



Richland County Council  
Community Impacts Grants Committee  
**MINUTES**  
May 11, 2023 – 4:30 PM  
Council Chambers  
2020 Hampton Street, Columbia, SC 29204

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Jessica Mackey, Chair, Jason Branham, Paul Livingston, and Cheryl English  
Councilwoman English entered the meeting around 4:48 pm

NOT PRESENT: Gretchen Barron

OTHERS PRESENT: Allison Terracio, Don Weaver, Michelle Onley, Chelsea Bennett, Anette Kirylo, Angela Weathersby, Abhijit Deshpande, Ashiya Myers, Kyle Holsclaw, Lori Thomas, Jennifer Wladischkin, Stacey Hamm, Dale Welch, Elizabeth McLean, and Aric Jensen

1. **CALL TO ORDER** - Chairwoman Jessica Mackey called the meeting to order at approximately 4:30 PM.  
Ms. Mackey noted that Ms. Barron notified her that she could not attend today's meeting due to a prior obligation.
2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
  - a. April 4, 2023 – Mr. Livingston moved to approve the minutes as submitted, seconded by Mr. Branham.  
In Favor: Branham, Livingston, and Mackey  
Not Present: Barron and English  
The vote in favor was unanimous.
3. **ADOPTION OF AGENDA** – Mr. Livingston moved to adopt the agenda as published, seconded by Mr. Branham.  
In Favor: Branham, Livingston, and Mackey  
Not Present: Barron and English  
The vote in favor was unanimous.
4. **ITEM FOR DISCUSSION/ACTION**
  - a. Proposed FY24 Community Impact Grant Application – Ms. Mackey reminded the committee that they had set aside an agreed-upon amount for the upcoming fiscal year. The committee decided the next step would be developing an application process and an application by May 31, 2023. Between the last meeting and today, she has received comments and thoughts from her colleagues regarding the application process and the criteria for the application. It was noted the application in the agenda packet is not an entirely new application but a combination of applications we have used in other grants. The application uses similar questions we have used in other grant periods. Still, it does incorporate a few new pieces we think may make it unique to the Community Impact Grant phase, as well as suggestions we have received from Council members.  
  
Ms. Lori Thomas, Assistant County Administrator, stated that in looking at the application, the first parts for the demographics and questions about projects are relatively standard and what would be expected. When we get to the budget, there may need to be a distinguishing fact of whether the committee would like to see the organization's total budget, the budget of the project, or both. Something else that might be considered is whether it is a new or existing program. The required documents would be a non-starter for organizations that do not submit those. They will not proceed with the application and review if they are not included. Another consideration would be how the project will be sustained beyond the first year. What would be the key performance indicators if it is a new project?  
  
Ms. Mackey mentioned overall; this is standard information used in other applications. She pointed out that Question #4: "Are you applying for a Countywide or District grant?" is not something included in other applications. A Council member suggested the question. When we look at Community Impact Grant funding, tying it to our Strategic Plan and ensuring we are equitable in supporting organizations through our County. "Is

this funding related to a program that is Countywide?" or "Is this funding related to a program that only benefits a specific zip code or district?" This will help us determine if we are funding all districts or setting aside funds for specific districts to ensure all districts are getting the impact.

Question #5: "Which impact area will your project serve?" Affordable Housing, Education, Recreation, Workforce Development, and Food Insecurity (*Please select all that apply.*) – These are key areas discussed in the Strategic Plan that Council would like to see improvement in and where they would like to focus on moving the community forward. When we look at Community Impact Grant funding, we need to ensure we are funding organizations that will help us achieve the goals in the community.

Mr. Livingston indicated that this question might create a problem for him because someone may say they are impacting all the categories.

Ms. Mackey responded she believes that would be a good problem.

Mr. Weaver suggested adding an "Other" category. For instance, Pathways to Healing assists victims of sexual trauma, and he does not know how that would fit into any of the five categories listed.

Mr. Livingston replied Council decided to focus on certain areas. He is concerned that you may get organizations with totally irrelevant ideas.

Ms. Mackey noted Pathways to Healing has already been identified as one of the Community Partners the committee agreed to receive funding.

Mr. Branham stated he and Mr. Weaver were not on Council when the Strategic Plan was voted on. He indicated he liked the concept and much of what he had heard and seen. He appreciates the fact there is an effort to align this application with the Strategic Plan. Generally speaking, when it comes to government, they are empowered to enact laws that promote health, safety, and general welfare. He suggested including health and safety in the application. For example, the installation of security cameras would have an impact on a community.

Mr. Livingston said he could support Mr. Branham's recommendation instead of an "Other" category.

Ms. Mackey inquired if the committee needed to make a motion to amend the application.

Ms. Elizabeth McLean, Chief Deputy County Attorney, responded if the committee wanted to make significant changes, there would need to be a motion to ensure the will of the body is kept.

For the record, Ms. Mackey is fine with including a health and safety category. She noted that Questions #6-11 are general questions to obtain project information.

Mr. Livingston inquired if the start and end date of the project needed to be separate questions.

Ms. Thomas replied it needed to be two separate questions. It is helpful to know if there is any deviation in the end date (i.e., school year project). It also assists with the monitoring of the grant.

Ms. Mackey stated the next section is "*Benefit to the Community*" – Question #12: "Include number of persons served, demographics of the audience served and the geographic location of those served." This gives us a little more detail about the actual project impact.

"*Sustainability*" – Question #13: "What efforts are being made to increase the sustainability of this project/program and decrease the reliance on County Community Impact Grant funds?" – Staff recommends that we include some language that addresses the organization's plan to sustain the program.

Ms. Mackey acknowledged that we want to be able to assist organizations, but we want to ensure we are helping them achieve a goal but also help a diverse set of organizations.

Ms. Thomas expressed that some of the members were not here when the discretionary program was in existence. The discretionary program was single-year funding, at a specific maximum amount, or a specific maximum amount over three years for a program that might need additional help. She suggested the committee may want to determine, as we look at the process, how long Council would consider funding an organization and if there is a maximum amount. Lastly, if there are multiple years, what is the maximum number of years and amount in that arrangement?

Ms. Mackey indicated she would like staff to add some additional language for Question #13 that addresses the concern(s) of how the organization plans to continue after year one.

Ms. English said the Department of Disability and Special Needs does 3-year grants. The first year is 75%/25%, 2<sup>nd</sup> year is 65%/35%, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> year is 50%/50%, which allows them to come up with their own sustainability. If something needs to be extended, they must come back to the Council and explain the reason(s).

Ms. Thomas expressed the committee might want to consider if there will be a match requirement for the organizations. In the past, the County has not had this requirement. Typically, the County must have matching funds when accepting a grant to make us more accountable for the use of funds. That is something the committee could consider.

Mr. Branham declared he supports the sentiment behind Question #13. He likes the idea of us being “incubators” to help charitable organizations get going and establish their sustainability. He also does not want to create a lot of red tape or more meetings for Council members.

“Partnerships/Community Support” – Question #14: “Describe your partnership efforts with similar organizations in Richland County that assist in furthering the mission of your organization (List names of partnering organizations if applicable)” – Ms. Mackey noted Ms. English had suggested to include partnerships.

Ms. English gave the following example regarding partnerships: If we are working with mental health and will provide counseling, then we need Babcock to say they will partner with us to ensure the children that have already been assessed can come through the system. It provides some accountability.

For clarification, Ms. Thomas inquired if it would be fair to say, “Describe the partnership efforts with similar organizations in Richland County for this project.”

Ms. English responded in the affirmative.

“Outcomes” – Ms. Mackey inquired if we want to add more specific parameters related to key performance indicators. (i.e., How are they going to show us they have achieved what they said they would achieve?)

Mr. Branham expressed that we should get some kind of commitment of willingness to participate in an audit, if requested, or submit a report.

Ms. Thomas stated if we approve the application or come to a point where we have the application ready to forward to Council, we could then move forward with the procedures and processes.

“Budget” – The expense and income sources are included, but nothing specifically asks about the agency's total budget or the project budget related to the total budget. Ms. Mackey understands that the “Budget” category is to get information to see the amount of funding requested. What we award would be approximately 90% of the organization's entire budget. It may be concerning if Richland County is majorly funding this organization's total budget.

Ms. Thomas responded that is correct. That is the consideration we were giving there. Another option might be considering if Council would like to red-line certain activities. For example, if the rent is in their normal activities, that could not be considered a project activity. We could also request a 2-year budget history for the organization.

Ms. Mackey maintained that seeing the total budget versus the project budget is good for us to know.

Mr. Branham stated it would be nice to have the applicant acknowledge that the grant does not indicate intent to provide future funding. Another thought was to put some cautionary language on the application regarding any misrepresentation of fact. Also, should we request proof of insurance? Lastly, a commitment and promise to use the money for those purposes; if they do not do so within the permitted timeframe, they will return the funds to the County.

Ms. Thomas indicated the County would only fund 25% of an award upfront. Beyond that, it is made in reimbursement installments to the groups. If they do not meet the commitments at any point and time, they would not receive any additional funding. She acknowledged we would have the ability to claw back, if possible.

Mr. Branham inquired if there was any feedback on proof of insurance.

Ms. Thomas asserted that a lot of that would be relevant to the particular project and what they are doing. If they have employees, we would want to know if they have workers' compensation insurance, which would be a part of the application agreements. When these are awarded, a grant award letter goes out with all of the specifications spelled out. Under current guidelines, they would not be eligible for future funding if they failed to meet the grant requirements. She noted she would be happy to run this by Risk Management.

Mr. Branham mentioned there is a sign on the wall in the restroom that implies if you steal the toilet paper, you might be prosecuted, which is why he thought we could put something on the application that there may be consequences if there is a misrepresentation of fact. He noted he felt the strongest about including health and safety were added under Question #5.

Ms. Mackey stated that, as a committee, they have yet to discuss the criteria. She wants to give Ms. Thomas some direction so we can have a more formalized process at the next meeting. In the discretionary grant committee, there was an option for one year or up to three years of funding. As a committee, we need to decide if that is the structure we want to continue with or go with a different model. Ms. English had mentioned going with three-year funding with reduced percentages over the years. In addition, do we want to set funding limits?

For clarification, Mr. Branham stated we previously identified the equivalent of one mill as the total budget.

Ms. Mackey replied that the total budget is up to one mill.

Mr. Branham inquired as to what one mill is equivalent to.

Ms. Thomas responded one mill equates to \$1.78M.

Ms. English expressed, when putting parameters in place, that nothing is definitive because agencies' and organizations' needs can always shift, especially when dealing with children.

Ms. Mackey inquired if Ms. English favors one-year allocations and the organizations coming back each year.

Ms. English replied, at full funding, one year. If we do multiple years, then reduced funding.

Ms. Mackey stated when we previously talked about this, you could check the box for three-year funding, but you would still have to apply the following year, and Council would still have to vote on the funding. The application notes that your program was submitted as a three-year project. With that being said, she assumed Ms. English was in favor of a three-year model but with reduced funding after year one.

Ms. English indicated that in her experience with Federal funds, the funds have to be spent on programmatic things rather than on items such as file cabinets, TVs, etc.

Ms. Mackey inquired if there were any thoughts on funding limits.

Mr. Branham recommended \$25,000.

Mr. Livingston asserted he would hate for someone to have a great application, and we limit their funding.

Mr. Mackey noted our budget is only \$1.78M; therefore, we must have a cap. We cannot have an organization come in and request \$500,000, so we need to set realistic parameters.

Ms. Terracio indicated if we are looking at a \$400,000 or \$500,000 investment, she does not believe it would fit into the scope of this committee.

Ms. Thomas reminded the committee we have also named and inquired if they would be held to the same standards. If we allocate \$25,000 to each entity at the current funding level, we could potentially fund approximately 70 groups.

Ms. Mackey indicated that, as a body, we previously voted on nine organizations that we identified as Community Partners, which we committed to funding in the Community Impact Grant category. We did agree to a specific funding amount. These organizations will still be required to submit an application and provide proof. Knowing that Ms. Thomas pointed out that there are already nine organizations, we need to back into the total budget number. We need to determine what dollar amount we are setting aside for these nine organizations. The remaining funds would be what is open and available for other organizations to apply for.

Ms. English inquired if we have a list of what we previously funded the nine agencies.

Ms. Mackey estimated we have funded them at approximately \$900,000.

Mr. Branham declared that would leave us roughly \$900,000.

Ms. Thomas stated, given a couple of the organizations on the list did not previously receive funding, around two-thirds of the budget would be spoken for.

Ms. Mackey asserted the committee did not commit to funding them at the previous year's level. We committed to funding them but did not agree to a funding amount. She indicated we need to determine the amount so that we can set the parameters. For example, we could fund them at 40% or 50%, and the remaining funding would be available for other organizations.

Mr. Branham stated that if the partners were to get half, which equates to approximately \$900,000, we would have roughly \$900,000 to allocate to the other entities. If we capped the grants at \$25,000 and funded each entity at the maximum level, we could still assist 36 organizations.

Ms. Mackey inquired when looking at criteria if a countywide organization would receive more than \$25,000 for their program versus a district-specific program.

Ms. English responded that she would not favor that because her district is so large.

Ms. Mackey stated, for clarification, her question was if your organization is assisting the entire County, should you be able to receive more funding versus an organization just assisting one district?

Mr. Livingston recommended we fund them up to a certain amount. When we look at the application, if it references only a district, the amount could be lower.

Mr. Branham inquired if the district grant was meant to mimic the "old days."

Ms. Mackey replied that nothing is meant to mimic the "old days."

Mr. Branham suggested changing the wording to indicate which district will benefit from the project or which district is the project's geographic focus.

Ms. Mackey agreed the wording could be changed. The intent was to go back to the Strategic Plan and look for equity across grant funding. In previous applications, this was not something that was pointed out. This was to ensure that all parts of the County receive funds when we evaluate applications.

Ms. Thomas indicated the application could be for a Countywide or district-specific project. If it is a district-specific project, there could be a drop-down menu to identify which district(s) would be impacted.

Ms. Mackey inquired if there is a consensus to allocate up to 50% of the funding for the Community Partner, and the remaining 50% would be set aside for new applications.

Mr. Livingston would recommend a 60%/40% split instead.

Mr. Branham noted he would be willing to support up to 60% for the Community Partners.

For clarification, Ms. Mackey restated the recommendation is to allocate up to 60% of the funding for the Community Partners, and the remaining 40% would be set aside for new applications. In addition, the funding cap would be \$25,000 per application. She noted she would personally like to see a larger cap. She realizes this limits the number of projects funded. In this situation, she believes it is more about quality than quantity. If we could partner with an organization to make an impact in a 2-year period, that would be great, instead of giving them \$10,000 here and there for 6 or 7 years.

Ms. English recommended a cap of \$40,000.

Mr. Branham and Mr. Livingston acknowledged they would support up to \$40,000.

Ms. Mackey inquired if anyone would support up to \$50,000.

Ms. English responded she would not have a problem with that. She indicated she does not believe that \$25,000 would not be enough, and up to \$40,000-\$50,000 is a substantial number to get some work done.

For clarification, Ms. Mackey stated the funding cap would be up to \$50,000 per application and to have a three-year funding option with reduced percentages after the first year.

Mr. Branham expressed concern about having a multi-year funding option. He believes it will create a greater need for administration and payroll costs. He would suggest starting with one year to consider how it develops with time and experience.

Ms. Thomas believes she is clear on the committee's recommendation. She will draft a letter to accompany the award letter.

Ms. Mackey noted the next Community Impact Grant Committee meeting will be on May 25<sup>th</sup>.

5. **ADJOURNMENT** – Mr. Livingston moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Branham.

In Favor: Branham, Livingston, Mackey, and English.

Not Present: Barron.

The vote in favor was unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 5:30 PM.