

BUILDING BETTER BUSINESS: THE CITY OF IRVINE

A LEADERSHIP IN ACTION PROJECT BY ALEXIS KIM
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INTRODUCTION

There is a significant population in the City of Irvine that speaks a foreign language as their primary language. This poses a significant barrier for this population to find businesses in the city due to the multitude of documents, permits, and laws that can be challenging to understand even for native English speakers.

Irvine has been named as a top city to raise and family and begin a business. These benefits and the resources offered to families and businessowners should be extended to all prospective citizens, no matter their background or primary language.

OBJECTIVES

1. Increase accessibility to permit, license, legal, and document information on building a business in Irvine.
2. Provide more opportunities for the citizens of Irvine to learn about the nuances of establishing a business in Irvine in accordance with city, municipal, county, state, and federal laws and regulations.
3. Streamline the memo and website development process for city employees, especially given how busy city employees are due to it being election season.
4. Create five deliverables that support the mission of this project and can be easily updated in the future as laws and regulations change.

DELIVERABLES

1. Long-form guide on starting a business in Irvine
2. One-pager on the resources available in Irvine for businessowners
3. Memo calling for the establishment of a new team of city staff dedicated to business concierge services
4. Text and graphics to be posted on the City website by the City Clerk's office
5. Translate one-pager into the top spoken foreign languages in Irvine

LINKS TO DELIVERABLES

#1: LONG-FORM GUIDE



#3: MEMO



#2: ONE-PAGER



#4: WEBSITE LANGUAGE & GRAPHICS

HOW DID MY PLANS CHANGE?

Initially, I planned for my Leadership in Action project to be based on the research I conducted last summer on eldercare in East Asia. My original plan was to create a LiA project under Councilwoman Tammy Kim's office that would focus on the many unique cultural identity-based nursing homes that exist in Irvine. More than 50% of Irvine's population self-identifies as a person of color, and this uniquely diverse community has built a large number of identity-based nursing homes. These specialized nursing homes primarily hire caregivers who speak a certain language and offer cultural identity-based programming for its residents. There are also a number of volunteer groups in Irvine that seek to meet the cultural needs of these homes' residents. However, these homes tend to have challenges with funding due to the highly specific demographic they seek to cater to. Thus, they often rely on outside, independent organizations to help organize culturally mindful events. For my LiA, I planned to create a network to connect these disparate organizations with nursing homes that are looking for cultural programming, offering the residents of these homes more opportunities for enrichment and improving their quality of life.

However, I ended up pivoting my plans to my current, business-based LiA project to better serve the goals of the office I interned for this summer as part of my project. This new LiA project combines my interest in economics and increasing equity and access with the Councilwoman's policy goal of increasing business in Irvine. This sharp pivot taught me the importance of flexibility and demonstrated that it is always possible to work to merge my personal interests with those of my employer.

REFLECTIONS

This LiA project has taught me many personal skills, including time management, balance, and leadership as well as much about the inner workings of local government and governance on a city level. I had the opportunity to compare being a public servant on the federal level (based on past experience) and the local level, and I learned so much about how to best serve my community directly. Furthermore, I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to meet so many passionate public servants.

CHALLENGES

The most significant challenge I faced while planning my LiA project was tearing my ACL. This injury required a surgical reconstruction this summer, which greatly and suddenly limited my options for my project. Going abroad was not an option, so I had to pivot my original plans of working with a nonprofit in South Korea. I am so grateful I was able to find an office in my home city that holds many of the same values towards increased equity and inclusion I do that helped me create an adapted LiA project.

CONCLUSION

I am currently scheduled to have a meeting with our city manager and city clerk in the near future, and I hope that these deliverables will be able to help the residents of Irvine. This project allowed me to combine my passion for public service with my field of study, economics, as well as my desire to increase the accessibility of resources for traditionally marginalized groups of people. I hope that the deliverables I created will help the City Council create real positive changes for Irvine's business community.



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