

Ferndale Community Service Cooperative: Strengthening Social Support Networks in Ferndale

Funding Request: 2022: \$150,000, 2023: \$150,000 (\$300,000 total)

ARPA Nexus: Assistance to Households, Non-Profits, Investing in Housing and Neighborhoods,
Assistance to Disproportionately Impacted Populations

Request: Whatcom County is requested to provide \$300,000 from 2022-2023, a total that is expected to be matched by the City of Ferndale and will provide funding for the hire of a full-time Executive Director and a full time “Community Resource Navigator” for the Community Resource Center. Additional funding will be used to support, expand, and professionalize programs within the Center for the maximum benefit of the community.

Issue: The Ferndale community lacks a reliable social support network. Existing support networks in Bellingham are not only spread thin, but require a significant time commitment from Ferndale residents in need to travel to Bellingham, and cannot rely on efficient bus service to travel between the two cities. The existing Community Service Cooperative is run by a small group of dedicated volunteers, but is unable to keep up with the needs of the Ferndale community. This community includes the Ferndale School District and over 30,000 residents, and is the most diverse and fastest growing community in Whatcom County—requiring a diverse set of skills and services to meet the needs of the population.

COVID-19 has highlighted the needs for an expansion of services, ranging from access to child care, re-entry into the work force, navigating the social services network, utility bill and rental assistance, clothing and personal hygiene articles, and more.

Solution: The need for an expansion of social services in Ferndale is clear, and is overdue. The CSC has reached its capacity as a volunteer-led organization, and by establishing a permanent Director the CSC will be able to expand and streamline its services, identify processes to help clients navigate complex social service systems, and become eligible for grant funding at the Local, State, and Federal level, and more. ARPA provides the Ferndale community with a unique opportunity to address the impacts of COVID-19 while establishing a sustainable professional organization that has the potential to serve the community for many years. As the Ferndale community grows, services cannot rely on what is primarily a “hub” model within Bellingham, but must instead transition to a coordinated hub and satellite model, as suggested here. The City of Ferndale expects to contribute \$300,000 to this effort through its own ARPA resources, and to commence the hiring process for these positions in early 2022.

ARPA Eligibility: US Treasury Interim Guidance includes provisions for: Assistance to Households (food, rent, mortgage, utility assistance), non-profits, investing in housing and neighborhoods, and assistance to disproportionately impacted populations and communities. The CSC's mission squarely fits within these eligible expenditures.