



# CITY OF TOPEKA

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES

## SOCIAL SERVICE GRANTS COMMITTEE

CITY COUNCIL  
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**Date:** July 9, 2024

**Time:** 1:00pm

**Location:** Classroom A; LEC 320 S. Kansas Ave Ste 100 *virtual attendance option also available*

**Committee members present:** Councilmembers Sylvia Ortiz, Brett Kell, Neil Dobler (Chair)

**City staff present:** Carrie Higgins (Division Director Housing Services), United Way of Kaw Valley vendor staff: Brett Martin, Jessica Lehnerr, Joyce Katzer, Juliet McDiffet, Audrey Mott

### 1) Call to Order

Chairman Dobler called the meeting to order at 1:00pm. Committee members introduced themselves.

### 2) Approval of June 24, 2024 Minutes

Committee member Ortiz made a motion to approved the minutes from the previous meeting. Committee member Kell seconded. Minutes approved 3-0-0.

### 3) Agency Appeals

Brett Martin with United Way of Kaw Valley stated there were three agency applicants who would be appealing their scoring at today's meeting. He stated that, per the RFP, the award announcements are sent to the applicants and language states those awards are contingent on the appeals, this Committee and ultimately the Governing Body. For this process, the applicants are given seven (7) days to notify United Way, in writing, that they wish to appeal. Mr. Martin reminded that, according to instructions given in the RFP and within the larger process, the contents of the application itself must be the basis for the appeal. Any extraneous information that is submitted should not be considered for the appeal.

### Shawnee County Medical Society HealthAccess

Mr. Martin noted that the appeal for this program was one that the United Way team agreed with, that the scoring should be changed from a 3 to a 5 on "Past Grant Administration". He noted there had been a communication piece between the vendor and applicant that had indicated the report was not late, as had been indicated by the Reviewer. The recommendation from United Way would be to

give that section a score of 5 out of 5. Megan Skaggs with HealthAccess provided a few comments noting she agreed that she felt there had possibly been a typo during the initial review and thanked the committee for their consideration.

Chairman Dobler inquired what the score change for this program would mean for all others? Mr. Martin explained that their team had prepared an additional spreadsheet to show the amended score and walked the Committee members through a review of that spreadsheet. The adjusted award would be an additional \$1,000. It would mean the program that is last on the list would receive \$1,000 fewer on their award, however no other program applicants would be affected.

MOTION: Committee member Ortiz made a motion to amend the scoring recommendation for the Shawnee County Medical Society's HealthAccess program from a "3 out of 5 points" to "5 out of 5 points" on the "Past Grant Administration" section. The amendment would adjust the award to be \$47,500. Committee member Kell seconded. Motion approved 3-0-0.

### Community Action

Sara Rust-Martin with Community Action presented the appeals for the program that had applied for the SSG process. She voiced an understanding that some of the information being provided may be outside of the scope and not able to be considered, but that she wanted to provide an expansion of information that was provided on the application under the Outcomes information.

Ms. Rust-Martin noted the comment provided by the Reviewer seemed to indicate that the outcomes seemed vague and unrealistic related to the process for ensuring that clients keep utilities and that it does not happen again. She explained that Community Action does have an outcome plan in place, where they follow-up with clients 30 days, 60 days, 120 days, and 180 days after assistance to assess whether the services that were provided were helpful to improving their overall financial situation. When clients see services, they are not only filling out an application and receiving financial assistance, but rather are beginning the process that is in place. This process includes meeting with someone and receiving financial tools and information, budgeting help, referrals if there is under-employment or unemployment. There is an investment made into the clients to ensure they are doing better moving forward.

Ms. Rust-Martin also provided an expanded another explanation of what those performance measures are, and the information that Community Action does for grants across the board is to try to assess whether the services being provided are

meeting the intended outcomes, and if they are not, reviewing how they need to change services to make them more responsive to the actual needs and to the growth of people who are seeking assistance from Community Action.

Ms. Rust-Martin addressed information related to the process for client input. This process is the same as what is done with the Post-Service intervals of 30 days, 60 days, 90 days and 180 days, and includes a client feedback piece that is gathered at the end of the service provision to assess whether the services had helped to move the family forward and whether there are additional services that are needed. Community Action utilizes curriculum from the All State Foundation and other resources to provide financial empowerment with clients. Ms. Rust-Martin reads each of those responses and meets as a group to decide if the services are moving them toward the intended outcome. They receive their answer by feedback from the clients as well as by looking at the numbers.

The next item Ms. Rust-Martin spoke toward related to the Organization's Leadership. It was scored 0 out of 5. She was unsure of this reasoning and noted that their Board does not meet the gender criteria which states that "less than 70% of board membership identify as one gender". However, she stated the other criteria related to that item are met.

The next item was Collaboration and Partnerships. Ms. Rust-Martin noted that the information provide in the application only indicated the partnerships that were determined to be essential to carrying out the grant. She indicated that Community Action has a vast array of partnerships within the community that may not be directly necessary to fulfilling what was indicated on the application.

Committee member Ortiz inquired if part of the grant was to assist people with paying utilities? Ms. Rust-Martin confirmed. She also explained that there are some individuals who qualify for assistance on a monthly basis. She noted that, if a family is not able to be self-sustaining, a referral is made to other agencies to assist them further.

Committee member Ortiz referenced a requirement found in the outcomes of the application that stated the ability for individuals to receive assistance only once, as it is likely difficult for people to know if they are going to need further assistance at a later time and it may a difficult thing to prove. Mr. Martin stated that United Way does not have any influence within the process related to the substance of outcomes. Programs that apply are able to choose their own outcomes and choose their own targets and those are what they report on. He

noted that there had been internal conversation about the quality of outcomes in performance measures. It is a conversation that the SSG Committee has also had in prior years, and prior iterations, but there have not been any meaningful interventions. He added that the information stated in the Community Action application is not unlike many others across the community. The hope is to provide emergency services and then provide sustainability steps for folks in order to avoid future use.

Chairman Dobler sought clarification from Mr. Martin related to the score on the areas of the appeal where the information was included in the application.

“Outcomes are clear and related”. It was awarded an 8 out of 10. Additional information was provided in the appeal letter, but while the information strengthens the outcomes, it was not included in the application and would not be considered for the appeal.

“Plan has been identified to measure outputs and outcomes” was scored 3 out of 5. Mr. Martin responded that additional information, in terms of the intervals and not only the quantity but also qualitative information, is provided in the letter but was not included in the application.

“Agency has formal process and is using client input”. Mr. Martin responded that this was similar to the prior one. The plan to measure outputs and outcomes is again additional quantitative and qualitative information that was provided outside of the application.

“Organizational leadership” was scored 0 out of 5. Mr. Martin noted that there is ambiguity of this section. There is some ambiguity between language in the application and in the rubric. The application asks for the average percentage of board members who attend meetings. The application asks about the average attendance. The language in the rubric is more nuanced and unclear if you are comparing it to the application. The rubric has language about quorum and the percentage or ratio of time in which the board meets and has a quorum. The application asks for the average attendance. Mr. Martin suggested this be something that the Committee reviews in the Fall when working on changes to the 2026 SSG Cycle process. He stated that in the estimation and review of other applications and in other comments, the Reviewers were looking at average board attendance and not at quorum, even though that is the language in the rubric. Chairman Dobler inquired if, given the benefit of a doubt, the score would change? Mr. Martin confirmed that it would mean they would hit three of the four

criteria, where they currently hit two of the four. If the score was changed to a 3 out of 5, it would change the award amount. Mr. Martin stated the team had anticipated that change and provided the Committee with an adjustment. The dollars awarded would subtract from program #23 on the spreadsheet.

“Past Grant Administration is Effective” and it scored a 3 out of 5. No appeal for that score.

“Collaboration and Partnerships” scored a 0 out of 5. Mr. Martin noted they had listed three partners and the requirement to receive a full score was six. The Reviewers also felt that the three partnerships listed were not especially meaningful, and were more of the standard type of partnership.

Chairman Dobler stated he felt it would be easy to take out additional funding from the uncommitted reserves, upon being passed by the Committee, to award the program.

MOTION: Chairman Dobler made a motion to change the scoring for Community Action’s application score, in the “Organizational Leadership” criteria from a score of zero (0) out of five (5) to a three (3) out of five (5). Committee member Ortiz seconded. Motion approved 3-0-0.

### East Topeka Senior Center

Debra Dawkins with East Topeka Senior Center discussed the appeals of their scores. She indicated that no new information was being submitted, but rather that she wanted to provide clarity to what was being submitted.

“Capacity: Organization has the resources to produce the proposed outcomes efficiently and effectively” scored a 5 out of 10. Ms. Dawkins felt the response to the is question was misread. She provided financial statements and stated those reflect a large revenue over expenses. This is due to being awarded funds by the Kansas Department of Transportation and ARPA to purchase new vehicles. Those vehicles were purchased at the end of 2023 through the beginning of 2024. The monies appear on the financial statement but, on the balance sheet, it would be noted that the bank account does not reflect that amount because they are listed as assets. Ms. Dawkins stated she did not put the budget narrative into the application because it would not affect their 2025 request. Those monies were received and expended in 2024.

Chairwoman Ortiz inquired about the language in the application for the budget narrative. Mr. Martin answered that the budget portion of the application asks for an explanation for any substantial increase or decrease in the budget. When the reviewers were having the conversation, they saw the difference between 2024 and the proposed 2025 projected and saw a difference of roughly \$127K. The explanation given in the application was the increases add additional hours and pay to drivers. To the Reviewers, that did not explain the \$127K difference, resulting in the score of a 5 out of 10 on “Capacity: Organization has the resources to produce the proposed outcomes efficiently and effectively” and 3 out of 5 on the “Capacity: Organization manages program effectively” section.

Chairman Dobler inquired if Mr. Martin felt there was a justification for a change in this score? Mr. Martin responded that, during the conversation with the Reviewers, they went through the information that was included in the application and did not see basis at that time to change the score. Recognizing now with the information given in the appeal, the justification makes sense, however it is important to provide such detail in the application itself.

Committee member Ortiz inquired about what financial information was requested on this application as it relates to a program documenting any and all other grants? Mr. Martin responded saying there is an extensive program budget outline in the application. Throughout the budget, the applicant is able to put a number of revenue streams within the application to help account for the resources that they have. There is also an expenditures section in the application that allows the applicants to provide detail in terms of what dollars are going out of the program. The budget narrative question is included to allow applicants to provide additional information that may not be clear from the itemized budget, in addition for them to provide the opportunity to explain any substantial increase or decrease from year-over-year budget.

#### **4) Review Scoring and Funding Recommendations**

Chairman Dobler reviewed adjustments of what the final award recommendations would be to include the changes made to Shawnee County HealthAccess and Community Action. Mr. Martin stated the difference those changes would make for applicant #23 would be \$1,800

MOTION: Committee member Ortiz made a motion to approve the spreadsheet as presented, with adjustment for Shawnee County Medical HealthAccess and Community Action. Additionally, to request the Governing Body approve \$1,800

of additional funding for applicant #23. Chairman Dobler seconded. Motion approved 3-0-0.

**5) Other Items**

No additional items.

**6) Adjourn**

Chairman Dobler adjourned the meeting at 1:53pm.

Meeting video can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/Q0hlzBG4j0U>