



Legislation Details (With Text)

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Title: Actions pertaining to the Equitable Economic Mobility Initiative (EEMI) Grant Program:
 1. Authorize the City Manager to accept the \$70,000 in grant funding for the Equitable Economic Mobility Initiative (EEMI) Grant Program from the National League of Cities (NLC)
 2. Authorize the City Manager to execute all related documents for the acceptance, modification, extension, and administration of the EEMI Grant Program
 3. Authorize the City Manager to execute a Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Fresno and Bitwise Industries Inc. (Bitwise) regarding the EEMI grant

Sponsors: Economic Development Department

Indexes:

Code sections:

Attachments: 1. Grant Award Letter, 2. MOU with Bitwise

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
9/1/2022	1	City Council	ADOPTED	Pass

REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: KELLY TREVINO, Acting Director
Economic Development Department

BY: LAURA RIOS, Economic Development Coordinator
Economic Development Department

SUBJECT

Actions pertaining to the Equitable Economic Mobility Initiative (EEMI) Grant Program:
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RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends Council accept the Equitable Economic Mobility Initiative (EEMI) Grant Program

for the amount of \$70,000 and approve the MOU agreement between the City of Fresno and Bitwise.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On May 26, 2021, the City of Fresno Economic Development Department, in partnership with Bitwise, applied for an Equitable Economic Mobility Initiative (EEMI) Grant Program sponsored by the National League of Cities with the support of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. On June 27, 2021, the City received notification that this application was successful and the planning phase portion of the grant was awarded in the amount of \$25,000. On August 19, 2021, the City Council approved adopting the 2nd amendment to the annual appropriation resolution NO. 2021-178 appropriating \$25,000 for the EEMI Grant.

Recently the City received notification of the final award grant of \$70,000. This grant is a supplement to funding the city received in 2021 through NLC's Equitable Economic Mobility Initiative (EEMI), bringing NLC's total EEMI investment in the City of Fresno to \$95,000. This grant enables the city to implement the data-driven plans developed throughout the initiative to equitably expand economic mobility for residents and their families now and in the future.

BACKGROUND

The proposal focuses on financial inclusion and empowerment by reducing known barriers that deprive "hard to reach" businesses of government services including grants and financing opportunities, financial education, business creation programs, and technical assistance for all economic development programs. We have already obtained a more detailed understanding of the Fresno small business community through focus groups. This information will guide future discovery to provide more effective delivery mechanisms for city services.

Bitwise and the Department of Economic Development will work in collaboration to develop technology apprenticeships and a new technology program that will deliver accessible language support in Fresno's four key languages: English, Spanish, Hmong, and Punjabi. In partnership with the Office of Community Affairs (OCA), and with various community organizations - including the Fresno Area Hispanic Foundation, Fresno Metro Black Chamber, the Street-Vendor Merchant's Association, and others - conducted a Listening Tour consisting of four two-hour sessions in English, Spanish, Hmong, and Punjabi. Over 300 pages of raw data transcripts were collected, Bitwise is proposing a one-stop shop for small-business owners in the form of a digital hub for understanding business licenses and related permits, connecting the users to relevant community organizations, and increased language support for "hard to reach" businesses attempting to interact with government services and strategies.

Economic Development staff will work with technology apprentices, recruited by Bitwise Industries, to propose and develop new technology strategies that can deliver:

- accessible language support for economic development programs in Fresno's four key languages: English, Spanish, Hmong, and Punjabi. This could include options to "read out loud" certain key pieces of information to broaden access for those with accessibility or literacy barriers;
- text-only outreach for those businesses without email or broadband access; and
- a linking of Economic Development programs and information to the existing City of Fresno community channels, 311, and the FresGO mobile app, ideally with language support in Fresno's four key languages.

Impact

This project will provide a better understanding of “hard to reach” businesses and provide new tools for communicating to them. With these tools in place, we can better measure every economic development service for racial equity outcomes and strive, over time, to improve our historically poor performance on economic inclusion. This project will provide us with these new tools:

- a better understanding of the racial and ethnic profile of our small business community and its needs, allowing us to better measure our performance on inclusion;
- enhance outreach efforts and relationships with community-based organizations;
- more sustainable language support options including “reading” key information to users who can’t read; and
- an app that will allow us to deliver text as well as email notifications.

ENVIRONMENTAL FINDINGS

This item is not a project as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act.

LOCAL PREFERENCE

Local preference was not implemented because this item does not include an award of a service or construction contract.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no net City cost associated with the recommended action.

Attachments:

Grant Award Letter

MOU with Bitwise