



CITY OF TOPEKA

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

SOCIAL SERVICE GRANTS COMMITTEE

CITY COUNCIL
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Date: February 4, 2020

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Location: Holliday 1st Floor Conference Room; 620 SE Madison

Committee members present: Councilmembers Karen Hiller (Chair), Christina Valdivia-Alcalá, Michael Padilla

City staff present: City Manager Brent Trout, Sasha Haehn (Director of Neighborhood Relations), Corrie Wright (DNR), Rachelle Vega-Retana (DNR)

1) Call to Order

Councilmember Hiller called the meeting to order at 10:00am. Committee members introduced themselves. Chairwoman Hiller gave a brief introduction of the goals of the committee to the audience.

2) Approve Minutes from January 27, 2020 Meeting

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá made a motion accept the minutes from the January 27, 2020 meeting. Committee member Padilla seconded the motion. Motion carried 3:0.

3) Review

a) Priorities Sheet

Chairwoman Hiller stated the Priorities Sheet was set by the previous Committee and had been approved by the Governing Body. Corrie Wright, Division Director of Housing Services, responded the minimum grant amount is \$10,000 and the maximum amount is \$25,000. New programs maximum is \$15,000 for an organization that has not been established with the City in the past five years. The Committee continued with the proposed funding formula in which the reward of requested funding is correlated to an application's score received. This formula has been continued for three or four years.

Chairwoman Hiller reviewed the mission statement and categories found on the Funding Priorities Sheet, which defines the categories that the City is interested in funding through the Social Service Grants. Chairwoman Hiller provided history of funding, contracted services, funding cap, and the two agencies that had been Grandfathered in. The topic of new programs came up.

Ms. Wright clarified the process for new programs with regard to the lower funding cap, lowering the total points allocated, and weighting of the Score Sheet.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá inquired about the process for a new program receiving funding. Ms. Wright clarified that new programs were weighted differently as there would not be past history for reviewers to look at. New programs are not penalized, but also do not receive as high of an amount of funding.

Chairwoman Hiller noted there had been conversation about changing how new programs receive funding, as well as the topic of possibly making changes regarding the Grandfathered programs.

Chairwoman Hiller stated three parts of meeting for this year:

- Tying up items for this funding cycle (now until complete)
- Review the Senior Services, and perhaps all programs (Summer)
- Begin process for the next funding cycle, and recommendations (Fall)

b) 5-year Funding History

Chairwoman Hiller stated the grant funding total has remained fairly consistent, and is currently at \$434,904. The committee reviewed the five-year funding history information that Staff provided. Ms. Wright noted the Contracted Services had been steadily running at \$290,000 to \$300,000 thousand before they were removed from this process.

CDBG Funding was reduced by \$67,000 during concerns of Federal funding, and later the General Fund was reduced by \$100,000 due to budget restraints. The committee at that time supported that change. Ms. Wright noted that in 2016, the Contracted Services amount was \$300,000 followed by \$229,000 in 2017 and \$211,000 in 2018. Chairwoman Hiller stated the funding in 2016-2018 still remained around \$400,000 and inquired if that was correct. Ms. Haehn confirmed.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá inquired about the definition of Contracted Services. Chairwoman Hiller replied that the funding remained the same, however the various City departments took over the overseeing the grant process for those agencies rather than having them in the same group with the

Social Service Agencies. Ms. Wright noted that in 2016 there was approximately \$442, 487 and in 2017 the amount was \$555,518 and in 2018 the amount was approximately \$407,192. The 2020 number on the sheet includes the \$40,000 that the City Manager was asked to find. Chairwoman Hiller continued with the history noting the Contracted Services had been originally included to ensure there was oversight with the grant dollars with regard to receiving reports for outputs and outcomes. Ms. Wright stated a contract is established between the agency and the department similarly to how they were, and that the departments maintain reports for the outcomes and outputs for the Contracted Services.

Committee member Padilla inquired about support services for non-English speaking programs, and if there were multiple programs. Ms. Haehn stated the Community Action Latino Family Development program, El Centro Community Resource Program were two. Ms. Wright stated that although the two programs mentioned exclusively assist with the Latino population, many of the other agencies have programs or components of programs to also assist non-English speaking community members.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá inquired if there was a check list on the application that could be included to whether a program would offer Spanish speaking services. Ms. Wright stated there was nothing in the application to specifically ask that question, however that many agencies include that information in the narrative section of the application. Chairwoman Hiller spoke about the section of the application that asks about duplication of programs. The model that is currently going through does not allow that subjective assessment of the program as the past system. The goal of the Committee and Staff was to come up with a scoring system that was as neutral and empirical as possible.

Committee member Padilla inquired about the non-funded programs and how to read the information Staff had provided. Staff provided the answer as well as noted that another sheet had been added to the packet to provide a different visual for applying agencies.

4) Discussion & Approval

a. Score Sheet

Chairwoman Hiller noted the Score Sheet was an action item that needed to be finalized. Ms. Haehn stated that Staff had created a pseudo application in order to generate a sample for the Committee to view, and had attached it to the Score Sheet.

Chairwoman Hiller noted there had been conversation regarding Diversity on Boards and Board attendance, which had been discussed by the 2019 committee. Staff has made some changes to the language. There are some agency concerns during the appeal process regarding Staff scoring.

Chairwoman Hiller inquired with Staff as to their proposal for removing language regarding their responsibility in the process. Ms. Wright confirmed that Staff was proposing to remove the Staff scoring component of the process for this cycle, as the vendor will be overseeing the rest of the process. Ms. Haehn added that the Committee and Governing Body would have the ability to include the language in the future, should the decision be made not to outsource the process again.

Regarding the scoring process, Councilmember Hiller touched on the following:

- Suggested a possible need to provide additional guidelines to third party vendor.
- Personal opinion, should not fund new programs at all, and only do programs with a three year history to them.
- If “we” do want to score Grant Administration, simple guidelines should be provided to assist with checking with past grantors to inquire about some of the program/agency records have been. Similar to doing a reference check on a new hire.
- Is there even a need at all for this process? It was important to staff in the past, but may not be now.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá stated the piece regarding agencies entering information into the system, and that information not going through, and inquired:

- With outsourcing, will those glitches be fixed?
- What software system will the vendor be using? Councilmembers Hiller and Padilla shared that inquiry.
- Will it be the third-party vendor who is responsible for assisting with questioning and working with the agencies on this piece?

Ms. Haehn stated language would be added into the contract to clarify the expectation of quality. Staff wants to ensure the agencies receive the same or better level of service and assistance from the vendor as they have received from Staff.

Committee member Padilla noted the issues that had been brought up regarding the software program and if the vendor would be using the same software system. Ms. Wright stated Rachelle Vega-Retana, Grants Administrator, has worked diligently to assist applicants with navigating the program. The system is called EcImpact, and had been suggested by the Committee after many agencies had commented it was a system many were familiar with using it through applying for grants with another agency. Ms. Haehn stated the language in the RFP states that the vendor will provide a system to receive applications and provide documents. A final decision has not been made with regard to the type of system used. Some vendors utilize their own software or online portal. Chairwoman Hiller asked that Staff take agency preference into consideration, as many of the agencies had become familiar with EcImpact or had been involved with suggesting the software to begin with.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá inquired if there was any public comment regarding issues with using EcImpact. No comments from the audience.

Committee member Padilla inquired if EcImpact had been reviewed to see if errors had occurred. Ms. Wright confirmed that any time a system error had been brought to Staff's attention, Ms. Vega-Retana would check the system, work with the system vendor if needed, and work with the applicant to resolve the problem.

Chairwoman Hiller noted some of the feedback she had received centered on a delay in Staff response for getting assistance. Ms. Wright stated applications did not receive lower scoring if there were delays in staff response with regard to deadlines.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá inquired about Papan's Landing receiving a lower score for a late submission. Ms. Vega-Retana noted that

the system has a cut-off that will not let applications be submitted late. However, Papan's Landing applications had always been received on time.

Chairwoman Hiller inquired if Staff would be able to walk the Committee through process in the order of the points that correspond with the various sections of the application. Committee members Padilla and Valdivia-Alcalá agreed.

Rachelle Vega-Retana program review:

- Score Sheet on Application page 5 - Narrative section "Describe the community need that this proposal addresses and how it is related to what you are trying to accomplish" applicant would answer the question and review committee scores. Score 15, 10, 5, or 0 points.
- Outcomes found on Application page 7 - Correlates with next section of Score Sheet, Issues and outcomes. "Outputs are clear and related to identified needs". Next section "Outcomes are clear and related to identified needs".

Committee member Padilla inquired if an agency had stated serving 25 and fell short by 3 or 4 people, how much would the score be effected? Ms. Wright stated the outputs and outcomes factors in the bottom score item "Outcomes and Outputs on Prior Grants". Example: If there are 4 outputs and 4 outcomes, for a total of 8. If they do not make their output, but meet the other items, they would receive a score of 7 out of 8 which correlates to a percentage. At the end, the percentage will fall into one of the scoring categories found on the Score Sheet. Chairwoman Hiller stated that an outcome is measured to a need that the program is trying to solve. The output is measuring the number of individuals who were assisted by the program. Chairwoman Hiller inquired about scoring if an output remains the same for multiple years. Ms. Wright stated the scoring would not be effected. Agencies are able to revise the outputs to reflect actual numbers that correlate with the lower dollar amount that they are receiving during contract time.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá inquired about the repercussions for missing an output by a small amount. Ms. Haehn noted this would be a function of the total. If the total is 5, being 2 or 3 short would be a much

lower percentage; however if the total is 50, being 2 or 3 short would score in the 90% range. This would be an example of a direct function of the statement of what a program could accomplish.

- Application pg. 7 - “Plan has been identified to measure outputs and outcomes” “Describe the data source, data collection method you will be using to assess output and outcome attainment”.
Chairwoman Hiller inquired about the difference between an activity and a program. The definition of “Activity” is found on page 7 of the application. Chairwoman Hiller explained an applicant had come forward with the question. Ms. Haehn stated Staff has some control, but not complete control due to the software design, with regard to setting details up on EImpact and noted “Activities” may have been a header that was automatically put in. Activities would describe what is happening inside of the program.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá stated she did not feel a need to change the language on the application was necessary, but perhaps having a clear understanding of the difference between the two would be something to pass along to the third-party vendor.

Chairwoman Hiller provided historical reference of separation of scoring and management and the conflict of interpretation and inquired if the vendor would be able to manage both areas. Ms. Haehn stated this would be something to add into the contract and felt it was important. Chairwoman Hiller inquired if the vendor would be expected to have an outcomes-experienced panel. Ms. Haehn stated that would be Staff’s preference, however without knowing the different systems, she was hesitant to create too definite of language.

- Page 5, under Duplicated Services - “Please discuss whether this service is duplicated by another agency, and if so, address why this duplication is justified based on the community need”. The review committee would score the answer.
- Page 1 of application, History & Capacity, continued on page 2, “How long has your organization be in existence?” “Describe the training

and/or years of existence your organization and/or key staff have in proposed program area?” The review committee would score them.

- Committee member Padilla inquired about a section found on page 2 of the application: “How does your organization collect and make use of client feedback regarding programs and services”. The example of a survey is listed. However, if an agency goes above and beyond on this effort a score is not increased, but remains at the higher level. Ms. Vega-Retana replied the Score Sheet touches on that topic “Agency has formal process and is using client input”. Committee member Padilla inquired if frequency of data collection would make a difference on the score. Ms. Wright responded the frequency was not measured, but rather if the data that was collect was being used to improve the program.

Chairwoman Hiller emphasized the importance of client surveys and receiving feedback and being able to measure outcomes.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá inquired if Chairwoman Hiller was proposing stricter language with regard to defining collecting outcomes. Chairwoman Hiller noted the seasoned reviewers could generally gather a fair amount of information from the description of a program.

Committee member Padilla inquired about the highest score on areas of “Issues and Outcomes”, highest score of 10, “Plan has been identified” highest score of 5, “Unduplicated program” highest score of 5. Where do the highest numbers come from? Ms. Wright noted the score is less subjective and requires measurement. The committee has never decided to change that. The Committee is able to determine the weighting, however 25% of the weight is currently based on the outcomes and outputs. Chairwoman Hiller provided a scenario to assist with explaining this process.

INTERMISSION (followed by “Part 2” of video)

- Score Sheet – “Organization leadership is strong and maintains community-based representation” corresponds with the Application pages 3 & 4 under Board Control and Board Composition.

Chairwoman Hiller inquired about the language of the Board Composition and whether Staff is proposing to change the meeting attendance rather than the actual Board Composition. Ms. Haehn stated feedback from agencies is that the 65% attendance requirement for Boards is difficult to attain, however many times they are able to meet quorum. Staff recommendation is to remove the attendance piece. With regard to the Racial & Ethnic of Boards, Staff is recommending the requirement keep this language as it is, or even raising the percentage.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá spoke to the importance of the diversity on boards, and noted Committee member Padilla's work with training younger minority populations to serve on boards and committees. Committee member Padilla reiterated the importance of the training, reaching out to individuals and that 15% would be minimum, however would not be opposed to making a motion for proposal to the Governing Body to increase that percentage.

Chairwoman Hiller agreed with the importance of outreach to obtain a more diverse board. With regard to Board Attendance, Chairwoman Hiller noted feedback from agencies had expressed difficulty in reaching the minimum diversity percentage due to not having control over Board nominations and assignments. However, over time, the requirements were being noticed by Boards and some outreach had taken place. Chairwoman Hiller cited past intention was to require the Board to establish quorum at least 65% of the time.

Committee member Padilla agreed that he was less concerned with the attendance piece as long as the Board was able to make quorum and conduct business, and appreciated Staff's recommendation to remove that piece.

Chairwoman Hiller inquired if referencing quorum rather than the 65% attendance be an acceptable replacement. Committee members Padilla and Valdivia-Alcalá agreed.

Chairwoman Hiller inquired if the application asked for the percentage of attendance. Staff confirmed that page 3 of the application states "Average percentage of Board membership attending meetings in the

past 12 months”. Chairwoman Hiller inquired if Staff has received agency feedback regarding the change to this language and if replacing attendance with quorum would be recommended. Ms. Wright confirmed that changing the question would accommodate the concern of the agency. Chairwoman Hiller inquired if the percentage for quorum would be raised from 65% to 80%. Ms. Wright stated that would be a decision for the Committee.

Ms. Haehn read the proposed language: “Meets regularly with a quorum of Board members in attendance at least 80% of the time”. Meeting this threshold would earn them 5 points. The next two criteria would read “If 3 of 4 criteria are met” for 3 points, and “If less than three criteria are met” for 0 points.

Restating sentence:

“At least 15% is made of racial or ethnic minorities, is less than 70% of one gender, meets regularly with a quorum of Board members in attendance at least 80% of the time, and has a healthy mix of needed skills and resources”.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá suggested changing the requirement of 15% of racial or ethnic minorities to 20% as earlier discussed. Ms. Haehn stated a vote would need to take place by the Committee to change that language.

Committee member Padilla inquired if any members in attendance would like to comment on this proposal. No additional comments.

Chairwoman Hiller restated the action proposed in the motion. Ms. Haehn read the motion with proposed changes.

MOTION:

Ms. Haehn read the final motion with proposal to change the language of first criteria on Organizational Leadership is Strong and Maintains Community-based Representation on the score sheet to say: “At least 20% is made of racial or ethnic minorities, is less than 70% of one gender, meets regularly with a quorum of Board members in attendance at least 80% of the time, and has a healthy mix of needed skills and resources”.

Committee member Padilla made a motion to approve. Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá seconded. Motion passes 3:0.

- Page 13 and 14 of application: Collaboration and Partnership
Chairwoman Hiller inquired if this was an area where concerns had come up recently. There were no responses from the audience.

b. Allocation Guidelines

Chairwoman Hiller inquired about Staff's proposal to the Past Grant Administration piece. Ms. Haehn stated a report could be provided to a vendor for each agency that has applied which answers the questions, however noted a concern regarding Staff involvement in the process. The recommendation is to remove Staff involvement in the 2020 cycle, and to re-evaluate adding that back in for 2021. At that point, even if the decision was made to continue with the outsourced vendor, the language could be added back in as the vendor would have their own information on Past Grant Administration. If the decision is made to bring the process back in-house, Staff would also be able to pick up as it had been previously.

Chairwoman Hiller inquired with the audience as to whether or not this is something that is scored on other grant applications. There were a few nods from audience members.

Committee member Padilla inquired if language had been included in the vendor contract to see if agencies had been reporting on time. Ms. Haehn stated the RFP and contract language would require the vendor to monitor the quarterly reports. Staff prefers to hold the dollars and issuing payments to the agencies based on the vendor receiving the reports and reconciling that information against application and submitting an invoice to the City on behalf of the agencies following an audit, of sorts. Ms. Haehn included that the process of outsourcing grants for the 2021 cycle, however if goes out to the application process and then comes back in-house, Ms. Haehn suggested leaving the language as it is because someone will need to continue monitoring the grant, whether that be a vendor or Staff. Contracts are between the vendor and the applicant agencies. Ms. Haehn noted the monitoring piece does not go into effect until next year. Chairwoman Hiller inquired if the first year

contract with the vendor would almost be a half-contract, as they would oversee the applications piece of the grant, but that by 2021 the vendor would be able to administering the first ones, and processing the new applications. Ms. Haehn confirmed. If the intention was to support the process of outsourcing with a vendor, it would almost be a two year process altogether.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá voiced concern as to if this process would actually save money.

Chairwoman Hiller stated she felt the process may be difficult for future Committees to understand. Ms. Haehn stated Staff could send a report to the vendor regarding the performance on the reporting piece from 2019 agencies, however Ms. Vega-Retana would not be participating in the scoring. Chairwoman Hiller stated she felt it would be better at this time to leave the piece in place rather than to remove it and try to add it back in later.

Committee member Padilla wanted to ensure that if Staff would not be overseeing the various processes, he wanted to know that the new process would be something to establish consistency for a while.

Ms. Haehn restated her concern would be that Ms. Vega-Retana would get caught in the middle between the agencies and the vendor. Chairwoman Hiller suggested Ms. Vega-Retana could report whether the applicant's reporting was completed on time and whether or not it was accurate. By leaving the language as it stands, it sends a message that it is important.

Chairwoman Hiller inquired with Ms. Vega-Retana about questions that are asked but may not receive a score. Ms. Wright stated the demographics and program budget were pieces that were asked about but did not receive a score. The demographics question assisted with funding programs with CBGB grant funds.

Page 5 process to verify income for clients, what donated services are received that add value...do those items receive a score? Ms. Wright stated the verifying income piece was to assist with CBGB Funding, but that the donated services question could likely be removed. Chairwoman

Hiller stated the budget issues and donated goods and services piece would be something to consider in the future.

c. Appeals

Chairwoman Hiller provided the recent historical process for agencies issuing appeals, noting agencies would submit a letter to the Neighborhood Relations staff and have the ability to appeal to the committee.

Ms. Haehn requested permission to discuss the appeals sheet that Staff had provided. In 2019, there were two agencies that did not go through the appeal process, because the error in the scoring was caught prior to that point of the process. The change to scoring was brought to the Committee level during the appeal session, but those were the only two applications where errors had occurred. The miscalculation occurred when putting the outputs and outcomes into the EcImpact system. The changes were made, but had not been put into the EcImpact system. Staff reviews applications and the system to ensure the information is included into EcImpact. Chairwoman Hiller inquired about some of the agencies that appealed. Ms. Wright stated that some agencies appeal even if they receive funding because they may not have received the amount they had requested.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá inquired about the timeframe for which the Committee had to decide on appeals. Chairwoman Hiller stated the decisions were typically made at the same meeting, however the Committee is provided with seven days to make a final decision. Staff confirmed that in previous years, the appeal process and final changes were completed at the same meeting. Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá stated she did not feel the single day decision was an appropriate amount of time to offer consideration. Chairwoman Hiller responded that with a solid application form, application process, scoring has been thought through, and reviewers that were well-trained and familiar with outcomes and non-profits, the scoring should be solid. The Committee has been able to use the appeal process to hear from applicants and have provided an appropriate amount of time to review the information.

Ms. Haehn stated that Staff's response would be the same, with regard to changing an agency score or funding and would bring those changes to the committee, even if the appeal process was removed. Chairwoman Hiller

feels the appeal process is important for the integrity of the program, especially moving forward with outsourcing the majority of the process.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá commented on concern regarding the senior centers not receiving funding in 2020. Ms. Haehn stated that there were four programs that had not received funding, and that there are always agencies that do not receive funding. Chairwoman Hiller explained the intention of the scoring process was intended to have the scores be a driver to determine who received funding based on their outcomes. Reversely the system was designed to determine those remove those programs or agencies that were not competitive. Chairwoman Hiller stated the Committee may choose to make a change to the threshold for the next funding cycle. Ms. Haehn noted the decision had been made to lock the scoring system to create a competitive grant process that also added consistency to the application and scoring processes. Under the current system, there will always be agencies that do not receive funding, or the amount they request. The alternative is to add all of the agencies up and divide the funding equally, which creates different problems. The decision to seek an outside vendor to take over the process, would alleviate a number of issues that Staff and the Committee members have expressed over the years.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá stated it was the job of the Governing Body, Committee and Staff to be able to take the heat, and to be able to defend and explain decisions as well. However, with the decision to outsource already made, Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá would join the other Committee members with making the situation the most positive experience that it could be.

Committee member Padilla expressed his initial concern with all of the senior centers failing to meet the threshold raised a flag that there may be a flaw in the process somewhere. He understood it was not done intentionally, however seemed puzzling that three agencies that serve the same population of community would all fail to meet scoring expectations. Committee member Padilla has been very appreciative of Staff's patience and continued efforts to answer the questions that have come up during the process.

Committee member Padilla inquired how the appeal process would occur during the outsourcing process. Ms. Haehn explained that the vendor would serve in the capacity that Staff currently does. They will present the Committee with the scores and answers as to why the scoring ended up as it was. Staff would then provide the vendor with the Committee's decision on the final decisions. The committee will hear and decide on appeals, if that process is decided to continue.

Ms. Haehn stated information will be updated in the contract to reflect correct information.

Chairwoman Hiller would like to continue to have the appeal process remain in place and to have the Committee hear those appeals. Motion made by Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá. Seconded by Committee member Padilla. Motion passes 3:0.

Chairwoman Hiller noted the meeting time has run over. Other items on agenda will be continued at the next meeting. She inquired with staff if the results had been received from the RFP. Ms. Haehn stated one agency had responded and that the RFP would be reissued with solicitations being made to other agencies who do this type of grant management.

5) Set Next Meeting and General Calendar for Committee

Next meeting on Wednesday, February 19th at 10:00am. Meeting details will be posted to the City of Topeka public calendar, committee website, and e-notification.

6) Adjourn

Meeting video can be viewed at:

Part 1: <https://youtu.be/JfO115NNSkY>

Part 2: <https://youtu.be/5oySKzG1aPM>