



Richland County Council  
Community Impacts Grants Committee  
**MINUTES**  
December 5, 2023 – 4:00 PM  
Council Chambers  
2020 Hampton Street, Columbia, SC 29204

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Jessica Mackey, Chair, Jason Branham, Paul Livingston, Gretchen Barron, and Cheryl English

OTHERS PRESENT: Allison Terracio, Anette Kirylo, Kyle Holsclaw, Lori Thomas, Stacey Hamm, Angela Weathersby, Ashiya Myers, Jennifer Wladischkin, Michelle Onley, Elizabeth McLean, and Wayne Thornley

1. **CALL TO ORDER** - Chairwoman Jessica Mackey called the meeting to order at approximately 4:00 PM.
2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
  - a. **November 16, 2023** – Ms. Barron moved to approve the minutes as distributed, seconded by Ms. English.  
In Favor: Branham, Livingston, Barron, Mackey, and English  
The vote in favor was unanimous.
3. **ADOPTION OF AGENDA** – Mr. Livingston moved to adopt the agenda as published, seconded by Ms. Barron.  
In Favor: Branham, Livingston, Barron, Mackey, and English  
The vote in favor was unanimous.
4. **ITEM FOR DISCUSSION/ACTION**
  - a. **FY2024-2025 Community Impact Grants Application** – Ms. Mackey stated the main item on the agenda is the FY24-25 Community Impact Grants application. At the last committee meeting, they reviewed the application and provided suggested changes to the guidelines and application. Staff has updated the document to reflect the suggested changes. At today's meeting, she would like to review the updated application and provide final changes so we can forward a recommendation to Council.

Assistant County Administrator Lori Thomas noted that the grant notifications would be June 28, 2024, not 2025. In addition, although the award amount is up to \$1.830M, the cost for a third-party consultant will bring that amount down to approximately \$1.647M.

Ms. Barron noted on p. 21, Item #13, "Benefit to the Community," that she would like to include more specific language regarding districts and/or zip codes. She believes that will streamline questions from other Councilmembers and constituents. Where it asks about the organization or other funding sources, in Item #14, "Sustainability," she thinks it would be helpful if we request specific amounts. On Item #15, "Partnerships/Community Support," it would be beneficial for them to describe the type of partnership they have so we will know they are working with that organization to provide "x, y, and z." Under the category "Outcomes," Item #16, she would like us to be more specific and ask for measurable goals and objectives. Lastly, she knows the discussion regarding the Community Partners will likely be ever-evolving. She would like to recommend funding the Community Partners list in a three-year cycle and then having them reapply after three years. Additionally, their three-year funding will be based on an annual evaluation, and they will not be given full funding each year. For example, in year one, they would receive full funding. In years two and three, there would be a decrease of 20% per year. She indicated we have a lot of organizations that have become solely dependent upon County funds. We can be better stewards of our dollars if we encourage our Community Partners to look at sustainable programming. If we allow them to apply for full funding, does the organization meet the goal of sustainability?

Ms. Mackey moved to accept Ms. Thomas and Ms. Barron's recommendations regarding the Community Impact Grants application, seconded by Ms. Barron.

In Favor: Branham, Livingston, Barron, Mackey, and English.

The vote in favor was unanimous.

Mr. Livingston stated he believes the Community Partners are organizations that could be Community Partners indefinitely because of their role in the community. He does not want us to pick and choose different organizations each year. We need to stay with those providing a viable service to the County.

Ms. Barron noted that her recommendation is that we revisit the list. Those same partners will have the opportunity to be a part of the list once again.

Ms. Mackey indicated she would like to set a limit on the number of Community Partners we fund at any given time. She recommends that we fund no more than ten organizations each year.

Ms. Barron moved to fund up to ten community partners in three-year cycles. Year one would be 100%, year two – 80%, and year three – 60%. Mr. Branham seconded the motion.

Mr. Livingston indicated he is not ready to support reducing the funding each year.

Ms. Barron stated that we have been funding organizations and softly encouraging sustainability and sustainable programs for a long time. As we look at our climate, our financial status, and the things we want to do, we can make modifications and adjustments by encouraging the non-profits to look for other sources of funding.

Mr. Livingston maintained that most Community Partners are already sustainable, and have been around for many years. They do not need to prove to him that they are sustainable and can do the job. He does not want to say to them, we are going to start cutting your funding each year.

Ms. Barron noted they have shown us they do good work and are sustainable because we continue to fund them at 100%. If that is what Council would like to do and we do not have an expectation they need to go after additional funding, she would encourage us to stop asking them about their sustainability plan. The way it is set up now, we encourage them to pursue additional funding, but if they do not, we still fund them at 100%.

Ms. English stated it was her impression the Community Partners were chosen for their work throughout Richland County. When she looks at them, she sees them as an extension of our hands, which is why they were chosen. She would like to see them funded at the full amount.

Ms. Mackey acknowledged the Community Impact Grants is a new process we created. Moving into our second award cycle, we are working to align it with the budget process. She believes this is an everchanging and growing document that will require a few rounds to get right. She noted one of the things she heard from non-profits is how they get on the Community Partners list. The current list of Community Partners is valuable to the community. Moving forward, we must look at how we continue to evaluate and ensure that as the County needs grow and change, we continue to partner with the right organizations. It is also essential the organizations know we appreciate what they do but that we will continue to evaluate their use of taxpayer dollars. In addition, it is not our responsibility to completely fund them year in and year out. We need to work on language/process to allow other organizations to join the list of Community Partners.

Mr. Livingston maintained we have a couple of Community Partners that provide an essential service to the County that no one else provides. He would not want to say to these organizations that we will automatically reduce their funding over time.

Ms. Mackey responded that not everyone on the list provides what Mr. Livingston refers to. We would need to be able to differentiate between them.

Mr. Branham expressed there appears to be a desire to see diminished dependence on Richland County government and taxpayer funds.

Ms. Mackey inquired if the body would be okay with setting a time limit. She noted Council members could say they want to remove an organization at any time since this list will be voted on during each budget cycle. In addition, do we notify these partners and let them know there is a possibility of a sliding scale as we continue to develop the language for the Community Impact Grants?

Ms. Barron responded she would support that recommendation. She noted it would be difficult for someone entering year two to have sustainable measures to replace those dollars we are deducting. She inquired if the percentage breakdown should remain in the motion or if we should do something separate, noting when it will be implemented.

Ms. English replied she believes we need to have separate motions.

Ms. Barron amended her original motion to remove the breakdown of the percentages.

In Favor: Branham, Livingston, Barron, Mackey, and English

The vote in favor was unanimous.

Ms. Barron moved, beginning in year three, to provide decreased funding to the present Community Partner applicants, whereby they will receive 60% of their first-year funding. However, after completing the first Community Partners term of three years, we will implement funding at the following levels: Year 1 – 100%, Year 2 – 80%, and Year 3 – 60%. Ms. Mackey seconded the motion.

Ms. Mackey inquired if the current Community Partners would automatically go from 100% in year two to 60% in year three.

Ms. Barron responded that their funding would go to 60% in year three. After that group of Community Partners is completed, and we look at another three-year cycle of Community Partners, we would institute the 100%, 80%, and 60% breakdown.

Mr. Livingston said it sometimes sounds like we are doing these agencies a favor when they are doing us a favor by providing services to our citizens. He noted he is having trouble with us automatically cutting the agency's funding.

Ms. Barron responded it is not her intent to cause anyone to go out of business or reduce services. However, she noted these organizations are not just providing a service to Richland County, so why is the county is 100% responsible for their project funding? These organizations apply for federal and state funding where they have to adhere to the same request level. She fully supports these organizations and the process, but she would encourage them to be creative and look at other funding.

Ms. Mackey expressed that not only do these agencies do different things, but they are unique in the funding they request. For example, Pathways to Healing requested \$60,000, whereas some others requested upwards of six figures. She is inclined to look at the smaller requests differently than those requesting larger amounts when we start talking about a reduction in funding.

Mr. Livingston maintained a policy decision regarding a reduction in funding is his foremost concern.

Ms. English recommended, until we get clarity, to fund the Community Partners for three years without implementing the reduction of funding.

Ms. Barron asserted that the more concrete this process is, the better. She noted a significant amount of criteria has yet to be identified regarding how organizations even get on the list, but, at some point, you have to start something.

Mr. Branham inquired if the motion is an additional recommendation to Council or to add something to the application.

Ms. Barron replied it is her understanding the entire packet is going to Council.

Ms. Mackey inquired if this motion is going to Council or if it is to be a part of the subsequent application process.

Ms. Barron requested the motion to be held until the subsequent application process.

Ms. Mackey responded she believes there is something in the motion that needs to be included in the current application. She wants the organizations to know they may not be funded every year.

Ms. Barron noted it is already a part of the current application.

Mr. Branham made a substitute motion that we include a statement that Council has a general objective to, over time, see a reduction of Community Impact Grant recipient's dependence on community impact grants, seconded by Ms. Barron.

In Favor: Branham, Livingston, Barron, Mackey, and English

The vote in favor was unanimous.

Ms. Barron expressed her concern that the Hospitality Tax, Accommodations Tax, and Community Impact Grant applications all go out simultaneously and the impact it will have on staff.

Ms. Thomas indicated it was staff's intent for the applications to all go out simultaneously. The applications are due back by February 4<sup>th</sup>. She noted the non-profits are used to the established practice. Additionally, an outside party will score the Community Impact Grants; therefore, there will not be a significant impact on staff.

Ms. Mackey pointed out that a fellow Council member had expressed concern about the equality of the distribution and award of funds.

Ms. Barron inquired if there was a recommendation from the Council member.

Ms. Mackey responded the recommendation was that there was a process to ensure each district had an organization that received funding.

Mr. Branham stated he believes that will be addressed by some of the changes we made earlier in the meeting.

Ms. English noted her concern is the needs per district. Naturally, the needs of Districts 1, 10, and 11 are different than those of District 7. She requested additional clarification on the equity of distribution. She indicated the things she wants to see from our Community Partners are evidence-based criteria and outcome of measures or results. She would like this to be included in the Community Partner criteria.

Ms. Barron moved to accept the amended application and criteria, seconded by Ms. English.

In Favor: Branham, Livingston, Barron, Mackey, and English.

The vote in favor was unanimous.

5. **ADJOURNMENT** – Ms. Barron moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. English.

In Favor: Branham, Livingston, Barron, Mackey, and English

The vote in favor was unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 4:53 PM.