

Opioid Remediation Committee Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 10th, 2023

4:00 PM – 5:30 PM

SLC Staff Present: *Jana Blomberg, Molly Cooper, Linnea Mirsch*

Members Present: *Greg Anderson, Laura Bennett, Elisabeth Bilden, Heather Blue, Patrick Boyle, Pat Conway, Melissa Dybvig, Beth Elstad, Jennifer Garbow, Ashley Grimm, Sherry Johnson, Kim Maki, Jessica McCarthy-Nickila, Paul McDonald, Susan Purchase, Lisa Prusak, Allison Vanneste*

Others Present: *None*

Members Absent: *Katie Bauman, Joseph Bianco, Brandon Hankey, Bryan Johnson, Danielle Jones, Branden Mattson, Jeff Polcher, Gordon Ramsay, Verne Wagner*

Meeting started just after 4:00 PM with a moment of silence and introductions. Commissioner McDonald is joining the committee as he is now Chair of Public Health and Human services. Blomberg shared her PowerPoint presentation, starting with a brief recap of 2022.

The next step is to make recommendations to the County Board for approval which will be presented at the Committee of the Whole meeting on January 24, 2023, followed by final approval on Feb 7, 2023.

Blomberg did a brief review of principles and strategies from Johns Hopkins and noted that these aligned with where the committee moved their strategies. The goal was to come up with three to five strategies. The three determined were:

1. Enriched, broad prevention strategies, especially for youth and culturally appropriate; broad community stigma reduction.
2. Harm reduction – syringe exchanges, overdose prevention, peer recovery supports & services.
3. Warm handoffs to treatment and housing from jail – including prescriptions, appointments, housing, services; treatment in jail – criminal justice focus.

RFP process took place with proposals being submitted in November and scored in December. Last months follow up interviews were conducted. Blomberg thanked all who served on the review team. She noted that it was a long discussion, and a lot of work took place.

Proposals were submitted by:

- Recovery Alliance Duluth
- Rural Aids Action Network
- CHUM
- Housing for Inmates
- United Way
- Midwest Communications
- YWCA Duluth
- Wellbeing Development

- Duluth Police Department – SURT
- Northeast Service Cooperative
- Family Rise Together
- Lincoln Park

Blomberg mentioned that there is no formal conflict of interest rule; however, those who are on the Committee that submitted proposals are asked to refrain from commenting.

Mirsch discussed that the amount that the group was working with initially was only \$340,000 but three payments were received totaling \$2,067,677.51 which have drastically changed the way we think about bringing forward recommendations forward and the timing. She added that there is a really good broad spectrum of those that applied from all over the county. A few proposals are eligible for other funding sources and that the Northeast service cooperative was outside of the scope of the RFP.

The 2023 amount is unknown. Since this amount is higher than they anticipated, they came up with a plan to fund more proposals than initially thought.

ROUND 1

Rural Aids Action Network Highlights

The proposal would expand services in both north and south St. Louis County. The hope is that the new position can be filled by an individual from the Range or a more rural area and could possibly move the position to be focused more on the northern part of the County. Duties of new staff position could include naloxone and fentanyl test strips distribution, naloxone training, fentanyl test strips training, connecting to resources, outreach events, HIV/Hep C testing, and some administrative support.

Recover Alliance Duluth Highlights

Adding three FTEs for staff for both north and south. There was a PSS – shift from chum to rad so there isn't subcontracting happening. So total was bumped up. Expand service and get more support. They mentioned going deeper into the work rather than broadening and going wider with their work. The innovation of what they talked about in the follow up interview was great.

Linnea said part of their role is vetting for eligibility. That certainly informed category and RFP and some of this will streamline reporting.

Housing for Inmates

South focused organization with harm reduction focus. Provide housing for formally incarcerated individuals. Neat to hear from them all the partnerships they have or hope to incorp into their proposal. The purchase of a building is really the sticking point. What change can look like for individuals. We did confirm capital expenses as an accrued expense with the attorney general as it wasn't clear, and they wanted to make sure they were approaching appropriately.

Chum

Shifting of funds, the only piece that was removed was the funding for the peer support specialist. They would expand street outreach (street outreach specialist), talked a lot with everyone that was added, what the sustainability plans are for each of these. Also being able to do additional training with staff on street outreach.

United Way

They are proposing to expand lunch buddies mentoring program, match with a positive role model. This was quite an experience for them to expand programming. Whether this was to fund a funder, but this is specifically for the lunch buddy and would stay there to expand the program. Already in a couple of schools but would explore others, have interest expressed.

Proposals Recommended to Fund – Round 1		Priority Categories	Target Communities
Rural Aids Action Network	\$144,468.24	Harm Reduction	North; some countywide
Recovery Alliance Duluth	\$283,248	Harm Reduction	North; some countywide
Housing for Inmates	\$300,000	Harm Reduction	Based South; available to residents countywide
CHUM	\$94,150	Harm Reduction	South
United Way	\$34,000	Enriched Broad Prevention – Youth Focused	North
Total Amount – Round 1		\$855,866.24	

Questions/Comments

Boyle inquired if Housing for Inmates is for brick and mortar, purchase of a building. Mirsch replied yes and felt that they had a great plan for sustainability that was well detailed out.

Boyle followed up and asked what are their (Housing for Inmates) expectations for overall project costs? Mirsch responded that they wrote proposal for specifically \$300,000. Boyle asked if they said how many beds they'd like to have, or is it that far along? Adding that this seems very new. Mirsch replied, "yes that is a good point." Blomberg had connected with many players to ensure they were endorsing and to make sure there were no concerns. Grimm added that in the RFP group they laid out specific questions that they wanted answered. She added they have fantastic grant writer and connections within the community.

Purchase would like more information on the proposal. She wants to know if there is there other funding or is this the first for this type of request. Mirsch replied that it is a 501C3 and did operate previously in this area and that they are coordinating with law enforcement.

Mirsch added that they didn't mention they were working with the cognitive skills piece.

Blomberg was taking notes to circle back on the questions and comments.

ROUND 2

These are to start later in 2023.

Midwest Communications/Media Fund

Ann moved but working with someone new. Focused on harm reduction materials focus on naloxone and syringe exchange, opioid epidemic. Helping review messages, and rally a county wide focus, pulling in communications manager, and other work with positive community

Linnea added, we did not specially solace media proposals. This is in second round because there is so much evidenced based data and other messages that could target coverage. We want to dig in more and have more people involved in the development.

Wellbeing Development

North specific focused. Happy to see full county range of proposals. Want to expand services. Similar to the HFI proposal. Interested in bringing the balance with the housing option. They had mentioned the benefits of having a peer recovery specialist. Didn't ask for funds for that but exploring infrastructure/partnerships for that. Looking for a long-term rental, this is a difference. They did talk about sustainability and were intentional on that process.

YWCA Duluth

Provide transitional housing to young moms, south focus. Seeking to offer targeted training for staff, program participants and families. The heartache families have seen. High importance of having naloxone on site. Specifically highlighted having naloxone on site.

Proposals Recommended to Fund – Round 2			
Midwest Communications/Media Fund	\$120,000	Prevention/ Community Stigma	Countywide
Wellbeing Development	\$134,957	Prevention/ Community Stigma; Harm Reduction	North
YWCA Duluth	\$100,000	Harm Reduction	South
Total Amount – Round 2		\$354,957	

Questions/Comments

Anderson stated that all proposals were very exciting. Regarding Midwest, the key piece was that they had limited coverage in SLC which brought about the expansion of collaboration so that to get full coverage.

Bilden stated that it looked like they were also collaborating with a few others, and she thinks that they need to enhance involvement of local organizations. Things that are tailored to SLC.

Blomberg mentioned also figuring out what organization from the North so they can cover the whole county.

Mirsch said there is an opportunity for everyone to continue to be involved as there are great places to have them focus.

Purchase commented regarding the Midwest proposal that she knows Ann and her work well. She participated in some of it and went on to say that they need info on tribal radio stations and the one for FDL band, Carlton County and SLC in part as well as Boise Fort. She added that partnerships like those are critical and that they have to pay attention to that as well.

Bennett added the need for collective messaging that can go beyond to give us a broader reach and greater impact.

Purchase stated that up in Cook County there is a lack of information and there is a huge unmet need among youth.

Blomberg showed the funding broken out in another way to demonstrate how it all breaks down. Some proposals highlighted that they may fit under multiple categories. Jana put them in the best she felt they fit but the reality is there is both represented.

Proposals Recommended to Fund	
– Harm Reduction	
Rural Aids Action Network	\$144,468.24
Recovery Alliance Duluth	\$283,248
Housing for Inmates	\$300,000
Wellbeing Development	\$134,957
CHUM – partial funding	\$94,150
YWCA Duluth	\$100,000
Total Amount	\$1,056,823.24
– Harm Reduction	
Proposals Recommended to Fund	
Enriched Broad Prevention: Community Stigma & Youth	
Midwest Communications/Media Fund	\$120,000
United Way	\$34,000
Total Amount	\$154,000
- Enriched Broad Prevention: Community Stigma & Youth	
Total Funding Amount Recommended from 2022 Funds	
\$1,210,823.24	

Total Funding Amount	\$1,210,823.24
Recommended from 2022 Funds	
Total Currently Available	\$2,067,677.51

Proposals Development for Round 3			
Criminal Justice Coordinator focus:			
- handoff from jail			
- housing with services			

She added that there is a lot of opportunities to shape and connect the work proposed.

Boyle inquired if they have reached out to the City of Duluth to make sure they aren't stepping on their toes. Mirsch stated that they have and added that they are more in the planning process, but that collaboration and partnerships have been a discussion. She added that the City of Duluth's RFPs were internal not community.

Mirsch responded to whether or not tribes have settled stating that there is no information on that, and they reached out but there was no additional information available.

Next steps

- Board Workshop Review with Commissioners January 17
- Seek Board Approval: January 2023 (January 24, February 7th)
- Determine 2023 Committee Commitment
 - Committee authorized to continue by Chair Boyle
 - Original Chair McDonald envisioned Committee role in reviewing impact.
- Focus for next round of funding will be around public safety, discharge from jail.
- Bi-Annual Meetings
 - Updates from organizations funded & monitor impact.
 - Review additional amounts received & provide recommendations.
 - Seek volunteers for Public Safety work.
 - Information with reporting requirements
- Note: no 2022 reporting will be required
- 2023 Reporting Requirements still TBD

Comments/Discussion

Grimm inquired where to field questions from Commissioners that have not been a part of this process. Mirsch said that the goal is to start that discussion, depending on outstanding questions from Commissioners. Those would go through her and that there would be an opportunity to address questions between board meeting dates.

Mirsch inquired how members of the group were feeling.

Bilden responded that she was super supportive, excited, impactful, impressed how they pulled everything together, “right on the money.”

Elstad said she is super excited for the Housing for Inmates, “very happy to see that.”

Prusak is delighted with the house piece... “it’s a start!”

Boyle gave a huge thanks to the whole committee. He added that he attended ACA meetings and talking with other commissioners and planted a seed to add housing up north.

Purchase said it would be helpful to have follow up from grantees around harm reduction. She’s curious if it is harm reduction or not. Due diligence from follow up is important to keep track of what is happening, because the need is great. Money attracts people but not always the work or help people need so desperately.

Anderson stated that he came into this situation with this group and with there being so much to consider he was worried about the chaos. But the process and format that this group has gone through has just been incredible. He can’t thank everyone enough and mentioned how impressive the work is. This model could be used throughout the state and country.

The meeting concluded at 5:06 PM.