

Grants Management Advisory Committee Meeting (GMAC)
March 14, 2013 MINUTES

Approved May 20, 2013 with revisions

Members Present

Jeff Fontaine	Robert Martinez
Arthur de Joya	Marcia O'Malley
Cindy Roragen	Connie McMullen
Kevin Schiller	Michele Howser, New

Members Absent

Dr. David Jensen
Al Conklin
Ken Lange – Resigned
Pauline Salla
Ina Dorman

Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Staff

Laurie Olson, Chief, Grants Management Unit
Rique Robb, Social Services Program Specialist (SSPS) III
Toby Hyman, Social Services Program Specialist (SSPS) III
Pat Petrie, Social Services Program Specialist (SSPS) III
Sally Dutton, Social Services Program Specialist (SSPS) III
Gary Gobelman, Social Services Program Specialist (SSPS) III
Toni Cordova, Administrative Assistant III
Gloria Sulhoff, Administrative Assistant II

I. Welcome, Introductions and Announcements

Chair Jeff Fontaine opened the meeting. A quorum was established.

Laurie Olson, Chief of the DHHS GMU, reported that Ken Lange had submitted his resignation on Wednesday, March 13, 2013, and a new member in the south, Michele Howser, had been appointed to the committee as a member with knowledge, skill, and experience in the provision of services to children. She is on the faculty of the University of Phoenix and is pursuing her PH.D.

II. Public Comment

Las Vegas – None
Carson City – None

III. Approval of Minutes – Jeff Fontaine, Chairperson

- December 13, 2012 – Marcia O'Malley asked that in her comments on Page 7 the word "disabled" preceding the word "youth" be deleted so the sentence will read: "I would strongly recommend that someone from the community who is familiar with the health issues for youth and people with disabilities be appointed to the Wellness Subcommittee." Ms. O'Malley explained that Nevada Revised Statutes require that the person be identified first and then the condition (e.g., with disabilities).

Motion: Connie McMullen moved to approve the minutes with that correction.

Second: Ms. O'Malley

Vote: Unanimously carried

- January 18, 2013 – No changes.

Motion: Robert Martinez moved that January minutes be approved.

Second: Connie McMullen

Vote: Unanimously carried

IV. GMAC Orientation to Evaluation Process – GMU Staff

Summary of Applications Received

Ms. Olson led the committee through a handout that provided an overview of the proposals received in the FY14-15 Request for Applications (RFA) and pointed out that more than \$13 million in Year One funding was requested while only about \$5.5 million is available. (See Attachment A.) She cautioned that the Legislature was still considering the budget so the amounts available to award are not set in stone. Other points made during this agenda item included the following.

- The Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB) requested a projection of how the \$2.3 million earmarked for hunger might be spent. The second page of the handout included a table with the requested projections. However, the breakout could change based on the proposals received for hunger projects.
- A table on the first page of the handout illustrated how Social Services Block Grant (SSBG-Title XX) funds are being utilized in FY13. Ms. Olson explained that the purpose for which these funds may be used is versatile. The GMAC will be recommending a distribution plan for FY14-15.
- Ms. Olson said that evaluation of proposals for Respite Care could be handled by either the Subcommittee for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect or the Subcommittee on Disability Services. She recommended that the latter subcommittee take responsibility so that the workload was evenly distributed. Members of the Subcommittee on Disability Services agreed. Ms. McMullen asked whether programs that serve people with early-onset dementia will be eligible to apply for grants if Senate Bill (SB) 86 passes. Ms. Olson said that the bill would not change provisions to the Fund for a Healthy Nevada (FHN) Disability Services category. These funds have always been available for this purpose. Rather, the bill proposes to broaden the scope of FHN Independent Living grants awarded by the Aging and Disability Services Division.
- Positive Behavior Support (PBS) funds have historically been awarded to three separate university programs. For FY14-15, the three programs have collaborated to submit one proposal. They have requested more than the \$325,000 in FHN funds available for PBS but are hoping to draw some of the Title XX funds. A new applicant for PBS funds is an agency called Step 2.
- Only \$724,679 in Children's Trust Fund (CTF) and Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) funds are linked to proposals for parent training, child self-protection training and crisis intervention. Historically, however, the GMAC has recommended awarding a significant portion of available Title XX dollars for this purpose. In FY13, these programs are receiving about \$821,000 in Title XX funds.

Committee member Kevin Schiller and Chair Fontaine posed a variety of questions concerning the status of Title XX funding including the impact of federal sequestration, the possible utilization of reserve and the danger of the Legislature sweeping the reserve. Ms. Olson said that so far federal guidance indicates that the hit to Title XX could be anywhere from less than 1% to about 5%. Currently, Title XX has a reserve of about \$1 million, which would significantly soften the blow over FY14 and FY15. She explained that the reserve accumulated for a variety of reasons, but the biggest single factor is the difference between the spending authority approved by the Legislature and the actual federal award. Historically, the awards have come in a little higher than the budgeted amount. Instead of always going before the Interim Finance Committee (IFC) to draw in the additional funds, DHHS has left the funds in reserve. Any reserve is subject to a sweep by the Legislature if there are deficits elsewhere in the budget. However, DHHS has testified at the Legislature in favor of retaining the reserve due to economic unknowns at both the federal and state levels.

Chair Fontaine asked whether the GMAC might have a role in decisions about how to spend the Title XX reserve. Ms. Olson said the GMAC could make a recommendation to DHHS. If the Director agreed, a work program would need to be submitted to the IFC for consideration. Mr. Schiller related his experiences with work programs and said that the IFC is likely to listen if the proposal is sufficiently detailed. Chair Fontaine suggested that the use of Title XX funds become a standing agenda item in order to keep it on the committee's radar. Ms. Olson reiterated that, until more is known about sequestration and the state budget, it would probably be best to leave the reserve intact.

Chair Fontaine asked whether members of the public wished to make any comments. Paula Berkley, representing the Food Bank of Northern Nevada, asked about a staff person to implement Nevada's Food Security Strategic Plan. Ms. Olson responded that the DHHS GMU currently has a vacant half-time position. DHHS has requested that the Legislature increase it to a full-time position with primary responsibility for food security. Funds to support the position would not be taken from the \$2.3 million earmarked for hunger projects.

GMAC Subcommittee Responsibilities

Ms. Olson reviewed a handout that was drawn from the RFA (see Attachment B). She said that GMU staff was in the process of conducting a technical review of each proposal to determine whether any should be disqualified based on fiscal instability or other serious issues. Staff was also evaluating the proposals in order to provide the GMAC with comments about strengths and weaknesses. Finally, staff will provide notes about any issues related to the performance of existing grantees. When this process is complete, it will be up to the GMAC to actually score the proposals. Packets will be hand-delivered or sent via Federal Express by Friday, April 5, 2013. The deadline to submit scores to the GMU is Monday, April 22, 2013. The next step will be subcommittee meetings.

- Wednesday, April 24th – Subcommittee for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect
- Monday, April 29th – Subcommittee on Disability Services
- Tuesday, April 30th – Subcommittee on Wellness

The full GMAC will consider subcommittee recommendations at their May meeting. Ms. Olson reviewed the following guidelines.

- The GMAC may not bring applicants to the table and ask them to agree to generic budget cuts in order to distribute the available funds among many projects. Instead, the GMAC should fund the best proposals adequately. If cuts are necessary, the GMAC should cite

specific budget items or, if a project is scalable, the GMAC may ask the GMU to work with the applicant during the award process to develop a reasonable budget.

- The GMAC may request changes to the proposed scope of work and/or special award conditions to address particular concerns (e.g., potential fiscal instability or program issues).
- If a proposal needs to be funded but full funding is not possible, the GMAC may consider preserving the most effective elements of the proposal and eliminating other elements.

The GMAC's recommendations will go to DHHS Director Mike Willden who typically does his best to honor the GMAC's recommendations but occasionally asks staff to make some adjustments. He will finalize the awards about a week after the GMAC's May meeting. After that, staff will conduct negotiations with the selected grantees and issue awards to be effective July 1, 2013.

GMAC Subcommittee membership was recapped.

- Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect – Dr. Ina Dorman, Al Conklin, Kevin Schiller, Dr. David Jensen and Pauline Salla
- Disability Services – Cindy Roragen, Connie McMullen and Marcia O'Malley
- Wellness – Arthur de Joya, Robert Martinez, Denise Tanata-Ashby and Jeff Fontaine

New GMAC member Michele Howser was appointed by Chair Fontaine to serve on the Disability Services Subcommittee.

Ms. Olson reminded that, at our December meeting, the GMAC discussed inviting ad hoc members to assist with proposal evaluations. She introduced Darlene Dougherty who was under contract with the Division of Welfare and Supportive Services (DWSS) to do education and outreach for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Her experience will be valuable in evaluating hunger proposals. At Ms. O'Malley's suggestion, Ms. Olson also said she had contacted Debra Aquino at the Health Division for a volunteer who might assist with evaluations of Health Access proposals.

Chair Fontaine questioned whether half-day subcommittee meetings would be sufficient to dig into the details of line items, budgets and proposals. Ms. Olson asked for feedback on whether to schedule longer meetings or a second meeting for each subcommittee. Ms. McMullen and Mr. Martinez voiced support for the concept of allowing more time. Ms. Howser suggested that the GMAC or the subcommittees set a time limit to discuss each grant, particularly if a potential grantee wanted to disagree with a low score. Ms. Olson clarified that the subcommittees are not required to allow every applicant to testify. Instead, the subcommittees may ask selected applicants to answer questions. She noted that the question/answer period would allow subcommittee members to change scores based on applicant testimony. This part of the process would not be repeated at the full GMAC meeting in May. She concluded by confirming that the GMAC and subcommittees have authority to limit the amount of time spent questioning an applicant.

Chair Fontaine asked whether there is an appeal process for applicants who disagree with their scores (other than making a statement during the public comment period). Ms. Olson said there is not.

Ms. McMullen agreed with Ms. Howser about the idea of time limits to ensure that there is sufficient time at the end of the meetings to make award recommendations. Mr. Martinez asked whether the time crunch at the end of previous meetings was due to room availability. Ms. Olson

explained video connections are typically programmed to end at the time designated by the booking even if the room is still available past that point. Mr. Schiller said he was in favor of either an all-day subcommittee meeting or a meeting scheduled over two days. Ms. Olson said her staff would look into these options. She reiterated that the subcommittees are not required to bring every applicant to the table. Instead, it would be useful to question those with higher scores because they are most likely to be funded in the end. Ms. McMullen noted that the subcommittee chairs could move things along and allow an appropriate amount of time for discussion. Ms. Howser suggested publishing a time limit in advance so applicants are prepared to be concise.

Mr. Fontaine returned to the issue of applicants not satisfied with their scores. Ms. Olson said scoring sheets (with evaluator names deleted) and GMU reviews containing strengths and weaknesses are considered public information and will be released to applicants who request them. She reiterated that there is no appeal after DHHS Director Willden makes final decisions. If the GMAC wanted to add an appeal mechanism prior to that final step, it would be difficult to build into the process at this point. Ms. McMullen said she liked the idea of providing scoring sheets to applicants so they know their strengths and weaknesses.

Chair Fontaine asked Ms. Olson to review the process for adjusting scores during subcommittee meetings. She responded that the GMU prepares a spreadsheet that is formula-driven. Prior to the meetings, initial scores are entered in columns marked with reviewer numbers instead of names. During the meeting, after the question and answer period, subcommittee members are allowed to submit any scoring changes they would like to make. Staff enters the new scores and the spreadsheet recalibrates. Any changes in scores and ranking are read into the record.

Full GMAC Responsibilities

Ms. Olson restated that there will not be an opportunity at the full GMAC meeting to update scores. Typically, the process involving the full GMAC is easier than the subcommittee process. The full GMAC listens to subcommittee recommendations, asks questions of the subcommittee members or applicants, and moves toward adopt of final recommendations.

Guidance on Evaluating and Scoring Applications

Ms. Olson reviewed the three scoring matrixes that were published in the RFA. (See Attachment C.) She explained that special scoring tools were needed for Hunger One-Stop Shops and Hunger – Increase Access Points because they each have unique categories such as required collaborative partnerships and planning/development. She also noted that the executive summary in Hunger One-Stop Shop proposals is informational only; it was more important to assign these points to other sections. The scoring matrixes provide clear parameters as to why a response might be scored in a certain range. For example, a high score in service delivery would mean that methods are clear and effectively developed. Ten bonus points are possible for collaborative partnerships described in any proposal other than those submitted under Hunger One-Stop Shops (which are by definition collaborative partnerships).

Ms. Olson introduced GMU staff members who provided some insights about the evaluation process.

Gary Gobelman, Social Services Program Specialist (SSPS) III said that staff will provide strengths and weaknesses in a very straight-forward way, and will make comments on the budget. He recommended that, during the subcommittee meetings, adjustments to scores should be made only to the sections that were specifically addressed during the question and answer period. He

said that he had so far reviewed only the Hunger One-Stop Shop proposals but they all have three primary components – staffing, food purchase and operating cost – and they all appear to be scalable. With \$6.9 million in requests and \$2.1 million available, scaling back projects will probably be necessary in order to meet the goal of funding two to five projects in the north and the south and two or three projects in the rural areas.

Rique Robb, SSPS-III, said that, as a former grantee and the newest GMU staff member, she would suggest that the GMAC truly consider the GMU comments when evaluating proposals. She advised members to review the budget to make sure they match what is in the proposal. If significant changes are needed or an applicant has dismissed a requirement (e.g., the collaborative piece for Hunger One-Stop Shops), scores should reflect that.

Toby Hyman, SSPS-III, reminded members of the Subcommittee for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect to pay attention to whether proposals address requirements for evidence-based programming and use of the Six Protective Factors.

Pat Petrie, SSPS-III, reinforced that the scoring matrix provides strong guidelines for scoring consistency and will serve as a good tool for evaluation.

Sally Dutton, SSPS-III, said that, in her experience, it is important to remember that you can only read and absorb so much at one time without suffering from “reader’s block.” She recommended approaching the task strategically and planning to read only a certain number of grants in one day. That way, evaluators can give their full attention to each proposal.

Ms. Olson reiterated Mr. Petrie’s comment about consistency. It does not matter whether an evaluator tends to be a tough scorer or a liberal scorer as long as all proposals are scored in the same manner. She cautioned that, while some GMAC members may be familiar with one or more applicants, it is important to score proposals on their own merit and not on what one may or may not know about the applicant. Asking questions at subcommittee meetings may help clear up anything that might be missing from an application. If a statement is made in a proposal that particularly stands out, it is acceptable to go back through proposals that the evaluator has already read and reconsider strengths, weaknesses and scores. Ms. Olson supported Ms. Dutton’s idea about breaking the task down into pieces as well as Ms. Hyman’s request to make sure that proposals meet program requirements. She said the evaluation packets will include another copy of the RFA, which has URLs to websites with more detailed information about some of these requirements.

Mr. Martinez noted that he prefers to read proposals first and then review GMU staff comments. This helps him be objective. Ms. Olson said that approach is similar to the subcommittee process in that members evaluate proposals independently first and then come together to discuss them.

Ms. Olson returned the group’s attention to Attachment C to review examples of strong and weak responses to actual questions from applications. The responses, however, were fabricated. She noted that, in the examples, the longer responses tend to be the stronger ones, but that is not always the case. Sometimes a shorter, more concise answer is better than a long, rambling one. Other points made during the review included the following.

- Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) may include more detailed information about collaborative partnerships than an applicant had space to include in the application.
- Strong responses to questions about cost-effectiveness and leveraging of funds demonstrate that a grant awarded through this process would not be the only source of funding or support. A diverse funding base is preferable.

- Strong outcome statements not only count widgets produced but the benefit of the widgets. Anything measured in terms of percentages should include perspective (e.g., the number of clients participating vs. the number reporting positive results).

Mr. Fontaine asked about potential conflicts of interest among GMAC members. Ms. Olson explained that individuals are not allowed to serve on the GMAC if they are employed by organizations that are funded through the GMU. Members who serve on the Board of Directors of an organization that has applied for funding, or have some other close affiliation with an applicant, are required to disclose this information on the record. These members may participate in discussion about proposals but should refrain from sharing inside information that may unduly influence other members. In addition, they are prohibited from voting on funding recommendations that include their affiliate organizations. In the past, this is handled by separating the affiliate organization from any batch recommendations that are made. A separate vote may then be taken on funding for the affiliate organization.

V. Public Comment

Las Vegas – None

Carson City – None

VI. Adjournment

Chair Fontaine adjourned the meeting.