

CDBG Working Group

DRAFT Meeting 4 Summary: February 28, 2013

Members: Chris Hall, Karma O'Connor, Tae Chong, Beth Campbell, Joni Boissonneault, Mike Rolland, Rob Wood, Ed Suslovic

Staff: Amy Pulaski, Mary Davis, Maeve Wachowicz (note taker)

Welcome:

Chris welcomes everyone. Each person introduces themselves.

Amy explains there are a few goals for this meeting and the next. This week the goal is to determine 1) target populations and 2) desired outcomes. Next week we will focus on 3) metrics and time frames and 4) conditions and limits. We will also need to begin planning a public forum.

Meeting Summary:

Tae moves to accept the meeting summary with corrections. Another member seconds. All approve.

Conflict of Interest:

Staff consulted Corporation Counsel after last week's meeting. Corporation Counsel prepared a memo for the group, which explains there is no conflict of interest for the members of this group because the group is not actually allocating any funds, and a public process will follow their recommendations. Amy encourages the group to invite their colleagues in the workforce development field to the public meetings process.

Education Initiative:

Chris explains the Mayor's new educational initiative, ConnectED. It is an ambitious and equitable vision looking at making the Portland school system more competitive with the rest of the country, and has a focus on workforce preparedness. Mike Dixon is the project manager for the initiative. Amy wanted to bring the initiative to the attention of the group so that everyone is aware of other current programs addressing workforce/job-readiness issues. One member asks whether the goals are the same as the Working Group, or whether this group is primarily addressing barriers to employment instead of educational readiness. Other members comment that those can often be similar or overlapping interests. Ed stresses that ConnectED focuses more on the younger age group through high school, while the Working Group is focused beyond high school.

Target Populations:

The group discusses potential target populations. Identified groups include:

- Unemployed
- Underemployed
- Long-term unemployed
- Never employed
- Recently unemployed
- “Dislocated” workers – i.e. those in declining industries

They also discussed

- New Americans/Foreign born
- Homeless
- LMI

The group discusses that people may overlap several of these categories. Ed advocates for a “bonus points” model in which certain programs can get preference for targeting particular populations. Amy proposes that the level of employment categories are an eligibility criteria/threshold category, and homeless, foreign born, and LMI are bonus point categories. *Amy asks Mike to bring definitions of these employment categories for the next meeting.*

The group discusses the recently unemployed. Beth talks about a Rapid Response program that exists to address that population and the group talks about recently unemployed having a greater likelihood of becoming employed again. The group asks whether working with the never employed or chronically unemployed should be a bonus point category instead of threshold because of the difficulty of serving that population. The group also debates how the bonus points would work for proposals. For instance, in addition to or alternately to bonus points, applicants could get different levels of funding, however, those metrics are difficult to determine. One member thinks following the Mayor’s vision of focusing on foreign born and homeless populations would simplify the metrics. The group also talks about the amount of resources needed to help individuals with minimal resources, as opposed to those who are more readily employable with simple assistance or training.

The group talks about the statistics on homeless and foreign born populations. An estimate of the homeless population is 500 at a single point in time. Those working in homeless services have estimated about 20% of the homeless population may be immediately employable. Foreign born estimates are around 6,000-10,000. *For next meeting staff will bring statistics on homelessness and foreign born populations in Portland.*

Amy brings up single-parents as a target population that is not covered by the other categories, and how that population can tie in with the education initiative.

One member also brings up living wage and job mobility. The group decides those two issues are part of the outcomes discussion. The group discusses livable wage and employment level definitions. Addressing underemployed and livable wage fulfills HUD's goal of transitioning people out of poverty.

One member asks about looking at examples from other cities who may have undertaken similar efforts. Another member has an example from Massachusetts: "Pathways Out of Poverty," which is a workforce development initiative focusing on the clean energy sector.

Rob moves to give priority to three target populations: homeless, foreign born and single parent head of household. Chris seconds. All approve.

Amy talks to the group about HUD's requirement to work with 51% LMI, and the priority task force upping it to 66%. One member thinks it should in fact be 75%. Another member talks about having maximum median income requirements (AMI). Amy adds that the group should consider how restrictive these requirements can be for the business community. Another member thinks that the group is looking for those businesses who want to work with the LMI population, so they are encouraged by a higher percentage over a lower percentage requirement. *The committee will still need to make a decision as to what percent of LMI persons should be assisted with this program.*

Desired Outcomes:

The group discusses the structure of funding and programs. Will employers identify the needs of their employees among social service providers, or will social service providers prepare potential employees for employment? The group talks about partnerships among these groups.

Mary tells the group that \$61,100 is 80% of AMI for a family of four; \$42,000 for a single person.

Rob moves that 66% of those served by this program must meet the agreed upon income requirements (34% can be any income level and not necessarily from Portland). No vote.

The group discusses the motion: one member thinks it should be 100%. Amy says one option is to make 66% a threshold and above that can be bonus points. One member thinks 100% is too restrictive and discusses removing hurdles and simplifying the criteria to incentivize applicants. Mary thinks the Economic Development people at the city would agree. Amy says 100% would make it a full scholarship program. *Chris asks if the group can get feedback from Greg Mitchell and Doug Gardner on this matter.*

Tae asks to hear about the requirements of the PowerPay program. Amy also says determining 66% or 51% can be more complex than just going with 100%. The group talks about the necessity of social services and employers working together. Tae asks to see models from other cities. *The group does not vote on the motion.*

The group talks about desired outcomes. One member says in order to answer that question, the group needs to know more about the potential budget and what the average costs are for job training/creation. Are outcomes programmatic? Per person? Discussed outcomes include:

- Net new jobs (employment or self employment)
- Independence (transitioning out of public housing or off of food stamps)
- Return on investment (help someone get a job, which has exponential economic benefits)
- Self sufficiency (secured employment because received needed training/service)
- Job growth (a worker moves from part time to full time; gains benefits)

One model to consider is Maine Quality Centers (community college model). Amy reminds the group that a stipulation for providing money to employers is to create net new jobs. *Question: Can we fund programs that do not create new jobs?*

Metrics:

The group briefly discusses some metrics. Some issues raised include measuring progress vs. hitting targets, grantees defining their own benchmarks, and performance based measures and rewards. The group expresses a desire to set realistic targets and measures. They also talk about targets being necessary for realistic and concrete grant proposals.

Beth says that in the PowerPay program, 15% of people served have been LMI over 15 years. The group again debates the percentage of required LMI for employers and the flexibility issue. Chris asks about getting feedback from grant recipients on LMI requirements. Hot Suppa and Local Sprouts are two such recipients. Is the public meeting a good venue for this feedback?

Tae asks Chris if he has a sense of the number and scale of businesses currently looking to expand in Portland. Chris says his sense is that there is a pent up demand for development and investment. Potential growth areas in the near future include the service industry, Thompson's Point, Bayside, construction, retail, waterfront, hospitality, service; all things that could create net new jobs.

Next meeting:

The next meeting is Thursday March 7th at 2pm. The group will discuss metrics and time frames, conditions and limits, and the public input session.