Applicant Agencies

2. The electronic application.

We found the application to be difficult when it came to the paragraph formatting and word count and limited space.

There were a few glitches along the way but they were resolved quickly and communicated to everyone. The first year with the combined format created some challenges.

Please do NOT use excel. There are great e-grants software out there.

It certainly was better than the old cumbersome way of completing reports.

It was a good idea to revamp and upgrade the process. The electronic application mostly worked okay.

I very much appreciated the time that went in to getting this application in an electronic format. I also appreciated the training sessions that were offered to walk through the process, prior to the deadline.

3. Information provided at the Villager workshop(s) prior to the release of the application.

More access to information would have helped us. Because we are a small agency, we were not able to attend these sessions. This put us at an extreme disadvantage.

I think it help folks who are not experience using Excel spreadsheets.

We were still confused about some things as they related to our agency.

Worked well and excellent learning opportunity.

The workshops were helpful, and the application isn't really that difficult, but complex questions that are/were unique to individual applicants still could not be answered. While we respect staff's intention to remain impartial, we feel the manner in which staff chose to avoid contact, answer questions directly, was unacceptable and served no one's best interest.

It was a good idea to have this training, and it went pretty well. Some of us that are less tech savvy were challenged.

It seemed that some of the information was inconsistent.

It wasn't that complicated that it needed to waste that must staff time. Training was unnecessary for many. We have work to do! Would have rather had question/answer times for people who need more assistance.

4. Q & A blog as means of communication.
This was an attempt to be fair to all concerned. We appreciate this attempt.

I appreciate CDD for responding so favorably to my request for some sort of process to answer questions in a consistent and accessible manner and without having agency's get mixed messages by possibly getting different answers to questions based on which staff they might contact.

It's important to have as many ways to communicate as possible and I appreciate the fact that part of the purpose of the blog is to give everyone the answer and level the playing field.

There were questions brought up during the Q & A by previous participants that were helpful to hear in preparation for the application.

I used the Q & A Blog both for posting questions as well as learning from others who had asked similar questions. Staff did a good job of reminding us to check and use this tool.

I tend to prefer direct communication with city staff via email or phone

This was a great idea because it also provided feedback for you

Did not use it

I didn't realize this existed.

5. Communication received/exchanged throughout process.

Staff were very responsive and nothing is more important than good communication.

The notifications, emails of outcomes, dates, schedules, etc., updates throughout the process, were all very good. Communication during the application, however, was non-existent and unacceptable. Staff needs to be available to answer individual/unique questions directly.

Reflecting thoroughly over the past two years, a great deal of service provider time was put into the process. However, it did not appear all of the thoughtful input and essential issues were heard, recorded or incorporated into outcomes for either content or process for the budget.

I felt that there was a good amount of important communication throughout the entire process, more so than in past application years.

We would have benefited from more time to work with our specialist during the grant process

I think city staff was very prompt with replies throughout and did their best to provide info.

6. Application process gave you an opportunity to provide the committee with the necessary information for them to make an informed decision.

The application was not as big of a problem as the overall process- there needs to be a better approach to the hearings and a better approach to scoring prioritizing proposals.

As a predictor of success in the city process (i.e. funding) available staff time and familiarity with city staffers was/is much more important than proven results or innovative approaches.

Although I appreciate all the time the volunteers devote to the committee and try to make informed decisions, my only vivid recollection of the process was a couple times when agencies were being ranked and funds recommended there were some knee-jerk motions and changes that demonstrated little "method to the madness". In fairness - with all the various variables that should be factored into ranking and allocations, it's overwhelming for committee members and there is no perfect system

Public meetings were too formal. Not enough dialogue between agencies and committee members. At some point we felt regardless of what agencies were recommending it didn't make a difference. CSC members had their minds made up already.

The interview process is an important component and it was fair.

All parties were treated equally and decisions were made on an even field. The process ensured this was the case.

The application asked for specific information but we were unclear what the criteria were for making an informed decision.

We spent a lot more time and energy writing our application and providing information than we have in the past.

I felt that the time spent with the committee this year was more focused.

I liked appearing before the committee just to answer their questions, instead of putting on a presentation.

It seemed that funding tended to flow toward seasoned agencies.

Very long process.

People who had questions had more of an opportunity to sell their organizations than the ones that did not have questions.

I feel like as the process went on the committee tended to drift away from the applications and rely on testimony and other factors in making decisions.

7. Level of involvement in the decision making process.

I would prefer a process that had a presentation option.

We felt the previous priorities were more direct, more useful, and more appropriate. We fail to see the need for an elaborate redesign. We do, however, recognize that we might not know all the fairness reasons causing the commission to embark on said redesign.

3

CSC and staff had made their decision ahead of time on who funding was going to be made. Decision were made base not on quality of applicant or programs but rather on person experience with a particular agency or what they've heard how good a program was and made funding based on that.

The in person presentations were very frustrating. Lots of waiting, uneven time given to applicants.

I don't feel we were involved much at all in the decision making process. The application process was clearly designed to keep the decision making process in the hands of the committee, in an impartial manner. Once we submitted our application, in all honestly, that was the end of our involvement. Right or wrong, it was fair and it worked.

Don't understand this question.

Felt as involved as I imagine is possible

We were very involved in the process. It took a lot of our staff time to be involved in the process because it lasted for 6 months, much more than the past. It was not always clear what we should do after the Commission made their initial recommendations in August. We were discouraged from lobbying City Council members or attending meetings with the Mayor and City Council, but that is what resulted in getting our funding restored. It was frustrating and confusing along the way.

I felt that I was given plenty of opportunity to influence the decision making process, through various committee meetings, public hearings, etc.

I am not sure what level of involvement an agency exec would have. I felt like the proposal gave me some opportunity to present my programs and agencies.

8. Decision making process resulted in good decisions.

Process was longer and with the multiple levels far more involved than it needed to be.

No. The old, discredited ideas and approaches won. Innovative and experimental strategies lost.

Decisions on funding allocations were made based not on how high or low an application scored but rather on the perception of how well the agency was doing in the community.

The decisions in the end are driven by the budget and the process should recognize that from the beginning. Agency spend a lot of time and jump through all the hoops to end up in the same place. The answers to questions about research and outcomes seem to have no real bearing on the decision.

Yes.

I'm not going to complain about the cuts we took since we also received an increase in another program, but I will say that I wish you would just take out the bottom tier of programming choices so I didn't waste my time writing a proposal for programming you were never going to fund anyway.

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I realize that the decision making process in regards to the budget is difficult and difficult decisions needed to be made across the board. I received a flat City allocation, which is what I was hoping for, realizing that new and/or more money for programs just isn't available right now.

My answer specifically reflects my disappointment that I was told the commission would be making decisions based on objective criteria about the applications themselves. Rather, it was my experience that some of the decisions appeared to be made based on reactions to testimony by some of the organizations seeking funding.

We benefit from the decisions made. Still, it is hard to believe that the decisions derive from the mountain of data required in multiple iterations in the application.

Hard to say. We didn't get all we wanted, so in my opinion it wasn't a good decision. But given the fact that there is only so much money to go around, someone isn't going to get what they need.

The decision process seemed very strict on rules at times, and made up on the fly the other times. There was not a sense that the decision making process was fair.

9. Level of transparency throughout process.

Transparency was lacking for some, available to others.

I thought that staff were amazingly candid and straight forward even when it meant some agency reps at meetings/trainings were going to be disappointed on how the change or certain new criteria might negatively impact their program. I think CDD staff worked extremely hard making a difficult transition fairly manageable

The committee discussion was transparent and the staff recommendation process was unknown.

There was a lot of communication about when meeting would take place and when materials needed to be turned it. City staff did a good job of trying to make things as open and transparent as possible. However, regardless of how transparent the process was in the end if CSC members decide to not follow their own recommendations and criteria then it really doesn't matter.

Clearly that was a major goal. Transparency was not a problem..., your efforts to maintain a high level of transparency, however, kept people from having open communication with staff. We believe you could still accomplish this while still answering individual questions.

I think this is vital but the process was so convoluted that it was difficult to track. Meetings went on forever and didn't always even touch on all of the things promised. It is a waste of donated dollars to have Executive Directors or Program Managers sit in a meeting for hours only to find they will need to come to a different meeting to get to the topic they are most interested in.

The Commission claimed all along that it was being transparent, and maybe it seemed that way from their perspective. After the initial recommendations the process seemed to get muddier as we went along.

I feel that things were very transparent throughout the process. At one point in the process, there was a document shared that showed two different possibilities for funding, based on a number of variables. This information was important, for budgeting purposes, to know kind of a best case and worst case scenario for funding. Instead of the worst case scenario coming as a complete surprise.

Seems like there is a big effort to make things fair and transparent. I LOVE it!

What is opaque is the connection between what you require us to submit and its relevance and influence on the decisions made.

Not having electronic spreadsheets available and handing out the information late as well as not having it available with the agenda on the city website made the process seem less transparent.

It was unclear how staff participated in the process and if their recommendations were followed or were overruled. That piece needs much more transparency as their recommendations carry a lot of weight with the committees.

I think the city staff was transparent. I felt like there was some behind the scenes stuff going on with the committee sometimes. It happens.

10. Availability of technical support throughout process.

We think city staff made a reasonable in this regard.

Big learning curve for everyone including city staff this first time around.

Again, once we were provided with the application, we were essentially on our own. There was no technical support.

In addition, staff was available for guidance! Thank you!

Staff team was very responsive to questions/concerns and addressed issues in a timely manner. If it was a system wide problem with the application, communication was sent out so that everyone was on the same page about the issues and how they would be corrected.

It seemed limited, particularly for a new agency. Staff should have a more active role in providing technical assistance throughout the process.

I didn't need any so hard for me to answer this question appropriately

11. Level of understanding of the process.

We did not understand the process well.

Process seemed confusing.

Your process was very clearly defined and easy to understand.

The process was initially confusing because it was new to us. However, the process made sense as we progressed through it!

I tried very hard to follow, attend and address all aspects of development of the process from beginning to end but it was challenging at times to keep up. I know everyone involved appeared to be trying hard to do the best they could.

I thought I understood the process very well and was, in fact, excited by what I heard. As indicated above, I do not believe the process which was represented to agencies at the beginning was followed when the "rubber hit the road."

As a first time applicant it was rather daunting.

I thought I understood it, but it didn't seem to go the way I expected.

12. Overall process from start to finish.

We think the intentions were likely good. Unfortunately, the results were suspect.

Thank goodness we have over a year to improve our process.

I could see that the team wanted to be very clear and transparent. That's rare to see. At times it felt it was too much information, but overall appreciate your effort to communicate.

The process could be made near perfect if your staff would just be available--directly--NOT JUST via blog--during the process. Most of the changes were positive changes, and overall it worked well.

Confusing messages given to service providers that the community services committee members were ultimately making the decisions, yet community services committee members often gave priority to staff members to decide if priorities were to stay, or not.

The process is ok. It's the application form that is the problem.

As I mentioned it was almost a two and a half year process...

I think the application process is really good. I would like to see a clearer understanding of how decisions will be made and how funding will be allocated from the beginning.