

CDBG Advisory Board
MINUTES
April 4, 2012

Board Members Present: Kiona Baez Heath, Carole LaVigne, Stephanie Seguino, Monica Weeber, Jessie Baker, Judy Dickson, Solveig Overby, Fauna Shaw, Lisa Lillibridge, Jane Helmstetter

Also present: Gary De Carolis (facilitator), Margaret Bozik and Denise Girard (CEDO staff)

The meeting opened at 6:00 p.m. with a review of the agenda for this meeting and the minutes from the previous meeting. The March 28 minutes were approved with the following changes:

- o Project names to be added to the “DEV” designation
- o Typographical error in the third to last paragraph on the funding amount for DEV to be corrected
- o The following language to be added to the fifth to last paragraph: “Fully funding DEV3 reflects the importance of targeting youth and the way in which this application meets all of the criteria of the program, especially breaking the cycle of poverty.”

There was no public comment. The Board turned to balancing the Public Service budget, which needed to be cut by \$255 due to a reduction in the city’s CDBG allocation in the final (as opposed to preliminary) HUD funding notice. A proposal to reduce PS 11 (Homesharing & Caregiving) by \$114, to the requested amount of \$4,386 was approved unanimously. A proposal to cut \$7 from each of the remaining funded proposals was rejected by a vote of 1-9. Two proposals – one to cut \$141 from PS16 (Sara Holbrook Teen Program) and one to cut \$141 from PS9 (Case Management for Seniors) – were retracted after discussion. A proposal to cut \$141 from PS6 (WARMTH Program) was accepted by a vote of 8-2. At that point, the Public Service budget was balanced.

The Board then discussed possible improvements to the process for next year. The Board spent time talking about whether and when an applicant’s past funding awards should be considered. On the “plus” side, members said that they like seeing the previous funding because it reflects applicant’s reasonable expectations; that seeing the previous funding amount helps with shaving money, but not in the decision about whether or not to fund at all; and that it’s good to distinguish “new” from previously funded but dropped applications – so they want to see the trend over time, not just last year’s history. On the “change” side, members said that knowing past funding amounts may contribute to new applications not being funded, which isn’t a good thing, and that perhaps the past year funding amount on the postings should be covered up for the first round of discussion.

Another suggestion was to perhaps take the funding history out of the notebooks but leave on the posters. It was left to next year's staff to review this information and decide how to handle the past funding amount question.

Another suggestion for change is to bring a picture of past posters (or a sample poster from previous years) to the orientation meeting so that when staff talk about what the posters will look like, new members can actually see it.

The Board had an extended discussion about impact, outcome measures and how to best ask for that information in the application. Questions and issues included the return on investment of a program, and whether that could be quantified; the cost to agencies of doing follow-up and whether that is affordable; the fact that we want to build strong organizations that can show the effectiveness of their work; the fact that there's no perfect way to ask these questions, especially if you want to keep the application at its current length; and the fact that it's good to have different perspectives of "good outcomes." The Board suggested that Section IX(a) of the application form be modified to ask:

- (i) How are clients better off as a result of your program?
- (ii) What are the numerical outcome measures you use to see if your clients are better off?
- (iii) What is your process for evaluating the effectiveness of your program, and how do you respond if you aren't meeting your goals?

Section IX(b) should be changed to ask for results for the entire client population, so that the board can evaluate system-level effectiveness as opposed to "slices" of client populations. Question XII, which asks about meeting Consolidated Plan objectives, should be moved into Section IX and changed to ask not only which objective(s) the application falls under but also how the program helps to meet that objective (with numbers). And, the objective numbers - "DH3.1," etc. - should be added to the objectives chart in Board notebooks. Finally, the four parts of question VII should be separated so that applicants must answer each subpart, to show poverty impact. Staff should continue to provide training to applicants about what the Board is looking for in the impact / outcome area - and perhaps provide training on outcome measurement to the Board as well.

There could be a better opportunity or process for feedback to applicants. Possible suggestions include having successful applicants or Board members provide coaching to unsuccessful applicants.

Thoughts for the Consolidated Plan rewrite process include:

- o Should CDBG be sustainable, ongoing funding for programs? Versus encouraging greater diversity of applications and new programs? It would be more fair to applicants if there was an explicit position on this question.

- o An exit interview with Mayor might be helpful in preserving institutional memory.
- o Student housing is still an issue and should again be addressed in the new Consolidated Plan.
- o The new Consolidated Plan should keep the Board process.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:20 p.m.