

INDIAN WELLS CITY COUNCIL

October 16, 2025



To: City Council
From: City Manager Department
Prepared by: Eric Ceja, Assistant City Manager
Subject: **Consideration of a Reimbursement Program for Local Businesses to become Autism Certified through the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards**

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

Council provides **DIRECTION** on the Indian Wells Autism Certification Reimbursement Program (IW-ACRP); and

AUTHORIZE the City Manager to execute all documents required to effectuate the program; and

FINDS the action exempt from CEQA review under CEQA Guidelines section 15061(b)(3).

BACKGROUND:

In July 2024, the City of Indian Wells became a "Certified Autism Center" through the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES). Through the encouragement of Visit Greater Palm Springs (VGPS) several cities, hotels, and businesses in the Coachella Valley have achieved this certification and the Coachella Valley is now recognized as an "Autism Certified Destination" through the IBCCES. The designation is important for autism awareness and tourist traveling with autistic individuals. Currently, within the City of Indian Wells, The Living Desert and the Renaissance Esmeralda Resort and Spa have achieved certification through the IBCCES.

At the September 4, 2025, City Council meeting, a member of the public spoke during open comments to encourage the City Council to adopt an Autism Certification Reimbursement program for local businesses; similar to a program adopted by the City of Palm Desert. This program prioritizes hospitality, retail, and restaurants, and provides a \$2,500 reimbursement for achieving certification. The \$2,500 reimbursement is intended to offset the \$2,500 Certified Autism Center fee through the IBCCES.

If approved, the City of Indian Wells could dedicate \$10,000 from the Economic Development Sponsorship budget to reimburse up to four businesses at \$2,500 for achieving the "Certified Autism Center" through the IBCCES. Staff would promote the program to hospitality and restaurants first and would report back to City Council on the programs success and interest in 6-months. If additional funding is needed, staff can come back sooner for Council discussion and deliberation to provide additional funding for the program.

OPTIONS:

Staff is seeking City Council direction on the creation of a reimbursement program for local businesses to achieve autism certification through the IBCCES and presents City Council with the following options:

1. Create the "Indian Wells Autism Certification Reimbursement Program" (IW-ACRP) and allocation of \$10,000 from the Economic Development program budget in support of the program and authorize the City Manager to effectuate a program that would prioritize existing hotels and restaurants.
2. Do not create a reimbursement program for local businesses to become autism certified through the IBCCES.
3. Alternative direction

FISCAL IMPACT:

Funds to support this program are available in account no. 1012401-551200 Sponsorships under the Economic Development program budget.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA):

This creation of a reimbursement program is not a project under the CEQA and no evaluation of CEQA criteria is required for this program.