



Department Source: Finance
To: City Council
From: City Manager & Staff
Council Meeting Date: July 7, 2025
Re: Bloomberg Harvard City Hall Fellows

Executive Summary

This Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Columbia and the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative at the John F. Kennedy School of Government highlights terms regarding the engagement of a Bloomberg Harvard City Hall Fellow, who is a graduate of masters or professional degree programs at Harvard University, to work for the leadership team of Columbia for a two-year term.

Discussion

The Bloomberg Center for Cities at Harvard University Leadership Initiative has launched the fourth cohort of a unique fellowship to inspire Harvard graduates to pursue careers in city leadership while elevating the skills and capabilities that lead to more effective, efficient, innovative, and equitable cities.

The City of Columbia is working to utilize innovation to drive the way the City does work, through becoming more comfortable with taking risks and trying new ways of doing things. Creating space for departments to team up and collaborate more around shared priorities. And engaging residents more deeply to better understand their needs and co-create new ideas for solving problems.

Three local challenges that are particularly posed for taking an innovative approach to addressing: a shortage of affordable housing, particularly for families with low incomes, young adults, and first-time homebuyers; limited public transit routes and service; and while violent crime is down in Columbia, perceptions of public safety in the community including the downtown are negative.

Fellows will be tasked with supporting Columbia in developing and deepening capabilities to address pressing municipal challenges, and will receive ongoing training, support, and facilitation by staff and faculty. Host cities will provide leadership, supervision, and mentoring for the fellow throughout the full term of the two-year fellowship.

Success would start with piloting new ways of working within departments most receptive to change. The hope is to deliver quick wins that show what innovative approaches look like and use those examples to build momentum. The ultimate goal is for Columbia's city government to become more collaborative and creative about solving problems in ways that involve residents and respond to their needs.



Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: Equipping this person with office supplies and equipment would be a short temp financial impact of \$5,000 to \$10,000.

Long-Term Impact: N/A

Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

Strategic Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Operational Excellence, Secondary Impact: Secondary, Tertiary Impact: Tertiary

Comprehensive Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Not Applicable, Secondary Impact: Secondary, Tertiary Impact: Tertiary

Legislative History

Date	Action

Suggested Council Action

Staff recommends Council authorize the City Manager to sign the memorandum of understanding between the City of Columbia and the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative at the John F. Kennedy School of Government.