
City of Takoma Park, Maryland
GRANTS REVIEW COMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes

DATE: Thursday, January 14, 2021

TIME: 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

LOCATION: Zoom Webinar

Members Present: Nadine Bloch, Rachel Branaman, Keli Cochran, Nicole Ferraiolo, Susan Rosenblum, and Mark Swartz

Staff Present: Grayce Wiggins, Housing Manager; Jennifer Hale, Grants Coordinator, Department of Housing and Community Development

Call to Order and Welcome

- Jennifer Hale called the meeting to order at approximately 6:30 PM and welcomed the members of the Committee. The members of the Committee introduced themselves.
- Rachel Branaman moved to adopt the minutes of the October 27, 2020 meeting. Susan Rosenblum seconded the motion.
- Meeting notes were opened, and Niki Ferraiolo was selected as the primary note-taker.
- Jen Hale explained the note-taking process for the new members and explained it is difficult for her to take notes and run the meeting and that members alternate taking notes.
- One of the new members opted out of taking notes. It was determined that the rest would alternate the duty.
- Jen Hale explained the use of google docs and dropbox for sharing documents-- Dropbox folder system for formal documents, but in-progress documents will be in google.

B. Staff Update

- Jen Hale welcomed the new members to the GRC. Rachel Branaman announced that she is retiring from the GRC because she is relocating out of the area. Rachel was thanked for her outstanding service to the GRC.
- Jen Hale reminded the GRC that all committee members need to review and sign the Committee Code of Conduct, and provided the GRC with instructions on how to do
- Jen Hale shared a link to the Conflict of Interest Disclosure form and requested that it be completed before the next meeting.

C. FY21 Community Grants (40 mins)

- Jen Hale provided a tour of the virtual FY21 Grant Dashboard, a one-stop tool for locating and tracking the grant programs' administrative assets (i.e., contracts, milestones, narrative reports, payment history, and audit reports). All GRC members have access to this dashboard.

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D. Audits:

- Nadine presented her report on Create Arts. She attended a smArtkids classroom session and reported that she was impressed they were able to be successful via a virtual environment and that they did a good job engaging the kids. She observed that while it was an art class, they also taught literacy, spelling, and storytelling.

- Susan and Rachel presented on their visit to Community Bridges classes:

Susan attended a site visit in early December with middle school girls. It was the 9th session of a ten-week program called theatre lab. The purpose was for girls to create improv scenes about how to resolve conflict. The session was facilitated by two contractors skilled in mediation. In the improv scene, they were arguing about snacks at home. It was a scene between sisters. They used the chatbox as a way of suggesting ideas for furthering the scene. They plan to edit and present some videos for their “Our True Colors” performance at the end of the year. Susan commented that the session was well-done.

Rachel attended a session on toxic relationships and was encouraged to participate (e.g., find something brown and bring it back). There were 21 participants, and Rachel observed to the GRC that the grantee had a well-run system. Rachel was impressed with how they set up the program and kept it moving. she reported there were lots of checking-in questions and something called a Mindful Minute. They engaged the girls using the chat function.

- Niki and Nadine presented on their visit to a Creative Aging Dance Exchange drop-in class. They were both very impressed with the virtual class and thought it was extremely successful and engaging.
- Rachel Branaman discussed her audit of Carpe Diem Arts when she attended a Family Fun Night with Happenstance Theatre. The Zoom was hosted by one of their staff members and her daughters. It was in a black box theatre while families could engage on Zoom and FaceBook live. Rachel reported that there were lots of ways for people to engage. It was meant for 3-5-year-olds, but all the kids seemed engaged.

E. Discussion:

- SR Questions: “After site visits, how do we most effectively "debrief" with the grantee, assuming we have questions? Should we only use email, or is it appropriate to ask the grantee at the time of scheduling to set aside a short "debrief" by phone (15-20 minutes) to answer questions we may have?”
- After discussion, it was determined that the goal of not over-burdening the grantee must be considered when reaching out for additional information and that it should be done sparingly.

F. FY22 Community Grants Cycle (30 mins)

- Jen Hale explained that after reviewing and considering the grantmaking calendar, she determined that the FY22 Application needed to be completed in one stage. Jen Hale provided the final version of the application and assured the GRC there would still be time to ask follow-up questions of the finalists if needed.

- The GRC discussed a member's suggestion to eliminate or make optional some of the financial documentation. After discussion, it was agreed that audited financials would not be required. Jen Hale reminded the GRC that they would have access through Fondant to all of the applicant's 990s.
- The new race equity question was discussed. Based on recommendations, Jen Hale said she would re-draft it and send it around for approval.
- A member asked if there was a way to set up the change theory answer as a table. Jen Hale informed the group that the functionality in the application doesn't allow it for now.
- Jen Hale will reshare the application draft with the added questions and requested feedback the following Monday night as the grant application is launching Tuesday, January 19.

G. Meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM.