

ITEM #: 40  
DATE: 08-13-24  
DEPT: ADMIN

**COUNCIL ACTION FORM**

**SUBJECT:**           **COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS AROUND HOMELESSNESS -  
CONSULTANT**

**BACKGROUND:**

In the last six months or so, community service providers, ASSET volunteers, City staff, and the broader community have observed an increase in the homeless population in Ames. Homelessness is a complex issue and the reasons why an individual may become homeless can vary greatly. While there are various workgroups and service providers that focus on homelessness prevention and/or providing unsheltered individuals with services, there seems to be a lack of a comprehensive community understanding and strategy to assist the homeless population.

Part of the role that ASSET volunteers have is being aware of community needs and bringing it to the ASSET Funders' attention. At the July ASSET Admin Team meeting, board members discussed the issues of homelessness in the community and brainstormed suggestions of what could be done. An idea was brought up to encourage City and County leaders to lead a community-wide effort to better understand homelessness and to develop a comprehensive strategy to assist this population.

ASSET staff agree this is an important first step; therefore, it is being requested that the City Council authorize City staff, in partnership with other ASSET Funder staff, to explore, engage, and enter into an agreement with a consultant to host community conversations around homelessness with the goal of developing an action plan this coming fall. The amount being requested that would be committed by the City is up to \$12,000. At this time, the other ASSET funders have not discussed their financial contributions, but it is anticipated there will be other funder contributions.

On June 11, 2024, the City Council approved the FY 2024/25 ASSET contracts totaling \$1,780,999 and approved reserving \$143,579 in unallocated funds for three separate purposes, where:

- A) \$117,322 is reserved for needs that may arise for emergency shelter services;
- B) \$6,000 is reserved for needs that may arise for housing service coordination services; and,
- C) \$20,257 remain undesignated for any ASSET-related service need(s) that may arise in FY 2024/25.

Of the unallocated funds for emergency shelter services (Purpose A), \$100,000 has been committed to purchase services through The Salvation Army. This leaves a total of \$43,579 in unallocated funds available to fulfill this request. Staff is requesting that the \$12,000 request come from the \$20,257 undesignated fund (Purpose C).

Once the funding sources are finalized, ASSET staff will seek proposals from prospective consultants and enter into an agreement to perform the work.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

1. Approve authorizing City staff to explore, engage and enter into an agreement with a consultant to host community conversations around homelessness for up to \$12,000 from the unallocated, undesignated FY 2024/25 ASSET funds.
2. Deny the request to authorize staff to engage a consultant on homelessness and deny designating up to \$12,000 toward the effort.

**CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

An important first step to address homelessness is to understand what is happening in the community that is leading to a greater homeless population. The purpose of engaging a consultant is to facilitate community conversations with service providers, community leaders and the general public to understand what services are provided today and where are additional services needed to assist the homeless population. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1.