

CDBG Advisory Board

2/19/14

Members Present: Fauna Hurley, Sterling Scoville, Karen Freudenberger, Jen Powell, Jim Langan, Russ Elek, Jennifer Wallace-Brodeur, Lisa Lillibridge, Martha Maksym, Jim Holway, Jane Helmstetter, Bianca LeGrand

Staff Present: Marcy Krumbine, Denise Girard, Peter Owens

The meeting began at 6:07 pm.

Marcy introduced Peter Owens, CEDO Director. Peter welcomed the Board members and thanked them for their energy and commitment to this important work. He wished them luck with the difficult task ahead.

Introductions followed. Marcy explained that the United Way was once a voting member, but now a resource for this process.

On a motion by Russ, seconded by Karen, the minutes from the meeting of January 29, 2014, were approved with no changes.

There was no public comment.

The Board had in front of it the average ratings of all Public Service applications and the median funding amount from individual Board member's allocations, and colored dots representing each Board member's allocation for each application as follows:

Blue Dot: 75-100% of the amount requested
Green Dot: 50-75% of the amount requested
Yellow Dot: 25-50% of the amount requested
Red Dot: 0-25% of the amount requested

Review of the allocation process began with a discussion of what guided each Board member as they determined scoring and funding for each project.

- Looked at percentage of CDBG request to agency's entire budget, wanting to give more to those where this is a bigger chunk of their pie.
- Tried to reward people with high scores and give them more money and not reduce their requests so much.
- Looked at the future of the project, particularly where applicant was unable to substitute funds elsewhere.
- In the interest of rewarding applicants with strong applications and projects, I ended out zeroing out others.

Karen noted that about half of the applicants calculated the cost per person differently than was requested. She suggested posing the question differently next year.

Jennifer wondered if we should be asking a different question and asked that we reflect on this at the end of this year's process.

Marcy suggested that the Board decide on process: Perhaps all 1-year applications first and then 2-year. Board members decided to begin by reviewing the 1-year applications.

Marcy distributed a sheet showing the average scores and average funding amounts based on the spreadsheets received from 9 out of 11 Board members. A brief explanation of the point system (130 points) followed.

Karen asked for percentages based on the funding requests vs. the average funding thus far. Sterling did the calculations, and Marcy wrote the percentages on the posters as follows:

PS1 – 77%
PS2 – 42%
PS4 – 74%
PS5 – 53%
PS6 – 68%
PS7 – 57%
PS8 – 97%
PS9 – 47%

Marcy reviewed last year's allocation process:

1. Look first at applications with multiple red dots and vote yes/no whether to eliminate.
2. Don't revisit applications eliminated in step 1.
3. Review the remaining applications from high to low rank.
4. If budget is not balanced after steps 1-3, revisit close votes.
5. If budget not balanced after step 4, review again starting with lowest ranked.

Jim H noted that his spreadsheet contained scoring, but not funding amounts. He shared his red dots: PS7, PS8, and PS9, and Marcy added them to the posters.

Marcy reviewed the percentages vs. average scores. Lengthy discussion followed regarding funding based on average amounts, full funding, no funding, etc.

Fauna asked for Martha Maksym's opinion on fully funding vs. not.

Martha asked the Board to think about what they'll get for the money invested if they are not fully funding (i.e., if you only give 50%, you can expect only 50% of what they say they'll do). If they don't have another funding source, it may make sense to either fully fund or give none. A lot of agencies will find the difference elsewhere, but if you feel strongly about a particular application and impact, she suggested fully funding. The reality is that they asked for a lot more money than you have.

Fauna feels strongly about not eliminating, because the CDBG stamp of approval helps these organizations access other funding.

The vote to consider zeroing out any of the applications passed 6-5.

Marcy asked if the Board would like to begin the process by considering fully funding at least one application. This failed by a vote of 4-7.

Marcy asked if the Board would like to accept the averages that the Board scoring and funding came up with as the funding amounts. Discussion followed.

Jim L stated that if we approve the average funding amounts as written, it would be hard to explain. He feels it warrants further discussion.

Jane added that people spent a lot of time on this, so we should take the opportunity to question and discuss.

On a vote of 2-9, the recommendation to accept the average funding amounts (as is) failed.

Discussion followed regarding design of the application.

Martha urged the Board to consider transparency in the process, noting that the agencies will look at that. What were the scores? Was it a fair process? Scores vs. relative amount of money is important. It's important for you to feel comfortable walking out of here.

1-Year Public Service Project Discussion and Allocations

PS8 CVOEO Volunteer Income Tax Assistance

No conflicts.

Comments:

- Really hit the mark for me. High number of people being impacted.
- Application sounded great, but it's not the only place you can get free tax assistance.
- AARP and United Way offer free tax services, so this is duplicative.
- Serves a lot of people, and financial literacy is an important service. Transformative for people's lives.
- Disappointed with collaboration section. Seemed to talk a lot about themselves.
- Great multiplier impact, small money goes a long way. They work with Champlain College. It's clear what our money will fund.
- Not a lot of duplication. CVOEO is the only game in town for the general public. There were once 3 VITA sites, but now only CVOEO, with exception of AARP for seniors only. They do lion's share of free taxes.

Funding at the average amount of \$7,760 failed by a vote of 2-9.

Funding at \$8,000 was approved by a vote of 10-1.

PS9 CHC Dental Care Services

Conflict: Bianka LeGrand

Comments:

- This is a viable and important project; meaningful way to reintegrate people back into society.
- Problems with their application: they were missing demonstrated need items, not a lot of data on anti-poverty strategy, didn't meet outcomes, mentioned funding kits but not included in the budget. It's an essential project but the application is not clear.
- They do amazing work, but not a good job on their application at all.
- Demonstrated need very unclear. Didn't achieve outcomes, but they explained in application that it was not their fault. Budget wasn't broken down. Per person cost was good. No one else was providing this service.
- CHC used to use residents from FAHC. CHC is not using the dental residents any longer, and FAHC is about to open a free dental clinic to have placements for their residents.
- Includes an outreach program to the homeless and school children.
- Concerned about budget discrepancy.

Funding at the average amount of \$8,020 failed by a vote of 2-7 with 2 abstentions.

The Board tentatively approved funding at \$7,000 by a vote of 6-4, with 1 abstention.

PS7 AALV Project Integration

Conflict: Karen Freudenberger

Comments:

- Some of this service provided by VT Refugee Resettlement Program, but a much narrower population.
- People first receive services from VRRP, and then AALV takes over.
- Poor job of leveraging.
- They have done an incredible job becoming more sophisticated, better application, and the work they're doing is critical.
- Very important program.

Funding at the average amount of \$5,721 passed by a vote of 9-1.

The Board took a 10-minute break at 7:40 pm.

2-Year Public Service Project Discussion and Allocations

PS1 COTS Families in Transition

No conflicts.

Comments:

- Did an excellent job on their application this year.
- In the future, it will be hard for them to continue getting funding without aggressive steps.

Funding at the average amount of \$15,436 passed by a vote of 7-3.

PS6 Homeshare VT Homesharing/Caregiving

No conflicts.

Comments:

- Big bang for the buck.
- They work really hard to serve two different populations - people needing a home and supporting elders.
- It's amazing what they do for the amount of money.
- Better applications every year consistently.
- Gives people a break on rent and helps security of both parties.
- First section of application didn't demonstrate need, but improves as you continue reading.
- They changed what we asked for in the budget section.
- Scored low for collaboration and efficiency.
- Impressed that they were able to buy office space and lower their overhead.
- Incredibly well-run organization.
- Inventive and smart way to tackle two problems at once.

Funding at the average amount of \$17,222 failed by a vote of 4-7.

Funding at \$20,000 passed by a vote of 10-1.

PS4 VT Works for Women Fresh Food

No conflicts.

Comments:

- Excellent proposal, synergy, local food, clear, actual numbers were there, and what the impact would be if not funded.
- Bonus for starting food production business too.
- Of the women involved in the program, 78% go on to gain employment. That's astronomical. Supporting local food and resources is a great economic benefit. That's what this money is all about.
- Problems with application. Felt like program provides food to child care centers, but not specifically targeting needy or at risk children. In Section 2, anti-poverty didn't reference the Con Plan. Proposed outcomes were weak with regard to job training. High cost per person benefit. Number of people impacted relatively low based on others.

The Board tentatively approved funding at the average amount of \$22,333 by a vote of 6-5.

PS5 CVAA Case Management for Seniors

No conflicts.

Comments:

- No effort to show poverty reduction program. Accessible to all seniors, but doesn't seem to be targeting low-income.

- CDBG assumes that all senior citizens are considered low-income.
- Keeps people in their own homes longer, and extends their quality of life.
- This agency receives a huge amount of oversight. They collect a lot of data and report to a lot of people. Comfortable they can do what they say they'll do. They are doing labor intensive work to keep people in their homes to access resources needed to do that. 85% of clientele is extremely low and low-income.
- They did and continue to address needs of elderly refugee population. They have taken steps to work more closely with that population.
- They raised awareness for for-profit agencies in this area as well.
- Didn't find their case compelling, although they do compelling work.
- Caseloads are incredibly high, and funding is a struggle with this organization. Complexity of cases has increased. They go out into the community. Incredible service and underpaid.

The board tentatively approved funding at the average amount of \$12,722 by a vote of 6-5.

PS2 WHBW Safe Tonight

No conflicts.

Comments:

- Concerned that they couldn't answer who their target population is.
- Based on the application question, I can see why they answered it that way. Not deliberately deceptive; no demographic characteristic of their target population.
- Cost of protecting victims of domestic violence is important.
- Confused by program design and what we are funding. They mention three different programs. It's hard to understand and not clarified in other parts of the application.

Funding at the average amount of \$18,602 passed by a vote of 8-3.

Following a first pass of the applications, the funding was over by \$1,892.00.

Karen stated that based on our discussions this evening, the scores noted on the posters do not reflect our final scores.

Discussion followed regarding the process for making cuts.

Suggestions:

- Cut everything incrementally; divide all evenly.
- Start with closest votes and revisit.

Russ expressed concern that if you split the cuts evenly, you negatively affect the better applications.

Vote to divide up incrementally failed by a vote of 4-7.

There was consensus to start by looking at the close votes.

The Board next revisited the following projects:

PS5 CVAA

Funding at \$12,000 passed by a vote of 11-0.

PS4 VT Works for Women

Funding at \$21,500 passed by a vote of 11-0.

PS9 CHC Dental Care

Funding at \$6,663 passed by a vote of 9-2.

Marcy reviewed the Board’s assignment for the next meeting which is to read the Development applications and identify both conflicts of interest and any pass/fail questions for the applicants.

Board members reviewed this meeting to see what worked well and what could be improved.

+	Δ
Hearing from others	Felt rushed during last ½ hour of meeting
Talking things through and making changes accordingly	Up/Down arrows should be recorded on posters
Good balance – give & take	Unfortunate that not all Board members submitted rating/budget spreadsheets
Democratic process	
Consistency	
United Way input	
Jane’s institutional knowledge	
Cookies & chocolate	
Better than last year	
Better application	
Denise’s help	

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm.