

**ST. PETERSBURG CITY COUNCIL**  
**Consent Agenda**  
**Meeting of February 6, 2014**

**TO:** The Honorable William H. Dudley, Chair, and Members of City Council

**SUBJECT:**

A Resolution Authorizing the Mayor or his designee to execute a Memorandum of Understanding/Agreement to Participate with the National League of Cities for a new pilot program called the Local Interventions for Financial Empowerment through Utility Payments (LIFT-UP) initiative; to accept a grant in the amount of \$20,000; and to execute all other documents necessary to effectuate this transaction; approving a supplemental appropriation from the increase in the unappropriated balance of the Billing & Collections Fund (5021) resulting from these additional revenues to the Billing & Collections Department (350) Customer Service (2025); and providing an effective date.

**EXPLANATION:**

The National League of Cities ("NLC") Institute for Youth, Education, and Families in collaboration with the Cities of St. Petersburg, Florida; Houston, Texas; Newark, New Jersey and Savannah, Georgia has launched an innovative, two-year pilot program, Local Interventions for Financial Empowerment through Utility Payments (LIFT-UP), that will enhance family financial stability. Through LIFT-UP, we will test a new framework to align local financial empowerment services with municipal utility debt collection practices, with the goal of identifying struggling families and helping them become financially secure. The NLC is providing a grant to the City in the amount of \$20,000 to help implement the pilot program, including conducting data collection, financial empowerment counseling services, reporting and participant incentives.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

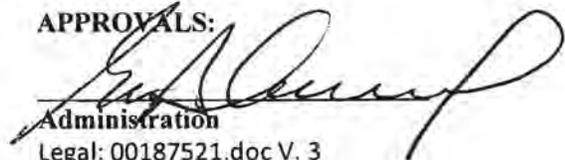
Administration recommends the City Council adopt the attached resolution authorizing the Mayor or his designee to execute a Memorandum of Understanding/Agreement to Participate with the National League of Cities for a new pilot program called the Local Interventions for Financial Empowerment through Utility Payments (LIFT-UP) initiative; to accept a grant in the amount of \$20,000; and to execute all other documents necessary to effectuate this transaction; approving a supplemental appropriation from the increase in the unappropriated balance of the Billing & Collections Fund (5021) resulting from these additional revenues to the Billing & Collections Department (350) Customer Service (2025); and providing an effective date.

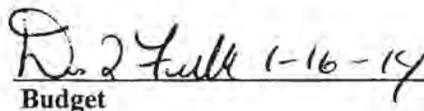
**COST/FUNDING/ASSESSMENT INFORMATION:**

Revenues of \$20,000 will be received from the National League of Cities. A supplemental appropriation for FY14 in the amount of \$20,000 from the increase in the unappropriated balance of the Billing & Collections Department Fund (5201) resulting from these revenues to the Billing & Collections Department (350) Customer Service (2025) will be necessary.

**ATTACHMENTS:** Resolution  
Memorandum of Understanding / Agreement to Participate

**APPROVALS:**

  
Administration  
Legal: 00187521.doc V. 3

  
Budget

A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR OR HIS DESIGNEE TO EXECUTE A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING/AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE WITH THE NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES FOR A NEW PILOT PROGRAM CALLED THE LOCAL INTERVENTIONS FOR FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT THROUGH UTILITY PAYMENTS (LIFT-UP) INITIATIVE; TO ACCEPT A GRANT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$20,000; AND TO EXECUTE ALL OTHER DOCUMENTS NECESSARY TO EFFECTUATE THIS TRANSACTION; APPROVING A SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATION FROM THE INCREASE IN THE UNAPPROPRIATED BALANCE OF THE BILLING & COLLECTIONS FUND (5021) RESULTING FROM THESE ADDITIONAL REVENUES TO THE BILLING & COLLECTIONS DEPARTMENT (350) CUSTOMER SERVICE (2025); AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Whereas, the National League of Cities ("NLC") Institute for Youth, Education, and Families in collaboration with the Cities of St. Petersburg, Florida; Houston, Texas; Newark, New Jersey and Savannah, Georgia has launched an innovative, two-year pilot program, Local Interventions for Financial Empowerment through Utility Payments (LIFT-UP), that will enhance family financial stability; and

Whereas, LIFT-UP, will test a new framework to align local financial empowerment services with municipal utility debt collection practices, with the goal of identifying struggling families and helping them become financially secure; and

Whereas, the NLC is providing a grant to the City in the amount of \$20,000 to help implement the pilot program, including conducting data collection, financial empowerment counseling services, reporting and participant incentives.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of St. Petersburg, Florida that the Mayor or his designee is authorized to execute a Memorandum of Understanding/Agreement to Participate with the National League of Cities for a new pilot program called the Local Interventions for Financial Empowerment through Utility Payments (LIFT-UP) initiative; to accept a grant in the amount of \$20,000; and to execute all other documents necessary to effectuate this transaction; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that there is hereby approved from the increase in the unappropriated balance of the Billing & Collections Fund (5021) resulting from these additional revenues, the following supplemental appropriation for FY 2014:

Billing & Collections Fund (5021)

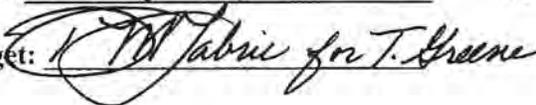
Billing & Collections Department (350) Customer Service (2025) \$20,000

This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon its adoption.

**APPROVALS:**

Legal: 

Administration: 

Budget: 

**National League of Cities  
and  
City of St. Petersburg, Florida**  
*Memorandum of Understanding / Agreement to Participate*

**Local Interventions for Financial Empowerment  
through Utility Payments (LIFT-UP) Initiative**

With support from CFSI's Financial Capability Innovation Fund II, the Ford Foundation and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, NLC's Institute for Youth, Education and Families is launching a new pilot program called the *Local Interventions for Financial Empowerment through Utility Payments (LIFT-UP)* initiative. Through LIFT-UP, the National League of Cities (NLC) and participating cities will test a new framework to align local financial empowerment services with municipal utility debt collection practices with the goal of identifying struggling families and helping them become financially secure.

The LIFT-UP project will focus on:

1. Forging connections between utilities and financial empowerment agencies to identify low-income residents who can benefit from the project's incentives and services;
2. Designing and testing a new mix of products and services that can financially empower indebted families, help them pay overdue bills, and help prevent future accumulation of debt; and
3. Restructuring outstanding debt owed to city-owned entities and using behavioral economic approaches to facilitate debt repayment.

The purpose of this Agreement/Memorandum of Understanding is to confirm and specify the details of an agreement between NLC and the City of St. Petersburg to pilot the LIFT-UP project. In order to achieve the goals of this initiative, NLC and the City will collaborate on project design, implementation and data collection/evaluation activities as set forth below in the sections on the roles and responsibilities of both parties to this agreement. This agreement will take effect upon the signature of the last party to sign and shall remain in effect until June 30, 2015. Either party may terminate this Agreement upon delivery of written notice to the other party. This agreement is not binding or legally enforceable, imposes no enforceable obligations upon the parties and does not grant any rights.

**SUMMARY OF NLC'S AND PARTICIPATING CITIES' ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

**National League of Cities (NLC):**

- a) Ensure effective project oversight and coordination among all parties (funders, cities, project evaluator, field experts) to achieve desired outcomes.
- b) Provide ongoing technical assistance and strategic guidance for the project, including assistance to cities as they develop and implement the program model, effective processes for data collection and analysis, and plans for sustaining the program after the project ends. Technical assistance will include:
  - i. Ongoing telephone and email correspondence with city teams as necessary;
  - ii. At least two site visits to each city to meet with local city teams;

- iii. Regular cross-site conference calls with all cities to discuss elements of the project and offer peer exchange opportunities; and
  - iv. Two cross-site meetings that will take place during the two-year project with city teams (locations to be determined).
- c) Provide regrants to cities to help implement the project, including conducting data collection and reporting necessary for the evaluation.
  - d) Create regular opportunities for peer exchange and learning, including connections to other organizations who could serve as potential partners, funders, or advisors.
  - e) Collaborate with the project evaluator, the Center for Financial Security at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (CFS), to conduct the project evaluation and a qualitative survey of participants.

**City of St. Petersburg and Other Participating Cities:**

- a) Select a local team lead within the city government who will act as a primary contact for NLC. The city should also select a utility liaison who will provide monthly project data to NLC as described in the evaluation plan, and a financial empowerment liaison who will provide additional available data on participants' financial empowerment activities.
- b) Agree to implement the LIFT-UP program model, incorporating five core model features (*as described in the LIFT-UP project model description*):
  - i. Streamlined identification and referral systems;
  - ii. Restructured debt payment options;
  - iii. Provision of financial empowerment services;
  - iv. A city-defined incentive for targeted utility customers to participate; and
  - v. Quarterly communication with participants during program operation.
- c) Work with NLC and CFS staff in implementing data collection and evaluation strategies as detailed in the project evaluation plan, including the timely submission of all relevant data to NLC. Information will be submitted on a monthly basis and will include data on public utility payments **and** participants' financial empowerment activities (*as described in the one-page Evaluation Summary*).
- d) Participate in technical assistance activities, including:
  - i. periodic meetings, monthly calls and webinars to provide an update on local progress;
  - ii. a site visit conducted by NLC and CFS staff;
  - iii. two project cross-site meetings hosted by NLC in early 2014 and in early 2015; and
  - iv. other NLC activities related to the LIFT-UP project as reasonably requested, which may include NLC's two national annual conferences as well as events that are sponsored by NLC's project funders.
- e) Provide NLC with a preliminary summary of implementation plans by May 30, 2013. The summary should address the key components of program implementation as described in the program model.

- f) Submit a final report on progress, outcomes, and lessons learned that includes a description of how NLC pass-through grant funds were spent to NLC by January 2015.
- g) Keep NLC or CFS staff apprised of progress, including setbacks or unexpected challenges throughout the grant period.

## **REGRANTS TO CITIES**

The National League of Cities will provide regrants in the aggregate amount of \$20,000 to cities to help implement the project, including conducting data collection and reporting necessary for the evaluation. This grant is made only for the purposes stated in this Agreement. It is understood that these grant funds will be used solely for such purposes in accordance with costs associated with project activities for the term of the pilot program. Allowable uses of funds include expenses associated with staffing and personnel, data collection, marketing and outreach, financial empowerment counseling services, participant incentives and quarterly communication with program participants. The full payment of \$20,000 will be made upon execution of this agreement.

## **PROJECT TIMELINE AND MILESTONES**

The project timeline will be two years. Year one will focus on program and data system development, program implementation, technical assistance, and peer learning opportunities. Year two will focus on sustainability and evaluation. Year two will also include a survey of program participants.

### **Milestones:**

- (a) Customer identification strategies, data systems and evaluation plans in cities finalized – December 2013
- (b) Pilot cities will have developed their pilots and begun implementation – February 2014
- (c) First wave of 50 participants per city will have agreed to participate in the program and complete their debt negotiation sessions with a financial counselor – April 30, 2014
- (d) Second wave of 50 additional participants per city will have agreed to participate in the program and complete their debt negotiation sessions with a financial counselor – August 30, 2014
- (e) The project target of 500 participants across the five cities is met (or 100 participants per city) – January 31, 2015

The National League of Cities is excited the City of St. Petersburg is interested in participating in the LIFT-UP initiative and looks forward to working together to make this initiative a success for the City and its residents.

[one signature page follows]

Acknowledged and Agreed:

City of St. Petersburg, Florida

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Print: \_\_\_\_\_

As its: \_\_\_\_\_

(Seal)

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_

Eva A. Andujar, City Clerk

Approved as to Content and Form: *RBS*

\_\_\_\_\_  
City Attorney (Designee)

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Assistant City Attorney

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**National League of Cities**

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Clarence E. Anthony  
Executive Director