



URGENT ITEM AGENDA MATERIAL

Government Code Section 54954.2(b)
Rules of Procedure Chapter III.C.5

THIS ITEM IS NOT YET AGENDIZED AND MAY OR MAY NOT BE ACCEPTED FOR THE AGENDA AS A LATE ITEM, SUBJECT TO THE CITY COUNCIL'S DISCRETION ACCORDING TO BROWN ACT RULES

Meeting Date: May 21, 2024

Item Description: Budget Referral for the Berkeley Faith & Justice Coalition – Grassroots Leader Support Project

This item is submitted pursuant to the provision checked below:

- Emergency Situation (54954.2(b)(1) - majority vote required)
Determination by a majority vote of the legislative body that an emergency situation exists, as defined in Section 54956.5.
- Immediate Action Required (54954.2(b)(2) - two-thirds vote required)
There is a need to take immediate action and the need for action came to the attention of the local agency subsequent to the agenda for this meeting being posted.

Once the item is added to the agenda (Consent or Action) it must be passed by the standard required vote threshold (majority, two-thirds, or 7/9).

Facts supporting the addition of the item to the agenda under Section 54954.2(b) and Chapter III.C.5 of the Rules of Procedure:

The Berkeley Faith and Justice Coalition (BFJC) is a consortium of ten African-American focused community-based organizations in South and West Berkeley. At a May 16 meeting with the group, our Council office became aware of the coalition's proposed project and request for City of Berkeley support.

To meet the deadline to be considered for the FY 25-26 budget cycle, with the first hearing on the budget scheduled tonight, on May 21, this item is being submitted as an urgent item.



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To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Councilmember Sophie Hahn (Author) and Councilmember Ben Bartlett (Co-Sponsor)
Subject: Budget Referral for the Berkeley Faith & Justice Coalition – Grassroots Leader Support Project

RECOMMENDATION

Refer to the FY 2025-2026 Budget Process up to \$25,000 per FY (total of \$50,000) to fund Phases 1 and 2 of the Berkeley Faith and Justice Coalition’s Grassroots Leader Support Project to establish ongoing support for grassroots leaders providing critical mentorship, development and support opportunities for African American and other potentially at-risk youth and young adults.

SUMMARY STATEMENT

The Berkeley Faith and Justice Coalition (BFJC) is a consortium of ten African-American focused community-based organizations in South and West Berkeley that have come together to address racial disparities and build an equitable Berkeley for the health, safety, and sustainability of all. One of the BFJC’s key goals is to build grassroots community capacity to provide high-quality, relational, culturally relevant mentorship, support, services, and programs for Berkeley’s highest-risk youth and young adults.

This item refers up to \$25,000 per Fiscal Year (up to \$50,000 total) to the FY25-26 Budget Process for Phases 1 and 2 of the BFJC’s Grassroots Leader Support Project. The Project is being developed in 4 phases and is intended to elicit and support the wisdom and experience of existing providers, and the perspectives and preferences of the communities and families to be served. Approximately 25 grassroots initiatives have been identified that currently serve at-risk youth and might benefit from BFJC’s initiative. The ultimate goal is to create an “umbrella” not-for-profit that supports these grassroots programs and individuals, helps them build capacity, and ensures their long term success.

Developing the vision and parameters for this umbrella support organization will also be conducted in a grassroots manner, with youth participation and leadership opportunities embedded in the work to conceive and bring to fruition the support organization and its capabilities.

Phase 1 is a mapping project to comprehensively identify, understand, and map providers and the communities they serve, resulting in a clear picture of all existing community assets, an understanding of their reach, and identification of gaps. Phase 2 involves outreach to all identified organizations to understand their broadest potential in terms of youth they may serve, and programs/supports that can be offered to at-risk youth, to identify the kinds of capacity building supports that may be needed from the umbrella organization.

The goal is to ensure that grassroots organizations providing relational, culturally attuned services and programs for African American young people and other young adults in Berkeley have the capacity and support they need to maximize their positive impact.

BACKGROUND

Research and grassroots community experts agree that positive, culturally attuned relationships with youth and young adults are the critical ingredient to improving the trajectory of a young person's life. In a highly competitive and individualistic society, healing and empowering relationships are undermined by the pace, culture, and demands of everyday life. This is especially true for groups that have historically been excluded, marginalized, and underserved by mainstream institutions, like African American young people in Berkeley. Programs that focus on building such relationships are the single most effective way to ensure positive youth and young adult outcomes, as well as community safety, but initiating and building out such relational, culturally attuned programs is challenging.

Berkeley benefits from the invisible work of countless African American leaders who have found ways to support African American youth and young adults as they transition to adulthood. These local leaders build relationships, run programs, and offer mentoring, in various degrees of formality, in efforts to support the youth and young adults in our community who would otherwise be isolated and at risk of mental health challenges, school failure, and involvement in violence. These grassroots leaders offer care and accompaniment in an environment that does not support their work. Far too often, programs start and stop, flail and struggle, in a policy and funding environment that does not recognize or support their leadership or vision.

Although the City of Berkeley supports youth programming through initiatives like the Youth Equity Partnership, many local grassroots leaders have been unable to access funding due to the stringent demands of the grant-making process. This initiative seeks to create an umbrella organization to enable and support these more granular, embedded and extremely important grassroots and individual initiatives.

The Berkeley Faith and Justice Coalition would like to better understand who our local grassroots leaders are, what services and supports they are providing, and how the Berkeley community can better support them in the critical work they do for the wellbeing of our community. Their aim is to build a Berkeley-based capacity-building organization to support the work of our local grassroots leaders, and to elevate the field of youth and young adult development.

Phase One (6 months) would include data collection through a series of one-on-one and small group interviews with 20-25 current grassroots program leaders, concluding with the development of a written report, to be shared with the City. The report would provide a Berkeley landscape or narrative map of the grassroots programs and organizations that are currently serving African American youth and young adults. It would include descriptions of their offerings, commitment to growth, strengths, and challenges, and training and capacity-building needs over the next several years.

Phase Two (6-12 months) would gather 10-15 of the most committed grassroots leaders for initial training on topics such as youth development programming, trauma-informed self-care and program development, violence prevention and interruption, non-profit governance, budget development and fundraising, social entrepreneurial program models, and program data collection. Participants would then conduct self-assessments of their own leadership and programs to determine areas where support and training are sought. The BFJC would also begin research on possible models for the development of a Berkeley-based capacity-building nonprofit that supports, trains, and helps to resource the work of grassroots leaders. The umbrella organization would serve as a program incubator, and training and support hub for grassroots leaders and programs that seek to provide high-quality, culturally-attuned services for youth and young adults in our community.

Phases 3 and 4 would continue the training and support of this emerging cohort of leaders, welcome newcomers for a second cohort, and begin building the board of the independent nonprofit umbrella organization, if the community determines that such an entity is needed to continue to support our youth and young adult service work.

At the end of Phase 4, the Berkeley Faith and Justice Coalition expects to have raised the capacity of the existing 20-25 grassroots Berkeley Community programs or organizations so that they are able to provide consistent, high-quality services, demonstrated through basic program evaluation data, and are able to apply for outside funding and develop plans for long-term sustainability. At this point, the BFJC will have determined, with its community partners, whether there is a need for an independent capacity-building organization and will have laid the groundwork for building the board and financial sustainability plans for this new entity.

CONTACT

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