for all contracts or contract modifications associated with this ordinance

SECTION 6: That for reasons stated in the preamble hereto, which is hereby made a part hereof, this ordinance is declared to be an emergency measure and shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage and approval by the Mayor, or ten days after passage if the Mayor neither approves nor vetoes the same.