# Vibrant Community Fund

*Continuous Improvement*

Recommendations for FY23 Outside Agencies Funding Process

# Introduction

- The city has been granting money to outside agencies since 1984
  - We've learned a lot about how to do it efficiently and well
  - We have adapted over the years, sometimes, a little; sometimes, a lot
  - Many community members have helped us review applications so that we have additional layers of objectivity and varied perspectives in our review. We remain grateful for this service to the city.
- We have identified a list of concerns or points of tension from the last several years and identified a proposed solution to each

# Points of Tension

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## Opportunities for Improvement

- Does not allow for investments in start-ups beyond $10,000 capacity grants
- Does not allow for investments in solutions to emerging needs
- Council has limited trust/faith in review process
- Council has limited confidence in staff expertise
- Does not prioritize equity needs sufficiently
- Does not include or prioritize consumer feedback
- Priority categories are broad, allow for pathway for vast majority of local agencies
- Does not establish a mechanism for understanding agency need for local support or prioritize that need
- Requests for funding are made throughout the year
- Does not allow for multiple year commitments
- Essential services are subject to competition for funding

# Point of Tension: Does not allow for investments in start-ups

## Proposed Solution: Create limited start-up funding pool

- Set aside $200,000 from VCF funding pool for start-ups nonprofit
- Fund two projects with grants up to $100,000 each
- Anticipate a possible second year of support of $50,000, if outcomes met
- Staff evaluate & support progress through quarterly site visits in advance of quarterly payments
- Staff provide technical assistance for organizational development
- Prioritize new programs/initiatives that:
  - Are responding to emerging need
  - Are responding to entrenched, unmet need
  - Use an equity lens throughout implementation & resource distribution
  - Improve a system of care through enhanced collaboration, coordination & strategic alignment of resources

# Point of Tension: Does not allow for investments in solutions to emerging needs

## Proposed Solution: Create emerging needs funding pool

- Set aside $100,000 from VCF funding pool to use throughout fiscal year

- Anticipate funding up to 2 nonprofit services with grants up to $50,000 each

- Staff support & evaluate progress through quarterly site visits in advance of quarterly payments

- Allow for new(er) nonprofits without established track records to apply

- Prioritize projects/initiatives that:

  - Respond to an emerging need identified by council, staff and community

  - Are poised to respond and make a difference quickly (shovel ready – ish)

# Point of Tension: Council has limited faith/trust/confidence in staff or process

## Proposed Solution: Establish an orientation to the VCF process for council

- Introduce council to staff involved in VCF process so that they are aware of their experience, skills, relationships, & knowledge

- Clarify staff role in VCF process

- Clarify review panel role in VCF process

- Introduce council to application tools & processes so that they are aware of the baked in assumptions, priorities, etc

# Point of Tension:  Does not prioritize equity needs sufficiently

## Proposed Solution:  Prioritize Equity

- Prioritize equity as a requirement for all applications and then apply the previously identified funding priorities

# Point of Tension: Does not include or prioritize consumer feedback

## Proposed Solution: Create mechanism for consumer feedback

- Conduct focus groups with community members during <u>council strategic planning process</u> to understand gaps, needs, and underfunded resources

- Research existing best practice models for including consumer feedback as part of grantmaking

- Review Community Risk Reduction Assessment, Stepping Stones, American Community Survey & MAPP consumer work results

- Require that all VCF applications include:

  - <u>Specific information</u> about the way consumer feedback is included in strategic planning, programmatic planning, and individual caseplanning

  - Percentage of consumers whose feedback is solicited and percentage of consumers whose feedback is provided

  - Specific feedback provided by consumers and how it was used within the agency

# Point of Tension: Priority categories are broad

## Proposed Solution: Identify broad AND specific funding priorities

- Include VCF & out of cycle funding priority-setting in <u>council's comprehensive strategic planning process</u>

  - Using community well-being data

  - Soliciting community feedback

  - Including staff recommendations

  - Identify programmatic priorities within each broad subject matter priority

    *(e.g. broad priority: health & mental health, programmatic priority: peer support services or alternatives to 911)*

# Point of Tension: No mechanism for considering agency need for funding

## Proposed Solution: Include agency need in application process

- Emphasize and consider the agencies' response to the question embedded in the application in council deliberations:

  - *Describe what the program will do if it does not receive any or all of the funds requested. Be as specific as possible. Would funds be sought from other sources? Would services or staffing decrease? If so, quantify.*

# Points of Tension: Requests for funding are made throughout the year

## Proposed Solution: Manage out of cycle requests

- Require that proposals address the broad & specific priorities identified in the strategic plan
- Require that agencies meet the basic VCF eligibility criteria & file the same required paperwork
- Require that agencies demonstrate a meaningful and compelling reason why they were unable to submit a request during the VCF process
- Limit requests to under $50,000
- Require that at least two councilmembers support the public consideration of the proposal at a council meeting
- Staff evaluate progress through quarterly site visits in advance of quarterly payments
- Future funding will be awarded only through Vibrant Community Fund process

Point of Tension: Does not have baked in process for evaluating outcomes

Proposed Solution: Create multiple methods for ongoing evaluation

- Staff to provide evaluation & outcome training to prospective applicants as prerequisite

- Authorize and require staff to provide information to council and to review team on previous year's evaluation process

- Staff evaluate progress through quarterly site visits in advance of quarterly payments for organizations that are receiving start-up and emerging needs funding and any agency receiving more than $50,000

- Require staff to include consumer feedback in evaluation process

## Point of Tension: Does not allow for multiple year commitments

### Proposed Solution: Create mechanism for making two year awards

- Consider making multi-year awards for agencies receiving funding through start-up and/or emerging needs pools

- Agencies in this category would not be required to apply for funding for this second year but funding amounts would be subject to:

  - Availability of funds

  - Successful progress towards performance goals identified in grant agreement

# Point of tension: Essential services are subject to competition for funding

## Proposed Solution: Create an **essential service** category

- Include agencies that provide a service that localities are required to provide
- Include agencies that provide emergency shelter services for people experiencing homelessness
- Include agencies that provide critical system coordination services that reduce duplication and improve system impact
- Include agencies that provide a service that directly avoids jail costs
- Review essential service agency applications through VCF Review Team but list them separately in council report
- Expand review of traditional contractual agency applications to include a team of three content experts