

Memorandum



CITY OF DALLAS

DATE June 21, 2024

TO Honorable Chair and Members of the Quality of Life, Art, and Culture Committee

SUBJECT **National League of Cities - Cities Addressing Fines and Fees Equitably: People and Pets Assistance Program Grant Approval**

Background

On November 9, 2022, the Office of Equity and Inclusion (OEI), Office of Community Care (OCC) and Dallas Animal Services (DAS) submitted an application for the NLC Cities Addressing Fines and Fees (CAFFE) cohort in alignment with Dallas' Racial Equity Plan (REP). The application amplified the City's commitment to addressing inequities through the REP, and specifically identified an opportunity to address disparities in DAS' pet fines and fees. The City of Dallas was selected to be one of eight cities (Birmingham, AL; Las Vegas, NV; Maywood, IL; Montgomery, AL; Pueblo, CO; St. Louis, MO; and Washington, DC) to partake in a two phase cohort inclusive of a \$40,000 grant and Technical Assistance and Support to address the impacts of municipal fines and fees on residents.

On October 25, 2023, NLC provided a MOU to the City of Dallas confirming the awarded \$30,000 implementation grant funds to the City in addition to the \$10,000.00 planning (not to exceed \$40,000.00) to support the CAFFE project. The CAFFE initiative aims to strengthen the financial security of families who are at risk of losing income and assets. This is in alignment with Dallas' REP and Equity Indicators Report, which notes disparities in Fines and Fees— specifically, Equity Indicator 40: Fines and Fees (60) that outlines disparities surrounding communities that are fined. According to the 2019 report "High fines and fees may reduce lower-income defendants' ability to pay for other essential needs, such as housing, transportation, or food..."

Communities below I-30 have higher instances of receiving civil citations. 42% of non-payment citations are from five zip codes: 75216, 75217, 75241, 75212, and 75211.

Through the cross-collaborative partnership between OEI, DAS, OCC and NLC CAFFE we are working to address disparities in fines and fees without compromising public safety in the following ways:

1. Incentivizing residents impacted by Dallas Animal Services fines and fees, with a focus on animal at large, no proof of vaccination or tags, not microchipped, or spayed or neutered.
2. Connecting impacted residents to other city services that can support debt reduction such as the Financial Empowerment Center.
3. Acquiring consulting services to support alternatives to ability to pay policy-level recommendations and key practices to address inequitable fines and fees.

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This multifaceted collaboration will support the City of Dallas to better understand the impact of fines and fees on communities who demonstrate the greatest needs, while developing some actionable steps to address the disparities through service delivery and policy recommendations.

Should you have any questions or would like to provide input, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Lindsey Wilson, Director of the Office of Equity and Inclusion, at lindsey.wilson@dallas.gov.



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