OFFICE OF THE ILLINOIS LT. GOVERNOR, JULIANA STRATTON

Restore, Reinvest, and Renew (R3) Program Board

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Workgroup

Regular Meeting Minutes

September 22, 2021

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **A present majority of R3PB member/designee positions shall constitute a quorum, i.e. 3** | | | |
| **Position** | **Name** | **Present (via WebEx)** | **Absent** |
| **R3PB Members/Member Designees** | | | |
| Elected Official | Sen. Celina Villanueva |  | **X** |
| Designee (Dept. of Children and Family Services | Dagene Brown | **X** |  |
| Designee (Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA)) | Charise Williams, Deputy Director | **X** |  |
| Formerly Incarcerated (over 24 years of age) | Marlon Chamberlain | **X** |  |
| R3 Area Resident or Worker | Pablo Mendoza | **X** |  |

Also, in attendance were:

**A. Call to Order and Roll Call**

1. Mitchell Troup called the meeting to order at 12:02PM

2. Blanca Dominguez took roll

3. Quorum was established

**B. Acknowledgement of Need for Videoconference Meeting**

1. Mitchell Troup acknowledged the continuing need to convene by videoconference because the public-health challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic are still present

**C. Motion to Approve the Agenda for September 22, 2021**

* 1. Moved by Charise Williams
  2. Seconded by Dagene Brown
  3. All in favor
  4. No oppositions
  5. No abstentions

**D. Member Introductions**

1. Mitchell Troup, ICJIA R3 Grant Program Manager

2. Blanca R. Dominguez, ICJIA Associate General Counsel

3. Dagene Brown, designee for Marc Smith, Director of Children and Family Services

4. Marlon Chamberlain, Campaign Manager for Heartland Alliance’s Fully Free Campaign

5. Pablo Mendoza, Lead Organizer for Parole Illinois; Research Fellow with the Prison + Neighborhood Art Project; and an Advisor with the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana

6. Karen Sheley ICJIA General Counsel

7. Greg Stevens, ICJIA Federal & State Grants Unit Associate Director

8. Rise Evans, ICJIA Advance Grant Specialist

9. Dr. Justin Escamilla, ICJIA Research Manager

10. Emily Harwell, Lt. Governor’s JEO Policy Coordinator

11. Ariana Correa, Lt. Governor’s JEO Program Manager

12. Charise Williams, Deputy Director and Chief of Staff, designee for Delrice Adams, Director of the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority

**E. New Business—Workgroup Purpose, Objectives and Considerations**

1. Mitchell Troup:

a. Explained purpose of the workgroup and how it fits into the ICJIA NOFO development process. Noted that ICJIA is a grantmaking agency which is required to release NOFOs as part of a competitive bidding process for grant opportunities. This ensures that grants are awarded in a uniform manner that is fair and transparent. Stated that the Grant and Accountability Transparency Act (GATA) sets up guidelines as to how grants are managed. Explained that each grant program is provided with funds and then grant managers and ICJIA staff work on developing the NOFO and setting up an application forms of materials that need to be completed. Stated that the information is released to the public for a specified period in which applicants can submit applications. Further explained that questions about the process are answered with technical assistance sessions at the end of the window for applications. Went on to state that applications are then collected distributed to reviewers who score them based on a predetermined rubric and that once those scores are collected, they are ranked. Explained that ICJIA also has approval process i.e., getting approval to award from budget committee and once obtained, the grant staff gets to work on getting those agreements up and running.

b. Explained that R3 grants are a bit different, i.e., R3 Board was able to comment on the NOFO after ICJIA staff prepared it. Explained that ICJIA received feedback that the R3 Board wished to be more involved in the NOFO drafting process and so as such this working group was established to allow board members the opportunity to participate in the process from the beginning by providing feedback on key aspects of the NOFO. Stated that ICJIA is eager to discuss some of the key aspects of the NOFO and hearing ideas and feedback that can potentially be used in drafting the NOFO.

c. Advised the workgroup that ICJIA has guidelines and restrictions that it must comply with as a state grantmaking agency as well as other policies so there is no guarantee that every single proposal for every single idea that's brought up by the workgroup will be included in the NOFO. Went on to state that ICJIA promises to hear all feedback that is discussed by the workgroup. Reiterated that the purpose of the workgroup is to allow the R3 Board to provide feedback on key parts of the NOFO.

2. Blanca Dominguez

a. Provided some information on legal considerations relating to drafting of NOFO. Noted that, historically, many underserved communities, including Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality, have not had sufficient access to state grants and have not been able to successfully apply for them.

b. Further stated that ICJIA is committed to ensuring that grant funds are awarded to grassroots organizations with deep ties in R3 service areas by removing barriers to applying for these funds. Recounted current steps ICJIA is taking towards equity:

* Formation of the R3PB Workgroup
* Tiers of competition
* Broad ranges of organizations that can apply
* Language access plan both for the agency and working on statewide task force
* Hosting roundtables with applicants who did not receive funds and current grantees to learn from their experiences
* Using equity tools to assess its processes

c. Also explained constitutional considerations relating to government race- based decisions and strict scrutiny under the Equal Protection Clause of the Constitution. Recounted three recent government grantmaking programs that attempted to alleviate past race discrimination have been sued for alleged violations of the Equal Protection Clause, including cases against the Small Business Administration, the State of Oregon and multistate class actions against the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture.

**F. New Business—Tiers of Competition**

1. Mitchell Troup

a. Explained that tiers are a new concept for this upcoming NOFO. Stated that purpose of the tiers is to set up structures where opportunities are available despite size of the organization. Stated tier 1 would be for organizations with less than one year of providing services, tier 2 would be for organizations that have been providing services for one to five years or an annual agency budget of less than $2M and tier 3 would be for organizations that have been providing services for more than five years and have a budget higher than $2M. Explained that the NOFO would have questions that help categorize the applicants into one of the three tiers.

2. Dagene Brown

a. Asked what tier would organizations that worked with another agency that received funding last year fall into if they are applying on their own for the first time.

3. Mitchell Troup

a. Stated that he believed such organizations would fall into the tier 2 category, but issue was open for discussion.

4. Pablo Mendoza

a. Stated that he works within that space and he believed that such organizations should be placed into tier 1.

5. Charise Williams

a. Stated that due to the interruptions to service delivery caused by the pandemic, such organizations would be better placed into tier 1 since they likely did not have the benefit of a full year of providing service.

6. Mitchell Troup

a. Proposed changing the criteria for tier 1 to less than two years of service to address the effect of COVID on service delivery. Further stated that tier 2 criteria would also be changed to allow organizations with two to five years of service to fall into that tier.

7. Dagene Brown

a. Agreed with changes to tiers 1 and 2; asked why criteria for tier 3 was based on meeting both length of service and budget amount where other tiers had it as an “or.”

8. Mitchell Troup

a. Explained that his thought process with respect to the use of “and” in tier 3 and “or” in the other tiers was that he did not want to hinder an organization that had been providing services for 10-20 years but did not have a high budget from qualifying for tier 2. Reiterated that tier 3 would be only for those groups that have been providing services for more than five years and had a budget over $2M. (Dagene Brown stated that she understood nuances of the use of and/or in the tiers after explanation).

b. As to the $2M cutoff for tier 2, explained that figure was based on data from last year’s applicant pool showing that there was a natural breakdown at $2M, with the majority of the applicants either falling under $2M or over $2M (Dagene Brown noted that an understanding of the basis for the cutoff was helpful).

c. Moved discussion to the distribution of funds amongst the tiers. Stated that currently, the proposal was to distribute 25% of available funds to tier 1, 50% to tier 2 and remaining 25% to tier 3. Explained that the intent was to allow a bulk of the funds to be available to tier 2 applicants which was consistent with available data regarding last year’s applicant pool. This would still allow for newer organizations to access funds as well as recognizing the value of larger organizations with a lot of capacity; reiterated that intent was to allow bulk of funding to go to grassroots organizations.

9. Dagene Brown

a. Noted the possibility of concern from others about the breakdown of funds amongst the tiers but recognized that it might not be possible to please everyone.

10. Charise Williams

a. Noted that the distribution was based on the available data from last year’s applicant pool.

11. Mitchell Troup

a. Once again referred group to the data showing that there were not many applicants that would have qualified for tier 1 and that questions about the breakdown would be explained to the applicants in the FAQs.

12. Charise Williams

a. Highlighted fact that any unused funds in one tier could be reallocated to the other tiers, thus providing additional funding (Mitchell Troup concurred with this assessment and clarified that flexibility to reallocate funds if not fully exhausted in one tier was always going to be part of the NOFO).

13. Pablo Mendoza

a. Stated that he wanted to point out that many organizations did not even know about the grant so they would not have had a chance to apply or had resources to apply. Explained that lack of awareness on the part of some organizations should be considered with respect to tier 1 candidates and provide more funds to grassroots organizations (Mitchell Troup acknowledged the statement and stated that outreach could be improved).

14. Dagene Brown

a. stated she had heard similar feedback from organizations as stated by Pablo Mendoza and just wanted to make sure that that point was considered.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*Blanca Dominguez’s internet connection was cutoff; went to Mitchell Troup’s office and resumed at 1:07PM \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

15. Mitchell Troup

a. Explained various technical assistance resources available to applicants; further stated that more would be offered with the upcoming NOFO (link to resources provided by Emily Harwell

<https://icjia.illinois.gov/gata/technical-assistance>).

b. Asked workgroup for alternatives to distribution of funds amongst the tiers. Also asked the workgroup if they had ideas as to how to reallocate funding if not fully used within one tier. Proposed a cascading method which would allow for money to go to lower tiers first before going to tier 3 (Pablo Mendoza stated that it was simpler to go with the cascade scenario which would allow for funds to be reallocated to tiers 1 and 2 before going to tier 3).

16. Justin Escamilla

a. Asked how scoring would work within tiers in respect to funding each grantee; what percentage of applicants would get funded in each tier. (Mitchell Troup stated that the issue raised by Justin Escamilla was not fully resolved; suggested taking this issue up at a later meeting, time permitting).

**G. Member Updates**

1. Mitchell Troup

a. Reminded workgroup of the importance to meet quorum of three given small size of the group and that member updates was opportunity to provide updates on any scheduling conflicts. Advised workgroup that this time could also be used to request the addition of new topics for discussion.

b. No additional member updates provided.

**H. Public Comments**

1. S.L. Owens, a current R3 grantee spoke at the meeting. Was informed by Mitchell Troup that she had approximately two minutes to speak.

a. SL Owens provided the following public comments:

i. Expressed support for tiers of competition and had a few suggestions to address some systemic barriers she observed: (1) offer additional technical assistance especially in relation to GATA pre-qualification for organizations that may fall into tier 1; (2) with respect to the application process, noted difficulties with connecting the budget to performance measures in a manner that really strengthened an organization’s program; would like to see more technical assistance on this matter; (3) provide easier access to resources so people do not have to search various places for it; and (4) as to outreach, provide more information to dispel misinformation as to who qualifies for R3 grants as well as more information on the R3 Board, the interplay between the R3 Board and ICJIA, etc.

b. No additional public comments.

**I. Adjournment**

1. Upcoming meetings will be held on 9/23 from 10:00AM to 11:00AM, 9/29 at 12 noon and 10/1 at 9:30AM
2. Moved by Dagene Brown at 1:30PM
3. Seconded by Charise Williams
4. All in favor
5. No oppositions
6. No abstentions