



Human Services Commission
300 N. San Antonio Rd. * Santa Barbara, CA 93110
Phone 805/681-4078 * Fax 805/681-4076

Approved
04/07/11

MINUTES
ALLOCATIONS COMMITTEE
Wednesday, June 23, 2010, 2:00 p.m.
Santa Ynez Valley Non-Profit Center
Montecito Bank & Trust / First Bank Building
545 Alamo Pintado Road, Solvang CA

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 2:10 p.m. by Committee Chair Schiffmacher. Committee members Debby Aceves, Lynn Schiffmacher, John Linn, and Vicki Book attended the meeting; Christina Pizarro was absent with notice. Human Services Program Administrator Nancy Madsen attended.

Guests Katharina Zulliger (KIDS Network Coordinator), Linda Rodriguez (DSS Contracts Unit) and Tara Dooley (Children's Health Initiative Program Manager) attended.

2. Public Comment Period

There was no public comment.

3. Committee Business

A. Welcome to DSS/KIDS Network Teams

Committee Chair Schiffmacher welcomed the guests, all of whom were involved with the child abuse prevention grant allocations process, and thanked them for attending.

B. Review Child Abuse Prevention Grant Allocations Process

1. What worked well?

2. What should be changed, if anything?

Chair Schiffmacher stated that this meeting was called because the Human Services Commission suggested that everyone involved with the child abuse prevention grant allocations process meet to discuss how the process worked. She added that she had heard that DSS was considering instituting some training in connection with RFPs, and asked for more information. Linda Rodriguez said that there is some interest in creating a standardized RFP; this is planned partially because many applicant vendors do not fill out applications properly or completely. All items that are included in every grant would be standardized, and then the program manager who is seeking services through the RFP would add questions that are particular to the funds available. DSS wants to update some of the old forms and distribute them to DSS staff; this will help the RFPs to be more consistent. The preliminary plan is to train DSS staff and also train applicants regarding what is expected in the grant application.

Commissioners and guests discussed several areas where future child abuse prevention grant allocation processes might be altered. The first issue discussed was that many applicants seemed to presume that the grant evaluators already knew a lot about their agencies and programs, and therefore did not include crucial information into the application. It was noted that the agencies write grant applications all the time and it is standard practice to write it as though the reader knows nothing about the program.

Next there was a discussion of whether applicants should be provided with the evaluation form that will be used by grant evaluators at the time they get the RFP. All agreed that this issue will be considered in detail prior to the next RFP.

Also discussed was the plan to improve the way some of the questions on the RFP. All agreed that some questions were too complicated and contained more than one concept, which resulted in less clear answers from the applicants. A word limit was suggested so that the applicants are required to be clear and succinct; this could also help to eliminate a “cut and paste” approach to grant writing.

Next, there was a discussion on the very short time frame that had to be followed this time and how that impacted the process. All agreed that many of the challenges that occurred this time would not have happened if a normal time frame had been possible. In particular, there was consensus that there was not enough time for grant application evaluation teams to prepare properly for the “responsive and responsible” review of the applications. Linda Rodriguez added that typically, there is about a week’s time between the submission of grant applications and the “responsive and responsible” review. The group agreed that having time to review applications prior to the “responsive and responsible” meeting would allow that meeting to be useful and productive.

It was also noted that the applicants had less time than usual to prepare the grant application. Ms. Rodriguez noted that DSS had six or seven RFPs out at the same time and many of the applicants for the child abuse prevention funds were applying for many other grants also, so they were especially rushed. All acknowledged the pressures that CBOs are facing, and agreed that it would be good if the application can be streamlined so that the grantor is able to find out what it needs to know while not making the application overly burdensome to the applicant.

Commissioners asked if the Human Services Commission will be involved when the review of the grant application form is taking place, and Ms. Rodriguez stated the DSS will notify all involved parties regarding the review.

The agency interview process was discussed, including the timing of the interviews and the question of whether or not the information gathered from the interviews can be used in the final evaluation. The difference between clarifying and supplementing written answers, as compared to supplanting written answers was explored, as was the question of whether grant evaluators can or should consider preexisting knowledge of a program as a part of the evaluation. The group acknowledged that there are a number of ways to think about why to do interviews and how to respond to the information gathered at the interviews. These issues will be included and resolved in the planning for the next RFP.

The next item discussed was the scoring of the applications. Some Commissioners felt that individual scoring was difficult and preferred scoring as a group. As a group they were able to educate each other, and the outcome of the group scoring was better. All agreed that the joint evaluation meeting went very well, and that it was helpful and encouraging to find that the two teams that met separately were very congruent in their assessments of the applicants. All agreed also that having a facilitator was very helpful and that Ms. Rodriguez did an excellent job as the facilitator. The assertion of the common goal was helpful also. The group also discussed whether or not it is helpful or necessary to have separate team scoring meetings. It was noted that having only one team is likely to require an open meeting due to the Allocations Committee’s Brown Act requirements. This issue will be included in the planning for the next RFP.

The protocol for the bidder’s conference was discussed, including whether it is best to make the bidder’s conference mandatory or voluntary. DSS’s process has been to make it voluntary, and to allow written questions after the conference so if an agency can’t attend the bidder’s conference, it can still apply for a grant.

Questions were raised regarding whether the RFP was specific enough regarding the services requested; most agreed that that it was. Chair Schiffmacher asked whether previous awards of

more but smaller grants diluted the money to the point where effectiveness was not measurable, and asked if the requirements of the RFP resulted in the creation of the collaborative applications; she is happy to see these joint applications. She asked that in the future the Human Services Commission receive copies of the award letters to the bidders.

Commissioners asked the guests whether the involvement of the Human Services Commission in the process was a help or a hindrance. Tara Dooley stated that she liked to have a broader group and outside input. Katharina Zulliger commented that she is happy with the outcome; the process wasn't always easy, but the result speaks for itself. She added that she would like to find a way to have one common meeting, in public or not. It was a clean process overall and the evaluations were carefully done. She liked the breadth of representation of the joint group: parents, DSS and Human Services Commission staff, KIDS Network, Child Abuse Prevention Council and First 5.

The items discussed at this meeting will be looked at again next time around by a group of planners. Sufficient time to consider all of these issues will be built into the process, so that the time pressures experienced this time will not happen again.

Chair Schiffmacher asked what will happen to the North County collaborative that was awarded a grant, due to the closure of Sojourn Services. Katharina Zulliger indicated that these questions should be directed to DSS Director Kathy Gallagher and Delfino Niera; DSS staff is waiting for instruction on this question.

C. Action: Plan for Report to Director Gallagher and Board of Supervisors

Notes from this meeting regarding the grant allocations process just completed will be delivered to all at this meeting; the notes will highlight areas of consensus and questions to be resolved for future processes. After any corrections and/or additions to the notes have been incorporated, Chair Schiffmacher will use the notes to draft a report to Director Gallagher and the Board of Supervisors. The draft report will be distributed to all at this meeting. When agreement is reached on the draft, Chair Schiffmacher will finalize it and send to Director Gallagher and the Board of Supervisors.

4. Calendar and Announcements

The next meeting will be scheduled as needed.

5. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:35 p.m.