



Request for City Council Committee Action from the Office of Intergovernmental Relations Grants and Special Projects

Date: June 16, 2005

To: Council Member Scott Benson, Chair, Intergovernmental Relations Committee
Referral to: N/A

Subject: Report on grants technical assistance for community-based organizations

Recommendation: Receive and file

Previous Directives: none

Prepared or Submitted by: Berry Farrington, Senior Resource Specialist, 673-2509

Approved by: Gene Ranieri, IGR Director _____

Permanent Review Committee Approval _____ Not Applicable X

Policy Review Group (PRG) Approval _____ Date of Approval _____ Not Applicable X

Note: The Policy Review Group is a committee co-chaired by the City Clerk and the City Coordinator that must review all requests related to establishing or changing enterprise policies.

Presenters in Committee: Berry Farrington

Financial Impact (Check those that apply)

X No financial impact - or - Action is within current department budget.

(If checked, go directly to Background/Supporting Information)

___ Action requires an appropriation increase to the Capital Budget

___ Action requires an appropriation increase to the Operating Budget

___ Action provides increased revenue for appropriation increase

___ Action requires use of contingency or reserves

___ Other financial impact (Explain):

___ Request provided to the Budget Office when provided to the Committee Coordinator

Community Impact (use any categories that apply)

Neighborhood Notification

City Goals

Comprehensive Plan

Zoning Code

Other

Background/Supporting Information Attached

Office of Grants and Special Projects

Strategic Partnership Initiative

2004-2005 Annual Report

July 2005

Background

In the last year the Office of Grants and Special Projects began offering grants-related technical assistance to Minneapolis community-based organizations. This new activity began as a way for the City to assist organizations in their work that achieves and sustains City goals.

Technical Assistance

The grants office provides support much like a consultant, though not as a grant writer but as an advisor. I work with organizations one-on-one, focusing on their particular grant needs. Depending on the organization's wishes, I typically assist them with:

- Understanding the application process and setting a funding strategy, especially those new to fundraising and grants.
- Selecting priority program and fundraising goals.
- Researching potential funders.
- Reviewing and making suggestions on draft letters of inquiry, proposals and budgets.
- Facilitating communication with City departments or other organizations, if appropriate.

Assistance can range from a one-time phone consultation to regular meetings. In addition, the website of the Office of Grants and Special Projects has been adapted to better reach an audience of community-based organizations as well as City departments. The site lists public and private funding opportunities, providing brief descriptions, deadlines and links to a full announcement. Other information about grants is posted on the site as well.

Outreach

Given the large number of community-based organizations in Minneapolis, my outreach approach has been to progressively notify groups of organizations about these services and then allow them to self-select their participation. Organizations have come to work with me through a number of avenues:

- Referrals from Council Members, NRP and CPED staff, other community organizations or people who call for grant-related information.
- Responses from notices mailed to NRP groups, Empowerment Zone applicants, and organizations that responded to the Health Department's public service RFP. Over 200 organizations received these mailings.
- Participants from an NRP sponsored "Get to Know the Grants Office" information session.
- Applicants seeking Empowerment Zone "Small Grants". The "Small Grants" RFP listed the grants office as a technical assistance resource.

Results

- Worked with a total of 35 organizations over the last year.
- Referred approximately 175 funding opportunities to organizations.
- Reviewed and made suggestions on 31 draft grant proposals for 15 organizations.
- Worked with organizations in nearly every ward.
- The most frequent types of assistance organizations use are: draft review, talking through program ideas to match with funder priorities, identifying potential funding sources.

Examples

West Bank Community Coalition: I have been teaching volunteers to develop grant proposals to fund a public art, lighting and wayfinding project near the Cedar LRT station. This project has funding from the City and County, and WBCC is seeking funds from private sources so that the project can include 4 pieces of public art as well as pedestrian lighting and signage. I assisted them with initial research of potential funders, provided information about process and helped them plan out their strategy. We continue to work together and the organization is waiting to hear from a number of potential funders.

Jordan Area Community Council: I met with their development staff person to discuss the organization's funding goals, and referred her to the Fiskars community garden grant which JACC received this spring.

Phyllis Wheatley Community Center: We worked together to better the organization's annual grant calendar.

Findings

The number one issue for organizations with few or no staff is lack of time. Meeting deadlines can be a struggle. I developed a tip sheet on how to schedule backwards from a grant deadline, and when working closely with an organization I remind them of important dates in their process.

Sometimes, organizations seek assistance from us and their priorities are not clear, but they feel ready to go get grants. It can be difficult to move a step back in the process to discuss goals, priorities and methods if needed. During the planning process it is also important for organizations to understand if other entities provide a same or similar service, and if there might be others they can partner with. To consider these issues we use the Logic Model to frame priorities and programs, and a worksheet to consider other resources and partners.

Money and grants are a sensitive topic. I appreciate the level of trust offered me when organizations share draft proposals or discuss unsuccessful grant proposals.

Evaluation

I send a brief feedback survey to each organization about a month after our work together is complete. At this time the technical assistance program can not be credited for bringing a specific dollar amount to organizations. Survey responses indicate that organizations find that working with our office is time well-spent, that it led to them submitting grant applications, some of which were funded. As the program further develops, the grants office will explore additional evaluation criteria.