

CDBG Priority Task Force
Meeting 6: Tuesday July 24, 2008
5:00-6:30pm Council Chambers, 2nd Floor City Hall

Attendance: Anna Priluck, Co-Chair, Rhonda Juneau, Wendy Harmon, Jon Bradley, Jeannemarie Celentano, Rachel Talbot Ross. Shalom Odokara by phone.

Staff: T.J. Martzial, HNS Division Director, Amy Grommes Pulaski, HCD Program Manager.

Introduction

Anna thanks everyone for coming to a second meeting this week. She says that we had a great meeting on Tuesday and that this is the follow up meeting.

Take A Way from Past meeting

Amy reviews the first handout, Highlights of UW Presentation. She goes over the two boxes on the front pages – (1) Essential Programs and Services and (2) Impact Initiatives. Their "Essential Programs and Services" is the way United Way funds over 100 programs and 40 agencies throughout Cumberland County, including Portland. They divide it into four areas of impact:

- 1.) strengthening children,
- 2.) youth and families;
- 3.) promoting health and wellness;
- 4.) building safe and strong communities; and
- 5.) meeting basic needs and self-sufficiency. (They characterize this as changing an individual's condition and the money goes to support the UW partner agencies).

The other side of the coin is "Impact Initiatives" – focused on impact on community conditions – bigger, not ongoing per say, may last for a while and will end, or at least UW involvement may end. UW impact initiative programs rely heavily on collaboration. Some of the programs are Language Access for New Americans LANA, Creating Assets Savings and Hope, and a few other initiatives. Likely these programs will continue on their own. And UW funds are used as start-up.

There are three additional UW initiatives:

- 1.) diversity & inclusion;
- 2.) helping at risk youth succeed; and
- 3.) preparing children for kindergarten.

Shalom mentions that UW does not pay for many of the impact initiatives, there are other funding sources. She explains that LANA is actually not funded by UW. It is more of a partnership. She further explains that it is not an apples to apples comparison because UW is not funding some of their projects. Anna explained we understand the distinction.

Jeannemarie had a question whether the people who receive the impact funding from UW understand the impact they are supposed to address and that it is limited.

Jon explains Rachel Talbot Ross is on the diversity team and asks her opinion. Rachel says the one goal of the UW diversity impact project is to get to non-traditional communities. She also explained that the last 6 years, all UW agency funding has been flat funded (it has been cut). Amy continues that there is also a tier-approach within the UW. Tier 1 projects receive increased funding, Tier 2 projects are flat funded, and Tier 3 projects are funded at a lower level. One reason for this is that there is not enough funding for everyone. She highlights another part of the UW presentation. UW has identified areas not to fund, such as affordable housing. This task force can consider areas that are currently funded with CDBG funds and decide which areas are not having a big impact, and discontinue funding. Amy also shares the eight point list that UW had given her in determining how to choose priorities.

Jeannemarie asks whether tiers are applied for essential programs and impacts. Jon answers that it is just for essential programs and services.

Potential Options for Changes in Social Services

Amy presents flip side of the handout, which is called “Structural Changes In The Grant Program”. Amy says the group can consider these structural changes:

- (1) higher minimum/maximum grants;
- (2) increased/required agency collaboration/partnership to address an issue;
- (3) multi-year funding;
- (4) introduce “gut” priorities;
- (5) grand initiatives and sunsets (large projects, that eventually go off on their own); and
- (6) grandfathering or sun-setting (for example, three years of funding, one year off).

Shalom says that we have very different agencies, with different capabilities and different talents. Sometimes, the agencies depending on size, can only take on specific size projects. Smaller non profit organizations cannot compete. She suggests a way to rate agencies so they can compete. Collaboration does not mean collaboration if there isn't an equal playing field.

Amy suggests smaller capacity building grants and Shalom agrees.

Jon explains that capacity building grants are complex. Just about any size social service provider agency could use funds for “capacity building”, needs more definition. Jon says let's focus on impact rather than who is doing it.

Rachel says that common language is important. Capacity building may mean something different to Rachel versus Jon. She suggests some definitions. She will send these to Amy.

Jon says a number of smaller agencies need help with administration and technical assistance.

Jeannemarie says it's important to focus not only on blanket organizations, but also on multiple agencies. If smaller organizations are addressing multiple issues, maybe they can compete with larger organization.

Wendy said there is also a difference between organizations with paid staff and volunteer staff. Shalom explains that one way to address that issue is to give more points to organizations without paid staff. Some larger foundations do this already.

Rachel says you have to agree upon a value system. Do you spend money on a community organization to build capacity to serve a smaller population? Or do you fund say Community Counseling who is adding only one new staff person. This is an organization who already has capacity. Which is a better investment of money?

Amy asks if there were any topics on the Structural Change worksheet that we need to add. She summarizes the two she wrote down from the discussion.

7) Smaller capacity building grants

8) An overall underlying theme, such as diversity or sustainability. Wendy says there is one we forgot-

9) one grant per organization.

Outreach Possibilities

Jon we need to think broadly about who we go to talk to.

Rachel one drastic change that UW is considering is since they have diversity and inclusion is an initiative. They may have to prove where they are having diverse boards, outreach materials, etc.

Shalom explains that partnership and collaboration may be challenging. In Lewiston a Somali group partnered with Catholic Charities and lost their group identity.

Rachel we can require anyone who applies would have to prove that they are reaching the values or populations that we want to reach.

Anna says that this echoes what Aaron said last night. It also reminds me of what Bill Needelman said and coordinates with City Vision and Sustainability Report.

Jeannemarie asks Rachel how UW defines diversity and inclusion. Rachel explains they surveyed other UW. Etc Jeannemarie also says that we could coordinate the UW report and the City's vision.

Wendy explains that the CMPAC committee required applicants to have more diversity.

Jon says we are now getting somewhere good. By putting certain values coordinated with the issues, it requires people to stretch. There's no reason to dive in half way, but we should just dive in and change it if we think it will have a meaningful impact. Maybe there are 2 or 3 or 8 values. Diversity is one of them.

Anna asks do we want to be political and hinder our recommendations or move toward transformation. Shalom says we are also going to the public, which makes the transition easier.

Homework: Rachel will provide definition of capacity building, collaboration, diversity

Anna says lets move onto the groups that we need to talk to.

Jon says we need to have a reasonable sample of big current subrecipients , and people who aren't or could be. We can always invite everyone to come to talk. He thinks you'd get better information in an interview. And then some focus groups. How do we feel good about who we are choosing?

Shalom wants to know the organizations that did get funded to explain why and how, to those that did not get funded. Many organizations were continuously not funded. She wants to hear how others get funded.

Anna says that may throw us off course. We may find out what works and doesn't work, but how does that help us set priorities?

Jon says one of the things this task force is going to do is change how things have always got funded.

Rachel thinks that we are starting with the wrong question. First what do we need to know? Then we ask who we need to talk to. If we don't know what we want to know, then we can do this forever. One way to do this is to have panels of 6 or 7 people to talk on a specific topic. We make sure it is gender balance and ethnic diversity.

Jon says the questions that we want to ask are already here, we just need to flesh it out. It's the structural stuff that will change the ball game. Anna states that we need to get a sense of the community's reaction to some proposed changes for the CDBG program. Rachel says that we need to have some more information on need.

Jon said his idea is to change the structure of the grant. For example, Preble Street gets three grants now. All of that is off the table if we make these structural changes. PS is willing to entertain that. Rachel says we need to make informed and intelligent decisions. Shalom said we need to be careful as to the level of need.

Amy explains that we need to decide how to best spend the money. Do we want larger initiatives or smaller start ups?

Jeanemarie says that whether we decide to only fund large \$50,000 grants then we have to have a reason and justify our recommendations. We need to say this is why we made this decision.

Anna says we can do an outreach piece, and we can do another set of outreach where we explain.

Who should be invited: organizations who have received funds, organizations who have not received funds and organizations who have never applied.

JM says lets use that data that is already out there. Jon says that UW already gave us a lot already.

Anna says we have some panels focused on change and some focused on needs. Rachel panel is more of a way to get people talking. It would be more of a round table.

Amy asks how we would gather this information. Would we divide them by topic? Specific invitations or open advertisement?

The TF discusses how to attempt outreach. Anna says we need a subcommittee.

Jeannemarie says we have two groups for outreach: providers and public. We need to have a cross section of who will be there. That would guarantee us to have a level of diversity, and have it open to everyone else.

Volunteers to be team leaders for the Social Service

Rachel says we can do some of this by staff. We have a HHS and Refugee and Community Services.

Jon asks what would need to accomplish.

- 1) create categories of focus groups,
- 2) best strategy to gather the information,
- 3) invitations,
- 4) facilitate meetings,
- 5) distill information back to the entire task force,
- 6) needs and structural changes.

Rachel says that we need to focus these discussions so they don't become a complaint session. We don't want organizations to say, why hasn't the city done this? We need good facilitators. You need very tight and specific topics for discussion. Shalom suggests ICL, could be a neutral facilitation.

Volunteers for the social service group: Jeannemarie, Jon, Wendy, Rhonda, Shalom.

We need some guiding principles of this team to address the "overall theme."

Send out values to group and gather feedback.

Anna says thanks to everyone.