



CITY OF TOPEKA

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

SOCIAL SERVICE GRANTS COMMITTEE

CITY COUNCIL
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Date: October 9, 2020

Time: 10:00 a.m.

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

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

City staff present: Corrie Wright (DNR), Rachele Vega-Retana (DNR), City Manager Brent Trout

1) Call to Order

Chairwoman Hiller called the meeting to order at 10:00am. Committee members and agency representatives introduced themselves.

2) Approve minutes from: July 8, July 15, September 11, 2020 meetings

Minutes from the July 8, July 15, and September 11 meetings were reviewed: Committee member Padilla made a motion to approve the minutes. Committee member Valdivia-Alcala seconded the motion. Approved 3:0.

3) Decision to Outsource 2022 Process

Chairwoman Hiller reviewed the items for discussion with possible action for this meeting. At the next meeting, items of the application and scoring will be reviewed.

Brett Martin, United Way, provided an overview of the 2020 grant cycle process. Throughout the process, they put together a list of ideas and suggestions from the agencies to potentially be implemented into the process moving forward. The items reviewed covered the technical, related to EcImpact, the process beginning with the RFP release and the agency training as well as the rest of the process. Mr. Martin felt as though the process has been transparent and conversational.

Mr. Martin sought questions from those attending the meeting. Chairwoman Hiller inquired if agencies had questions. Debbie Lake, Papan's Landing, inquired about the grant scoring process. One of the sections had the same wording on the 2019 application and the 2020 application, however they received full points in 2019 and received a zero this year. Ms. Lake stated she had sent that inquiry and had

not received an answer. Mr. Martin stated he would go back and review the information and discuss with Ms. Lake. Chairwoman Hiller inquired if the question had to do with the budget. Ms. Lake was not entirely sure, but would check.

Chairwoman Hiller noted the committee will review process and scoring at the next meeting, but urged agencies to email Mr. Martin with their questions. Chairwoman Hiller stated she would like to other ideas at the next meeting.

Committee member Padilla inquired about which meeting the conversation would be held for working on concerns or suggestions for next year's process. Chairwoman Hiller would like to discuss the outsourcing process at the current meeting, and explore any changes to the 2021 process at the next meeting.

Corrie Wright, DNR, informed the committee that a contract to renew for an additional four years can be approved, without needing to be put out for bid again. Ms. Wright felt the process went well from all standpoints. She agreed that there can be a few things to work on to continue improving the process, however overall was a good process.

Kathy Votaw, LULAC, echoed Ms. Wright's comments, and felt the process went well this year and appreciated the responsiveness of United Way.

4) Approve 2022 Calendar

Ms. Wright stated the calendar for 2022 would be similar to years past, with different dates.

- The committee would receive testimony, develop the priorities and a budget recommendation for the next funding cycle in October and November.
- The Governing Body would then need to approve the recommendations by December 15, 2020.
- Training for new committee members would occur by March of 2021.
- The Request for Proposal would be released by April 26th.
- With the assumption of having a vendor, an application workshop would be held on April 27th.
- Applications are due by 5:00pm on May 28, 2021.
- Notifications will be made to those applicants who did not meet minimum standards by June 9th.
- Three to five reviewers will be secured by the vendor by May 14th.

- Application scoring and year-end performance report for prior year grants will be provided to the Social Service Grants Committee by June 25th.
- The committee will meet for approval of the review committee scoring and recommendations the week of July 5th, 2021.
- The appeal process closes the week of July 16th.
- Allocation recommendation will be ready for the Governing Body by August 2nd.
- By August 24th, the Governing Body will adopt the City's Budget.
- After budget adoption, the Social Service Grants Committee affirms or adjusts recommendations based on the adopted budget.

Chairwoman Hiller inquired if United Way felt the calendar timeline was something that would work for them. The current process has one committee set the process for the upcoming year, with a new committee serving through the grant management process. Mr. Martin stated this grant process was longer than others that United Way manages, however, based on the budget cycle of the City and recognizing that federal dollars are part of the process, he would not recommend changing the timeline. Mr. Martin did recommend that the vendor establish reminders within the e-Impact system to assist newer applicants of timelines.

Mr. Martin posed a question to staff and the committee - In your experience with federal dollars, have you seen years where those have changed dramatically? Ms. Wright stated they do not see a dramatic change in funding from year to year, however, if there ever was a dramatic change, funding from another line item of the City budget would be adjusted to make up the difference.

Chairwoman Hiller noted the Governing Body approves the funding for the Social Service Grants in December, and this has been used as a placeholder as the budget process begins the following Spring, however, it is never set in stone until the full budget is approved the following August. Mr. Martin suggested clearly communicating with applicants and the vendor about the dollars, and final budget timelines.

5) Review Priorities for 2022 Process

Ms. Wright noted the priorities for 2022 have not changed from 2021.

Chairwoman Hiller explained to the audience that the document is the same as what was on the application:

Mission Statement: Quality, cost effective social services to handle our vulnerable citizens with care, minimize victimization and crime, minimize turnover in neighborhoods, and optimize success.

- Senior Citizen neighborhood-based programming to include - meals, activities, transportation
- Medical assistance for low-income individuals
- Programs for at-risk youth
- Emergency housing and utility assistance
- Neighborhood and independent living based services for persons with severe and persistent mental illness
- Support services for residents whom are non-English speaking

Social Service Grant Detail

Minimum Grant Amount \$10,000. Maximum Grant Amount \$25,000. Two agencies grandfathered: Shawnee County Medical Society, with a maximum amount at \$50,000. Positive Connections with a maximum amount of \$35,000.

New untested programs are allowed to apply, but without a set-aside amount.

New untested programs may receive a maximum amount of \$15,000 per program for programs not established with the City during the last 3 years.

Recommended Social Services Funding for Year 2021

Social Services Grant Total: \$434,904

General Fund: \$367,047

CDBG: \$67,857

The City will accept applications for new programs with the knowledge if funding is exhausted on established programs, new programs will not be funded.

Applications will be scored and the percentage of their score multiplied by the amount of the requested will be the total funding allocation. For example: Request for \$25,000 and they got a 95% the agency would receive \$23,750. Once the threshold is met, the funding will be cut off based on ranking.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcala inquired about the fee provided to the vendor. Ms. Wright answered \$21,000. Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá inquired about the funding for paying the vendor and asked if it would be coming from the top of any of the grant funding and where it would be coming from. Ms. Wright stated that conversation needed to occur for the coming cycle. Last year, CDBG and some of the Housing Services budget to pay for that; however, it may be different for this year.

Chairwoman Hiller asked for input/feedback regarding the six categories. Committee member Padilla inquired if the items were listed by priority. Chairwoman Hiller responded there was not. She explained further about subdivision that had happened in past years, but that was not the case these most recent years.

Mr. Martin had an inquiry regarding the items in the criteria versus the information in the mission statement and if there are other expectations that are not stated in the mission or priority areas that relates to how the funding is allocated. He inquired if there had been any review by the committee regarding where funding is used by the applicant agencies. Chairwoman Hiller stated there has been discussion about creating subdivisions to group similar agencies together, however that then becomes another issue. She provided the example of changing the language a few years ago to remove “new agency” to “new program”, as it had been found easier for existing agencies to apply for and receive funding for a new program, than new agencies. Mr. Martin expanded on his inquiry regarding how the mission is phrased and asked if there is a need to gain a broader sense of impact with the use of the dollars. Chairwoman Hiller responded that, to her understanding, that the mission statement was the starting guide leading into the six categories. Such as deciding whether or not to fund aging services, as there is already an Aging Mill Levy that funds some of those programs; or mental health programs, as there are other funding resources for those programs. The mission statement became a guide to establish what would be funded rather than what would not be funded.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcala commented that the committee should be cognizant of the effects of COVID-19 for the applicant agencies, and keeping that in mind when reviewing the six areas of criteria currently used. She stated she felt there is some validity to Mr. Martin’s suggestion and would be favorable of additional conversation to look into it further.

Chairwoman Hiller stated the structure that was put into place about ten years ago was to require outcomes. It was not meant to instruct agencies on how to provide services, but that it had to fall within those six categories and the outcomes needed to be communicated clearly on the application to allow for a way to measure the impact.

Mr. Martin stated there is currently no way for the reviewer to score whether or not a program has a good outcome based on the current scoring tool. He is also asking “Is anybody better off?” when trying to determine the impact of a program. When funders such as Topeka Community Foundation, United Way, City of Topeka, HUD, State dollars review outcomes; at some point, the City of Topeka and Shawnee County needs to ask if anyone is better off through receiving services and funding to these programs. The answer may take years to find, however with time, there is a way to better measure the effectiveness of a program. Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá responded that by changing the focus, it would help by creating a more holistic approach to funding. Mr. Martin confirmed, and stated that the City is moving in that direction, however process improvement is always something to strive for.

Chairwoman Hiller inquired if Mr. Martin would be willing to bring a suggestion for changing the mission statement to the next meeting. Mr. Martin stated he felt the mission statement covered the idea overall, however changes may be helpful in the areas listed below. Those items are supposed to support the mission statement by providing more clarifying language. By allowing applicants to describe more targeted outcomes, they are able to show the difference that is being made. He stated it is important to ask the right questions in order to receive the information that is truly being sought.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá sought Mr. Martin’s opinion on if he felt it would be beneficial for the funders to meet once or twice a year to see where major funders fit and align the funding opportunities. Mr. Martin stated there could be benefit to having all of the funders in the community come together to discuss the areas of funding priorities. He said he has had program partners request such a thing, and feels it would be beneficial for all of the programs and the community as a whole.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcala agreed that the big funders should come together to have these discussions but felt transparency during this dialog process would be paramount. She also feels that if the dialogs take place, it would need to look outside of the bubble of current trends; items to keep in mind such as an increasing senior population, living wages, and the current economy due to COVID-19. Mr. Martin stated that by involving those who are being served, they are being engaged in the process. From the Tuesday meetings with agencies to

discuss COVID-19 and the various needs that they are seeing in the populations they serve, the ability to identify and share resources has come about.

Chairwoman Hiller summed up her understanding of the conversation: there is some momentum on United Way's end to put together something perhaps twice a year, to bring together the funders, agencies, users, and "collateral issues" (items such as minimum wage that United Way may not be managing, but are needed to help change the whole picture). Chairwoman Hiller also noted she realized that outcomes has two pieces. One, to review quality. And the second, cost effectiveness. As the committee begins focusing on those items during conversations regarding the applications and scoring, it may start to pull together some of the comments. Mr. Martin confirmed.

Chairwoman Hiller stated if parties were comfortable with the mission statement area, review of the next section of priorities would be reviewed. She asked if there was any concern or question about the minimum and maximum funding amount for the grandfathered programs, core programs, and new/untested programs. Mr. Martin noted he felt it would be important for the City Manager, Budget/Finance staff, Governing Body and citizens to hear the information regarding how the dollars are being allocated. He felt it would be beneficial for grantees to better identify how the grant dollars were being used.

Kathy Votaw addressed the committee to state that by grandfathering in certain programs, the criteria to show how the funding is being used becomes more difficult. Ms. Votaw would like to advocate for grandfathering the senior centers in, however recognized that it may be difficult to be as transparent.

Ms. Wright clarified that any program that is grandfathered in will have the ability to receive a higher funding amount, however they will still be going through the same application process and receive funding based on their scoring. Funding is not automatically provided based on the status.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcala stated there was both an understanding for the need of senior programming, and also understanding the need for accountability for the funding dollars awarded to the senior programs. Would be interested in reviewing the current programs that are in the grandfather status. She would be interested in discussing extending the grandfathering to the senior centers.

Chairwoman Hiller inquired if she would be interested in having the two agencies provide a presentation at the next meeting. Committee member Valdivia-Alcala confirmed.

Committee member Padilla stated he felt there was a general misconception regarding the term “grandfather”, and that perhaps changing the phrasing would help to alleviate it. With the current use of the term, it may be assumed that those agencies are automatically receiving those dollars. However, although the maximum amount is higher, those agencies must still go through the application scoring process and are only receiving funding based on those scores.

Megan Skaggs, Shawnee County Health Access, addressed the committee to note the funding received goes directly to prescription assistance for individuals who fall into the gap of not having other coverage for such needs. She noted that although the agency was grandfathered in, funding has been cut over the years. At one time, there was a maximum of \$125,000. It has since dwindled to the current maximum of \$50,000 and that amount will only be received if the application receives full points.

Chairwoman Hiller stated two things stand out. It is challenging to use the outcomes model when it comes to looking at immediate and emergency care. The second challenge, is that a component for a reviewer to know if there is another funding component is not available to factor in. Ms. Skaggs noted there is an annual fundraiser which is well attended, however, in addition to the funding donated by health professionals, those donors are also funding the program by volunteering their professional time, which is costing them dollars by not spending that time at their practice. Chairwoman Hiller noted a grant match with Shawnee County to assist with funding. Ms. Skaggs stated that due to COVID-19, the annual fundraiser was not able to happen and additionally, the needs are going up. There have been many more people come to Health Access during the past six months who have lost their job or insurance due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chairwoman Hiller inquired if there were additional comments with regard to the funding for new untested programs. She inquired about the amount of new programs that had been funded in 2020.

Mr. Martin asked for a point of clarification regarding the \$15,000 cap placed on new programs. Current phrasing states “maximum \$15,000 per program available for programs not established with the City during last 3 years.” Mr. Martin inquired if those programs were only eligible to receive the maximum of \$15,000 for 3 years, or if clarifying language should be included.

Brent Trout, City Manager, stated the idea behind having the 3 year requirement was to be able to provide 3 years’ worth of outcomes that will verify the program’s ability to be successful. This could be reduced to 2 years, if the committee felt it would be sufficient.

Mr. Martin inquired if the 3 years was consecutive, or 3 years accumulative. Chairwoman Hiller noted another interesting point was that the language states “new untested”. There is a difference between a program being a brand new initiative and one that has been around for a while but is new to the grant application with the City. Mr. Martin stated he had received some feedback regarding that same question.

Chairwoman Hiller presented a few different options for moving forward with addressing the “new untested” definition. Committee member Valdivia-Alcala stated she would like to remove the “new” programs from the pool of applicants, in an essence to make the grant dollars stretch further. Programs who have not applied with the City, but could show a 3 year history, would be allowed to apply for the \$15,000 maximum for a year before moving to the pool of larger maximum amount.

Chairwoman Hiller suggested core programs with a minimum of a two year history could apply for the Social Service Grant at the \$15,000 amount for the first year. After that first year of applying through the City, they would be able to move to the pool requesting the \$25,000 maximum.

Committee member Padilla felt requiring an established program to only be able to receive the \$15,000 maximum initially simply due to not applying for the grant previously, it could hurt the competitiveness of the applicants.

Committee members discussed suggestion. Ms. Wright stated she felt by saying “last 3 years” would mean consecutive, but that either way would be fine. Committee member Padilla agreed that three consecutive years would establish

the sustainability of a program, however he felt those measures could be accomplished outside of the City grant process. Chairwoman Hiller noted that without having an established history through the City, it would be more difficult to understand if reports had been submitted on time, etc. Committee member Padilla stated that regardless, an expectation could be communicated that records of meeting minutes, and reporting to boards would need to be presented.

Tentative agenda: looking at single class of agencies that are applying for program that has been in operation for at least three years at date of application. Minimum \$10,000 maximum \$25,000. Then decide if two agencies receiving grandfathered amount would continue.

Mr. Martin clarified that the minimum amount of \$10,000, and that some of the applicants received less funding than the \$10,000 amount. Chairwoman Hiller provided some history behind the decision to establish the minimum request amount be \$10,000 was to help make the grants big enough to make it worth the time of other agencies and staff. However, there was some discrepancies that would need to be discussed by the committee, staff and vendor to clarify that intention. The committee inquired about suggestions from City Manager Trout. He stated the City does not typically fund low grant amounts, and felt that requesting a more substantial minimum amount would be more beneficial for the program applicant, and staff time spent on reviewing the applications.

Mr. Martin stated he would like to have input from the program applicants. As those who received less than the \$10,000 minimum did not turn the award away, even though it was under the minimum requested amount. Chairwoman Hiller noted some of those comments were heard during the appeal process. Mr. Martin stated there could be a potential for match dollar grants.

Chairwoman Hiller appreciated the conversation and would like to revisit the minimum grant amount at the next meeting. An additional issue revolves around the percentage score being the absolute driver for the amount of funding. Mr. Martin responded by explaining that the United Way's process. In the process, the review panel gets together in a facilitated conversation to look at the scores, discuss, and then review the total amount requested versus the total amount available to find the difference. Through a facilitated conversation, they are then able to determine where the dollars are invested. Chairwoman Hiller inquired if United Way interviews applicants for the United Way grants. Currently no

interview, however there is space during the process to allow for back and forth questions to gain more clarification on both ends during the process.

6) Adjourn

Next meeting will be October 29th, 10:00am in the Holliday 1st floor conference room. Meeting adjourned at 12:03pm.

Meeting video can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/gcSJbtTUtsY>