

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C., Sept. 19 -- The city of **Winston-Salem** issued the following news release:

Newcomers to **Winston-Salem** who do not speak English, or for whom English is a second language, will soon have someone in city government to help them thanks to a grant from the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation.

The foundation is giving the city a \$270,000 grant to hire a language access coordinator for three years. The coordinator will work with the local **Building Integrated Communities** program, says Wanda Allen Abraha, the city's director of human relations/diversity, equity and inclusion.

"This grant-funded position is in addition to the Spanish language access coordinator position the City Council approved in June," Allen-Abraha said. "It will allow us to enhance the range of languages that our local **Building Integrated Communities** program serves."

Winston-Salem's BIC program was started in 2015 as a local partner to the **Building Integrated Communities** initiative started by the Latino Migration Project at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

The local program was organized by the city's Human Relations/DEI Department and has focused on coordinating the efforts of community organizations that serve the immigrant population in **Winston-Salem**.

Earlier this year the Blue Cross NC Foundation awarded a separate \$1.55 million grant to UNC-Chapel Hill to support the statewide **Building Integrated Communities** initiative.

The city's grant is one of eight companion grants awarded by the Blue Cross NC Foundation, said Valerie Stewart, the director for healthy **communities** at the Blue Cross NC Foundation.

"These funds are to accelerate the inclusive practices and policies already underway in **Winston-Salem** and across our state to build toward more equitable and healthier **communities**," Stewart said. "The next three years will demonstrate what is possible when intentional language access efforts are made to engage and include all residents in important conversations that impact their ability to thrive."

Allen-Abraha said that the person who fills the grant-funded position, in addition to providing direct access to a language other than Spanish, will further expand the city's language-access efforts by training members of still more language groups. To date, the local BIC program has worked with 14 different languages.

The city will be hiring someone for this position by early October, Allen-Abraha said.

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