



CITY OF TOPEKA

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

SOCIAL SERVICE GRANTS COMMITTEE

CITY COUNCIL
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Date: November 23, 2020

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Location: Classroom A - Law Enforcement Center; 320 S. Kansas Ave Ste 100

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

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

1) Call to Order

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

2) Approve minutes from October 29, 2020 meeting

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá made a motion to approve the October 29th minutes. Committee member Padilla seconded the motion. Approved 3:0.

3) Discuss 2022 Cycle

a. Outcomes

Chairwoman Hiller noted previous conversation to review the Mission Statement. One suggested change was to add "Outcome based" to the beginning to allow for more description. To frame the discussion, United Way suggested being specific in the language and to set the outcomes in-house, as they do for their grants. A GRF Indicators sheet had been provided to the committee as reference. The idea is to have pre-set outcomes, and remove that portion from the application. Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá stated she felt the current mission statement ended with an incomplete sentence. Chairwoman Hiller stated it was intentional to allow it to be a fill-in-the-blank, to allow the applicant to define what success looks like for the outcomes description section of their program with what they are trying to accomplish. She inquired with United Way to find out if reviewers struggled with the way the SSG process asks applicants to self-define their outcomes. Brett Martin, United Way, stated there had been a sense among the reviewers that they had trouble giving a score to the quality of the outcome. There was no place on the review or score sheet to

give a score as to whether or not a program had provided a strong, moderate or weak outcome. Another area that prompted questioning, was identifying a way to have agencies show how the grant dollars impact the community through their program.

Chairwoman Hiller voiced concern for making the distinction between an activity and a program clear for reviewers. Activities or outputs should not be listed in the same way as an outcome. The outcome addresses a need, and has a measurable goal. Mr. Martin felt having more conversation, and peer-learning to discuss the difference between outcomes and outputs. For the purpose of reporting out to the community about where dollars for services were spent, Mr. Martin suggested agencies finding one or two agreed upon outputs for programs that offered similar services, to provide consistency and unification in community impact. This would help measure the strength of the application. The reviewers understand the difference between an activity and output, they understand an outcome and how to figure out the percentages, and whether or not those are measurable, achievable and clear. Mr. Martin suggested adding language that could attest to the quality of the outcome, and not just the applicant's ability to describe it or achieve it, could help the reviewers score this area more equally.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá inquired if the suggestion was to add a different grading mechanism to measure whether the outcome was strong, moderate, or weak. Chairwoman Hiller suggested replacing the current component with the revised language. Mr. Martin suggested making an addition to the current language, to include a type of qualitative measurement scale such as a Likert scale, to say "very good, good, acceptable, poor". He also recognized that there is also subjectivity to qualitative indicators to using words such as "strong".

Committee member Padilla stated it may be difficult to measure the change being made by outcomes that were described, and wondered if focus was being placed on the description of the outcome versus the impact of measurable change. He asked if the reviewers were looking at the narrative or the actual result of the work of the applicant. Mr. Martin noted that a program may be able to articulate information on an application, however there may need to be a larger conversation among applicants regarding the

quality of the outcomes to better describe the impact of the tax payer and federal dollars within the community.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá agreed with Mr. Martin's comment. Having a tangible way to measure the impact of tax dollars would be important.

Chairwoman Hiller stated some of those areas could be included in the first section regarding whether or not the program project has demonstrated the need within the community. The outcome is measured by the resulting measurement, and answering the question of whether or not the outputs were met. Mr. Martin felt the number and percent achieved based on the indicator, was correct.

Mr. Martin circled back to the idea of having a broader conversation, at a later time, with agencies to be able to create a way to provide a unified way to show the community that, on a broader level, "this" is what the dollars achieved.

Chairwoman Hiller noted that there had been some previous discussion where United Way might host getting agencies together to discuss strong outcomes, and shared outcomes and inquired if that broader conversation could happen at that time. She suggested that perhaps during next year's committee review process they could review what the outcomes were, and the measures used, to educate the committee more on the process as well as what they could share. Mr. Martin agreed that suggestion sounded okay, and mentioned they had already begun a similar conversation that included many of the current applicant agencies.

b. Process

Chairwoman Hiller inquired if placing a section on the 2022 calendar during the review process to also review the outputs, post-allocation but before the new process started, would be helpful. Committee member Padilla felt the calendar was ready for this coming funding cycle, however felt it was important to give the new committee a time to better learn about the applicant programs, and would like to have that future conversation.

Chairwoman Hiller made a note on the calendar to have the committee review the outputs, and for Mr. Martin to schedule the agency introductions for the new committee. She asked Committee member Padilla if he would like to make more specific outcomes for this year as a recommendation to the Governing Body. Committee member Padilla felt the committee was at a good place for the current year, but it would be beneficial for the new committee.

c. Applications: [video 51:24 minute mark]

Chairwoman Hiller recognized the sample application that Mr. Martin had provided that included comments. She asked United Way staff to continue. Mr. Martin read through the application and noted that suggestions were made to auto-fill the areas of Agency Director, Primary Contact Information, and Mission, from information pulled from e-C Impact.

History & Capacity - Provides information of the agency/program, but is not scored. Consideration for the committee to think about.

Question regarding collection and use of client feedback: This is potentially scored for the capacity piece, however the rest is not scored. Chairwoman Hiller wondered how this question was different from the outcomes section. Joyce Katzer, United Way, noted there may be some areas that may have missing questions and areas that may help form that answer.

Mr. Martin noted a suggestion to score the question in a way for the reviewers to know about the past grant effectiveness and whether they completed paperwork accurately and on time or to remove this from the scoring sheet. Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá inquired if these questions may be repetitive or suggesting auto-fill to save time. Ms. Katzer stated that removing this from the rubric did not allow the reviewers to know this information and thus were not able to score on it.

Chairwoman Hiller stated that there were funding pieces that were not scored on previously, because the City staff was able to fill in the information. However, she felt that having that information available for the third-party agency would be important. Mr. Martin stated they would set that up to be auto-filled.

Chairwoman Hiller noted a disconnect regarding the scoring of the applicant Boards, for Board composition and the quorum, and asked if it had been resolved. Mr. Martin read through the questions found in the current application. Chairwoman Hiller noted the question on the application needed to be changed to reflect the language found on the priorities sheet. Corrie Wright, Housing Services Division, noted she would work on completing those changes with Mr. Martin, as that was something that would need to be completed within e-C Impact. She will send that completed information to the committee members.

Program Information - Mr. Martin noted there had been some technical issues on United Way's end with a few areas of this section. The committee discussed these suggestions to understand the format and how staff intended to make it easier for applicants to understand.

Funding Information - Ms. Katzer reviewed the budget portion of the application and inquired if the request needed to be separated from the budget reporting section. Ms. Wright noted this format had been set prior to her time, however agreed that it would make more sense to separate the items out. Mr. Martin noted there have been some improvements to the e-C Impact program, and some of the sections were no longer needed.

Service Areas & Outcomes - Mr. Martin noted these were more of a reflection rather than a suggestion. If the community moves toward something in this capacity, it would help to measure the various programs performance on a shared set of outcomes. No recommendation to do this in the upcoming cycle.

Program Budget - United Way inquired as to the reason behind having "City General Fund" and "City CDBG" were broken out into two sections for the agencies to fill in. Agreement to not separate out.

Mr. Martin spoke about the budget narrative, and noted that the information provided on this section was useful for grantors to understand a substantial increase or decrease in a program budget, but the information is not scored.

Chairwoman Hiller spoke about the differences that had been brought up between the United Way application process and the SSG application process. She noted one area that has not previously been able to score was the agency budget, and asked for Mr. Martin's feedback. Mr. Martin noted that such a question was frustrating for the applicants, however the grantors preferred to have this information to see a diverse revenue stream. When dollars are scarce, it would be easy for a potential grantor to not allocate as high of a level of funding simply because the applicant agency receives funding from other sources. An organization should not be penalized for having a good financial support system in place. He noted that most of the applicant agencies do a good job of keeping the admins low, and working hard to ensure they have applied for the necessary supports to drive the work.

Chairwoman Hiller inquired if Mr. Martin felt they should be looking at cost per client. Mr. Martin felt it would be worth looking into more deeply, but suggested not making that change for the 2022 cycle. Having an ongoing conversation about it could be beneficial.

Chairwoman Hiller stated she saw a question on the United Way application that asked applicants what they would do should they not receive the level of funding that had been requested. Ms. Katzer noted that the agencies have the option to revise the application once proposed awards were made, however this was not a current option for the City's grant. Ms. Wright noted the agencies are allowed to adjust the outputs and outcomes to fit the dollar amount they received. This has not been a discussion. She did not feel any of the agencies were trying to cheat the system, but wanted to have the opportunity to make minor changes to reflect a more realistic report.

Chairwoman Hiller inquired about the request for attachments. Ms. Katzer stated she had not been sure how the resolution 75-80 works, and if agencies would still get their insurance if they do not have a resolution certificate. She wants to keep the process as simple as possible, but asked Ms. Wright to assist with this clarification. Ms. Wright stated she would review that information.

d. Scoring/Recommendations

Chairwoman Hiller inquired if Mr. Martin felt there were any additional changes he would suggest for improving the process. Mr. Martin provided a copy of the score sheet that was found in the e-C Impact with notes attached. Ms. Katzer worked through those items. Many of them were notes for staff. The sample was provided to allow the committee to provide input, if they felt any scoring items were missing. No further suggestions were made by the committee.

Chairwoman Hiller noted that the committee would be open to hearing suggestions from United Way as this second year of the process began.

4) Review, possible action: 2022 Cycle Issues

a. Outsource 2022 Process

Chairwoman Hiller noted that the first year of the outsource process was a learning curve, and that there were some differences between how the City had previously done the scoring and recommendation process and that of United Way's, and asked Mr. Martin for his input. Mr. Martin noted the process was similar, but also would be difficult to try to adapt to fit the same mold. He appreciated continued conversation throughout the process to make it work as smoothly as possible, and bringing programs in for a larger conversation to help strengthen applications. Overall, he felt the current process was strong.

b. Priorities for 2022 process

Chairwoman Hiller requested input regarding the \$10,000 minimum request. Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá stated she would be in favor of only funding programs that would score high enough to receive the \$10,000 minimum. Committee member Padilla agreed, and stated he felt there would likely be other resources for programs that would receive under \$10,000, and that it would perhaps not be efficient for the reviewers to take the time to score the entire application for a lower amount. Ms. Wright confirmed that the grant management had been set for the reporting and financial reporting for contracts, and the thought was that \$10,000 was the amount that all parties preferred to stay at.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá inquired about leftover funding. Chairwoman Hiller discussed a few possibilities. Mr. Martin noted that from their end, the question would be whether there is a \$10,000 minimum request, or a minimum award. In theory, a program that applied for a \$10,000 would need a 100% score in order to be awarded. This could potentially lead a program to request more funding in order to receive the amount they actually need. Chairwoman Hiller inquired if there were any comments from the attending agencies regarding this matter.

Barbara, Center for Peace and Justice, noted they were an agency that had applied for the minimum level of funding, and had been awarded \$8,000. She noted the award, although may be deemed small, was the only way their new program was able to become established and would like to see the request remain the same, and that awards could be provided even if an application scored under that threshold.

Comments from two applicant agencies stated they would like to see the minimum award remain at \$10,000. One agency responded they would disagree with that.

Chairwoman Hiller stated if the language was changed to read “minimum grant request”, it would allow agencies who scored above the established threshold to receive something if funding was left over. However, if it remained “minimum grant amount”, it would require the program to score 100% to receive their funding...and there was potential then for agencies to ask for more money in order to receive the minimum request.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá commented she would be favorable keeping the \$10,000 request, and rewarding an application less than \$10,000 if funding was leftover. Committee member Padilla agreed, and felt the initial consideration to fund would be at a lower priority, however if funding was leftover it could be awarded to the program.

No action taken, however note taken that consensus was to change language to say “Minimum request amount: \$10,000”.

c. 2022 Calendar

Item did not get discussed in great detail at this meeting.

d. Outcomes/Process/Applications/Scoring/Recommendations

Discussed at length, no action.

5) Other Items

Items to clarify at next meeting:

- Capping number of programs from one agency, or the level of funding that would go toward agencies with multiple programs.
- Grandfathering agencies.
- Issue on the calendar about dates for clarification from UW about the cycle.

6) Schedule next meeting

Next meeting will be in December.

7) Adjourn

Chairwoman Hiller adjourned the meeting at 12:03pm.

Meeting video can be viewed at: https://youtu.be/gOXi_87Ls6s