



CITY OF TOPEKA

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

SOCIAL SERVICE GRANTS COMMITTEE

CITY COUNCIL
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Date: July 9, 2021

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Location: 1st Floor Conference Room; Holliday Bldg 620 SE Madison (virtual attendance also permitted)

Committee members present: Councilmembers Karen Hiller, Christina Valdivia-Alcalá, Tony Emerson

City staff present: Corrie Wright (DNR), Rachele Vega-Retana (DNR), City Manager Brent Trout, Bill Cochran (Chief of Staff)

1) Call to Order

Chairwoman Hiller called the meeting to order at 10:00am, and described the goal of this meeting. Committee members, City Staff, and United Way staff introduced themselves.

2) Review and Discuss Scoring & Recommendations

[The Committee members were presented with scoring and funding recommendations. During the course of reviewing, questions arose centering around the scoring mechanisms used and points received by some programs. Through discussion, it was discovered that there had been a misunderstanding between the intention of the Committee and United Way. The following items were specifically defined and discussed]:

- Chairwoman Hiller asked Brett Martin, United Way, to discuss the methodology for scoring. There had been a shift from previous years, where new programs were not allowed at all, to this year when programs new to the City, but not necessarily new to an agency, needed to show they had been around for three years before being eligible to apply. Her understanding would be that this requirement would allow for a more-even playing field, where everyone would be required to show some sort of program history.

There had been a new way of scoring the two types of programs, one to show new programs that did not have grant administration history, and the programs that were long-term. Chairwoman Hiller stated that reference checking for funding sources would be made, either with the City if they had

been City-funded or other funders if it had been elsewhere, to allow for everyone to be reviewed and scored the same. She noted that that step had not occurred and asked to hear the process from United Way.

Brett Martin noted that when the United Way and City staff team had met with the scorers, they had been under the impression that they would be scoring new programs, and eliminating new programs based on past grant effectiveness, and based on outcomes. This would essentially create three sets of points possible: 100 total points, 90 total points, or 70 total points. This designation was given based on whether or not the City was able to speak to the past grant effectiveness and whether or not the program was able to demonstrate, through their application, that they had achieved their outcomes in previous iterations of the program.

In the far right column of the document, the total score possible was listed, with the percentage score then next to that. Thirteen programs were scored on the 100 total points possible scale. Depending on how well the other programs were able to explain effectiveness of past grant administration, they then scored a percentage out of 90. If they were not able to show outcomes, they received a percentage out of 70 total points possible.

Mr. Martin noted that there was no language in the rubric related to checking references for the history of past grant effectiveness. As such, United Way relied on the City of Topeka Staff to score that section “Past Grant Administration is Effective 10, 5, and 0”. Chairwoman Hiller recalled that the topic had been discussed at an earlier meeting, and that direction had been provided to check with whomever the funders had been, not just the City, but that if it had been someone else, to check that as well.

Mr. Martin noted the process for checking references may be difficult because there is no language in the application that asks for that information. As such United Way would need to contact each of those programs gather contact information for prior funders. United Way would also need to work with City Staff to figure out how they would score them: 10, 5, and 0 based on “past grant administration is effective”. Chairwoman Hiller agreed.

Mr. Martin noted that, of the applicants, nine of those would have been scored out of a total of 90 points, and eight of the programs scored out of a total of 70

points. The 90 points came based on when we shared the application with City Staff, and whether or not City Staff were able to indicate they had or had not been fully funded for a year prior. There were some instances where only the 2021 first quarter funding information was available based on when the grant application deadline was set. This was also an obstacle. Rachelle Vega-Retana, City of Topeka, stated she reviewed 2020 in order to capture the full year. If the agency had the program, and submitted reports to the City, she was able to see if there had been past grant administration. There were a lot of new programs that had not been funded in 2020, and she was not able to provide that past funding information. There were a couple of programs that had been funded in 2021, but again, only their first quarter information would have been available for her to review. Mr. Martin noted that all of the programs that Ms. Vega-Retana had indicated she did not have past grant history on, were scored at 90 or 70.

Chairwoman Hiller inquired as to the third category, stating the program was either able to show past history or it was not. Mr. Martin noted there were two scores on the application that indicate history: an outcomes question worth 20 points, and a 10 point question based on grant effectiveness. If they did not have the outcomes to demonstrate, then that section was zeroed out and the program was only able to have a maximum of 70 total points. The raw score was divided by 70 to get the final percentage.

Chairwoman Hiller sought input from the Committee, stating that in the past, programs were either able to score a 70 or 100...they were either able to show a past history or they were not able to show a past history. Ms. Vega-Retana stated she was also unsure where the 90 came from. Mr. Martin reviewed the score sheet to find an example. In the application, the program completed a section, their table matrix for outcomes, and indicated that they had achieved all of their outcomes in the 2020 year. However, in the Past Grant Effectiveness area, the comment in the score from the City indicated they had not been funded in that year. So, they may have been able to put in numbers, but they were not City dollars. Due to that, they scored out of 90 because they could demonstrate outcomes, but did not receive funding from the City of Topeka.

With this scoring mechanism, there were four programs that scored out of 70 that were above the scoring threshold.

Some of the reasoning for some of the conversation stemmed from the understanding that, in many cases, it is easy for new programs to get funding to get started. However, it can be more difficult securing the long-term funding to sustain a program over time. The Committee had moved away from investing in a large number of small grant awards. It was felt that by creating the \$10,000 minimum request, the grant would be more valuable.

When the change was made last year, the idea was to look at sustaining programs that had already demonstrated success. We wanted to know from the get-go that they had already been using outputs and outcomes and had been able to demonstrate success with that, in order for us to move them into our grant pool.

Committee member Emerson restated the goal, as he understood it, that we wanted to give the majority of the funding to sustaining programs that have been shown to be effective, and have been around for a while. He felt that even though the methodology was not the same, the results appeared to be correct. That 92% of the programs that had been around, got funded. And only 50% of the new programs were funded.

- Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá expressed the importance of communication, especially with having a third-party vendor now as part of the process. Chairwoman Hiller agreed.
- Chairwoman Hiller noted that although she was not able to determine the final rescoring, that it would affect the program that had been at the bottom of the list.
- Chairwoman Hiller noted that some of the applicants listed did not have a program name, simply an agency name, and inquired if there actually was a program. Mr. Martin stated that is what the applicant had listed into the Program Section, in terms of the title, in E-impact. Chairwoman Hiller noted that these were multi-program agencies, and sought to understand how priorities were measured. She felt that if other applicant programs, which did not have history with the City, but identified their outcomes and outputs and reported on having done that in the past, and the results, we should treat everyone the same if they are going to get the points.

- Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá stated she was not comfortable voting on a recommendation, as she would need more time to work through the process and get more familiar.
- Chairwoman Hiller reviewed some options as to the direction that the Committee could take at the present meeting. Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá stated she did not want to leave the possibility of contacting agencies that needed to provide the information, because if the Committee, Staff, United Way, are still working through the process, the other agencies should not have to feel the ramifications from that.
- Mr. Martin sought direction from the Committee about how to request information from past funders, stating the responses could be very subjective coming from someone outside of our process who potentially would not know our intentions for scoring. Chairwoman Hiller felt the language that accompanied the points possible were fairly easy to understand. Mr. Martin clarified his concern to state if he called a funder, who was not familiar with the process at all, he would want to be sure that they were applying the same reasoning for defining “on time and accurate” that Ms. Vega-Retana would be applying “on time and accurate”, because we would be putting that score in that funder’s hands. Chairwoman Hiller stood by her guidance.
- Juliet McDiffet, United Way, inquired if it was known if funders would be able to provide that information? Mr. Martin added it may be challenging to receive the information as it was not included as part of the application process. He noted in order to require this information, moving forward, that there would need to be a change made to the qualifications process, where new applicants would need to provide a list of funders and contact information. It can be done for the next year’s process, but in order to do that now, United Way would need to call 17 applicants and request a release of information, and a release of funder information. Chairwoman Hiller pointed to a section on the application that asks for the program budget from two years back, on funding sources. Joyce Katzer, United Way, noted that the names of the funders are not listed, merely that they do, or do not, receive funding. Chairwoman Hiller stated that the information had not been required to be itemized in recent years. Ms. McDiffet stated that the information is collected, however the contact information is not requested.

- Committee member Emerson inquired with Chairwoman Hiller if she felt it would be worth pursuing to see if agencies would provide contact information for past funders, and if the past funders would provide information. If United Way finds it is easy to receive the information, would we want to ask them to rescore and present again? Chairwoman Hiller stated the Committee could request to go that direction, or let it go this year and make that part of the process for next year's cycle. Chairwoman Hiller noted that if applications were rescored, it may not affect the outcome of who received funding, but would change the amount of award received up and down the line. The big factor that would affect the scores is the 20 points for outcomes and outputs from prior years. She theorized that if we only counted those who self-reported at 90-point level, the ones who did not self-report did not get 20 points, that way everyone would have been expected to report.
- Corrie Wright, City of Topeka, suggested not allowing programs to self-report, and instead change them back to a possible score out of 70, instead of 90, unless they had never done outcomes, but that if all agencies without past grant effectiveness and outcomes were scored at 70, the result would seem more fair to having some self-report and others not. Chairwoman Hiller noted that different funding sources ask for reporting in different ways, and that we want to have programs that are seasoned in operating. Mr. Martin inquired if, regardless of seasoning, some of those programs only had numbers from the first quarter of 2021 and those were the numbers they put in? All of the 90's did report outcomes, and past grant administration, but did not have more than the first quarter of 2021 to report. Ms. Wright again voiced concern over allowing agencies to self-report without having an additional reference checking measure in place.
- Discussion touched on the effects that many programs likely faced in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. Martin stated that one thing the group did, across the board, if you have a certain number of outcomes, if you have three outcomes, all of those outcomes will be reduced by 33%. None of those totals match the standing 90%, 75%, 50%, or 25%. The panelists decided, as a process piece, that if they got two-thirds of their three outcomes, they would receive 15 points (75% of outcomes), except you are not able to get to 75 with only three outcomes. The panelists moved them up to the next level on each of those because they did not know how to score it otherwise. That leads to a conversation for the process review portion of the Committee meetings, later

in the Fall. But again, the panelists did take COVID into consideration and if the individual program met two of the three outcomes, they were scored at the 15 points out of 20, rather than dropping them to the 10, because that is half but they had more than half, but they did not have 90, but they also did not have half. Chairwoman Hiller stated she understood those to be guidelines, but not strict and was okay with the scoring as long as it was consistent.

- Mr. Martin stated there were a few questions as they related to process pieces that they had recommendations for.
 - There currently is no budget question in any of it. Panelists referred to the “Organization has the resources to produce outcomes efficiently and effectively” as the budget question.
 - Another question from the panelists was weighting outcomes at 20 points out of 100, when some organizations only have one outcome. That means you are weighting 20% of an entire application on one outcome. Without requiring a minimum number of outcomes, it became difficult to decide whether or not it was appropriate to score that high of a percentage based on the single outcome, where other programs list three or four outcomes. Chairwoman Hiller noted that historically, the issue is we want to ensure a result is coming out, and not just going through the motions. Mr. Martin agreed.
 - If a program, for example in a COVID year, does not meet that one outcome, their score is zero because you cannot do a percent of nothing. Chairwoman Hiller noted that in some years, the Committee receives a score sheet that shows the breakdown of scores per application, and found it to be helpful.
- Chairwoman Hiller noted three additional items remained:
 - One, the program itself. Is it identified and eligible
 - The outputs and outcomes success
 - Grant management
 - (possibly the COVID relations)
- Chairwoman Hiller sought input from the Committee.

- Committee member Emerson inquired if United Way did this process for other organizations. Mr. Martin confirmed they ran the process for all of the 72 different programs and agencies that they administer grants for. Committee member Emerson inquired if the process for the Social Service Grants was the same that United Way used for all of their other grants. Mr. Martin stated it was not like the other grants, and is significantly different in some ways. United Way brought some of the technical assistance pieces to the process, but it is still much different. It is based on the scores at the end. Whereas the United Way grants receive a score, but that is not the end, and there is an additional discussion process. He noted that the other grants are also much smaller categories. Committee member Emerson inquired as to how much money United Way distributes through their process. Mr. Martin stated it was up to one million dollars, in different areas. Committee member Emerson pondered if the City was going about the process entirely wrong, and wondered if the whole process should be outsourced. Chairwoman Hiller noted that could be reviewed further in the Fall, 2023 cycle process conversations and provided historical information.
- Applicant inquired about the three year tenure that is the qualification, and if it means the program that they are actually applying money to has been around for three years, or if the establishment has been around for three years? It was his understanding that this was a capacity grant that would allow the agency to improve make a better impact, which means they may create some new programs to do that with. Ms. Wright read a statement from the grant application: The agency program must be in operation for two years prior to the date of the application. That is what the Committee had decided on. Chairwoman Hiller clarified that it is the program that has been established and running, so that it has a track record.
- Mr. Martin stated if the decision was made to have United Way go back, he would want to have clear direction for if they were doing only 100 points possible. Or, doing 90 points possible and moving the 70's to 90's, based on outcomes? Secondary to that, what specific questions are we asking of prior funders in order to gather the information and the scores? Chairwoman Hiller counted and asked if Mr. Martin was anticipating that, in order to go from 70 to 90, United Way would not only be accepting a self-report, but would also be going back to the prior funders to ask for that program report? Mr. Martin confirmed. He stated they would need to have verification on the 90's and

verifications on the 70's for all outcomes. And if that is the case, they may as well ask that funder about past grant administration, which would take it all to 100. Chairwoman Hiller agreed, and noted that if some disconnect is coming from the self-report for 20 points, and if it needs to be verified, it would probably require a double check. If they have reported, they should also have their prior funders. Mr. Martin inquired if the program would be disqualified if they did not list the funders' information, or asked if it makes them lose 20 points out of the 100? If the latter is the case, it would drop them below the current threshold, but with the mix-up throughout the current scores, it may not make a big difference.

- Mr. Martin noted the guidance would change the timeline. He did not feel comfortable with committing the team to meeting the July 26th deadline for appeals. Chairwoman Hiller noted that, although we wanted to let the agencies know their scores in a relatively soon amount of time, that the presentation of new scores could be pushed back a little. City Manager Trout noted that as long as the total line item number on the City's budget was not changing, that the timeline was not as critical.

United Way felt they would be able to finalize the new scoring recommendations by August 6th. The Committee chose August 11th to meet and review the scores again. Agencies would have one week to submit an intent to appeal, in writing, by 5:00pm on August 20th. From there, the Committee would meet on August 27th to hear the appeals and approve final recommendations.

- Debra Dawkins, East Topeka Senior Center, inquired if there would be an explanation as to why a score was what it was, or if there would simply be the number? Mr. Martin confirmed the notes are included. And that the notes have come from the panelist's scoring.

Adjourn

Chair adjourned the meeting at 11:26am.

Meeting video can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/A6E-g41Kwb4>

