

Committee Members

2. Quality of Applications.

Clearly, some agencies have grant writers on staff and others do not.

Most organizations could do a better job completing their written applications.

I think applicants struggle with measurable outcomes, but I believe that they should be included.

I was really impressed with the list of questions for the applicants from the members.

Would prefer to have applications be more specific about why the funds are needed and what they will be used for by the agency

Looking forward to streamlining the application before the next round.

There was a lot of variation in quality and lack of definition of terms/concepts.

Agency staff almost uniformly were diligent in responding fully and honestly to each question.

3. Communication received/exchanged throughout process.

The City specialists are important in clarifying for me how they see the organization functioning.

We had too many meetings with the applicants.

I have heard from a few service providers that they felt there was less opportunity to dialogue with staff throughout this past summer's process.

Thought that the conference committee process was very successful. For the over-lapping applications there may not be a better way to coordinate actions.

Communication was critical throughout the process. I was glad that CSC opened communication and feedback to organizations. After the decisions were made there was frustrations from organizations, because it seemed CSC did not listen and ended up making decisions that would not change too many things for staff or for CSC to deal with next year.

Can we design a process that better gets to the meat of the problems, issues and needs while keeping the process open?

There appeared to be sufficient opportunities for input of ideas and explanation or extensions or responses. The approach used for public hearing of individual requests was appropriate and fair.

4. Materials such as application, budget tables and service report summaries, received throughout the process.

The city staff did an excellent job of informing us with paper!

I wonder how other people make sense of the flood of data in the proposals.

Would like to see more specifics on needs/uses. Also would like to see some directional criteria (such as working with other agencies and other neighborhood centers) as part of application.

Continue to refine and define needed materials and reports to serve the Committee's need to make informed decisions.

A lot of material!! 3 large binders are too much! We need to find a way to trim the volume of materials and not lose their relevance in the process.

The amount of required reading was large but probably necessary. My concern is that the load on agency staff may need further consideration. One...it is possible that more information was requested than fully necessary? Two... is it possible that selected information be requested at times before total submittal of written materials?

5. The staff reviews and recommendations were helpful.

Unevenly applied in some cases....we should perhaps have definite staff reviews on reports and finances for all agencies.

The professional experience of staff and their hands-on monitoring of organizations and program success/failures are very useful. Effort should always be made to maintain 'critical distance' in evaluation of service outcomes (rather than cater to political interests or personal biases - stating the obvious).

Some statistical refinement might be helpful.

Excellent staff work; very valuable to committees.

As a committee member they were very helpful.

A critical aspect of the process.

This was an excellent improvement to the process.

The input was crucial to Committee decision-making. Committee members have various amounts of knowledge about agency objectives or programs beyond that which appears on the submittals. Also, the same may be said about the processes and intricacies of the budget process.

6. The overall process gave you the information you needed to make an informed decision.

I believe the city staff should have the opportunity to remark on the experience they have in working with the different agencies.

The overburden of unfunded proposals makes the process more difficult. I believe twice as much was requested as available.

As with any decisions, more information is always valuable, but still feel that decisions were well informed this cycle.

It would have been helpful to have had the Neighborhood Indicator information, for committee members to know what to look for in certain neighborhoods.

The information was there, our ability to sift and winnow to arrive at what really mattered became muddied on occasion.

It was better than in the past. Still seems to be an excessive of information.

7. Quality of decision making process, especially the committee structure and review of centers.

It was hard to stick to the priorities when there were so many worthwhile agencies seeking and needing assistance.

Sometimes our process seemed somewhat arbitrary. Not sure how to improve it though.

While the conference committee was a notable step towards a better process between CDBG and OCS, there is still great need to clarify the cities goals, objectives, and funding priorities and strategies regarding neighborhood centers (existing and potential). I appreciate the work being put toward this end.

With what we had and were aware of, the committee worked together to make the best decisions.

We continue to learn, grow and become better at the process as the Committee matures and changes with the times.

Good plan to have the neighborhood issues handled by the joint committee. That was an important early step towards a higher degree of coordination between CDBG and CSC.

Our decision making process seemed tokenized. Even though there were clear differences in the quality of proposals this was not used to make differential funding decisions.

8. Decision making process resulted in good decisions.

As always, the assessment and establishment of the priorities got confused with the award of dollars. Something can be a great program or agency, but if it's not what we want, it won't get the nod. Perhaps this can be stressed more to applicants. We could provide even stricter definitions of the priorities and number them 1, 2 and 3. Simple and clean.

Good but difficult, by the time we were splitting hairs unresolved value differences became apparent.

It seems a little silly for the ECCEC to spend so much time when the CSC or Alders could change things anyway.

We are making better decisions. This is directly attributed to the hard work of the staff.

We always manage to come out of the funding process with a solid and fair set of funding recommendations! Getting from here to there can be arduous. And whether the recommendations are the best we can do . . . well, I think there's room for improvement.

I think the end results made a good balance of budget amounts and agency needs. Unfortunately needs exceeded fiscal resources, and wants could not be considered.

9. Level of transparency throughout process.

We should always have total transparency.

We did NOT lack in transparency! Our products, meeting schedules, etc. were all out there for public review and scrutiny. I did not hear one utterance of complaint. We rocked the world of transparency!

10. Assessment of time spent on process vs. final package of decisions made.

We should keep track of ALL hours spent by staff, agencies, in hearings, and by committee members in order to answer this question.

On some occasions we seemed to beat the matter to death. Too many kicks at the cat by applicants.

An awful lot of time consumed by the process. Very dedicated members.

Process is drawn out, but still valuable. Conference committee made for more efficient decisions and more consistent.

Long, arduous and needed by a group of dedicated volunteer and staff.

I believe that the time spent was more than necessary (just don't ask me now for specific ways we could have reduced that time! - that's the next step).

Given how much time was spent making decisions, they often felt somewhat haphazard when they were finally decided.

Probably too much time of staff et al. due to complexity of process.

In some ways we spent way too much time assessing proposals with very little impact on funding decisions.

11. Availability of staff support throughout process.

Same old comment-- needed to hear more from staff about organizations and success in meeting objectives, fitting with priorities, etc. however, the staff was very available, they just did not provide as much verbal info as in the past.

I can't really answer the satisfaction part of this question, because I did not seek staff support much. The staff always are supportive and responsive when I or others have questions or seek information. Also the staff prepares well in materials and guidance toward efficient processes and decision-making.

Again, no complaint whatsoever here. The OCS staff were excellent!

Staff was consistently helpful and available.

12. Level of understanding of the process.

I had a good understanding of what I needed to do as a committee member, however I feel having access to Neighborhood Indicators would have helped me make even better and more informed decisions.

I think we (committee) had a reasonably good grasp of what was going on during those months. Occasionally, it seemed like we might have lost the thread. Occasionally, we seemed to display a "forest versus trees" mindset which is understandable. This is all to say that I believe there is room for improvement, reducing the size and scope of the application process, coming up with a more prescribed review/decision-making process, and producing more high quality recommendations.

When we began discussing the process this past winter it seemed to make sense--at least in theory. However, in practice, the process wasn't as straightforward and clear as many of us had hoped. It was a lot more complicated and not necessarily any better than what we've done in the past.

13. Overall process from start to finish.

Now that I've done it twice, I think I am finally getting it.

I would caution a new member of the time and detail involved.

Sticking to the rules we establish for ourselves is always the biggest challenge. The Committee is better each cycle.

It was a heckuva year! The funding process subcommittee did our darnedest to redesign the application form and process - and, to a significant degree, succeeded. The actual review process was intense but we all toughed it out and, again, succeeded. Could it have been done in a more efficient and streamlined way - as Sarah would say, "you betcha!" Now is our opportunity.

I think the process could be significantly improved and clarified.

I think I may have put more work into the process than needed

14. Any other comments:

Look back at hearings and comments received. How many times did an agency go straight to an alder to affect the funding decision? Did the hearings improve information and decision making?

The current process consumes an enormous amount of resources from all involved: the agencies who seek funding, the city staff who administer the process, and from committee members who are asked to review applications and make decisions. I encourage you to streamline the process wherever possible. Following is a list of goals for the process (which is not to suggest that the current process is lacking in these categories -- just that they are important): 1) easy to understand 2) transparent 3) accessible to all who seek funding 4) more coordinated with the funding cycles of other community partners who provide funding 5) less time intensive for those seeking funding 6) administered uniformly 7) more easily administered 8) provide some measure of consistency/predictability from year-to-year. Finally, I encourage you to look at whether it might result in better service to our partner agencies if the CDBG and Community Services committees were combined and/or realigned in some way. Thanks to the staff for all you do!

The staff work incredibly hard to develop collaborations with multiple organizations and I cannot speak highly enough of their efforts. It is very hard to deal with the emotional quality of the testimony when funding is limited. However, I believe that outcomes are of the utmost importance, as is showing in good faith, that the agency seeking funds is looking for ways to ensure that clients served are participating and active and contributing in some fashion however limited or small.

While I have been somewhat critical, I feel the process is a vast improvement over what we had before.

I am hopeful that this interim will resolve much of the uncertainty in regards to how the city of Madison funds neighborhood centers and why. I do not feel the conference committee is a good

long-term solution to handle overlapping areas for funding. Since all of this money is under the same division, is there not a rationale to have separate bodies wholly funding separate areas of service provision, with clear communication and sharing of information so that 'the right hand knows well what the left hand is doing.'

Good luck - it's never easy but always necessary.

Thanks to all for their hard work.

One more time on the staff issue: Each and every OCS person who worked on this deserves major kudos! The task at hand was certainly daunting. Trying to herd the committee in a productive direction was, at times, like herding cats.

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