



Metro

600 NE Grand Ave.
Portland, OR 97232-2736

Meeting summary

Meeting: Nature in Neighborhoods Capital Grants Pilot Program Design and Review
Committee Meeting #10
Date: Tuesday, May 10, 2022
Time: 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.
Place: Zoom
Purpose: Guidebook and Request for Proposal development
Outcome(s): Develop the program Guidebook and Request for Proposal

Recording: <https://vimeo.com/710445603/dc00a124db>

Presentation: <https://vimeo.com/699885711/7a8da702c2>

Attendees

Committee Members

Jairaj Singh, they/he, Unite Oregon
Blanca Gaytan Farfan, she/her, East County Rising Community Projects
Jeffrey Lee, he/him, (City of Portland, BES)
Theresa Huang, she/her, Urban Greenspaces Institute

Absent: *Anthony M. Bradley*

Kevin Hughes

Alisa Chen

Staff

Crista Gardner, Metro
Brandon Goldner, Metro
Humberto Marquez Mendez, Metro
Gabrielle Brown, Metro (PSU Fellow)
Allison Brown, JLA Public Involvement
Travis Rumohr, JLA Public Involvement

Welcome and Introductions

Allison Brown, JLA Public Involvement, opened the meeting and reviewed Zoom logistics. Crista Gardner, Metro, shared a new land acknowledgement. She also provided an update on the “lunch randomizer” and reminded everyone to be sure they abstain from discussing committee business during the social meetings so they don’t have to worry about public record.

Allison reviewed meeting summary, asked if the summary was alright or if there was anything that needed to be changed. The committee had no changes.

Crista provided an overview of where the group was in the process, what decisions had been made, and what was on the agenda for the day’s meeting. She explained that the goal would be to finish the discussion revolving around thresholds, with time dedicated to looking at the project development process and reminded the group the purpose is to get to a revised guidebook.

Progress Update

Gabrielle Brown, Metro, then provided a brief recap of where the group was at in the process, before moving on to the day's business.

Gabrielle shared the Mural Board that the committee worked on at the last meeting and reviewed the decisions and events from the previous meeting. She noted that the group is still waiting to hear back from the office of Metro Attorney to ensure they can legally change the Program Criteria.

Gabrielle then asked the committee to check the two changed Program Criteria to see if they agree with the changes.

Funding Projects

Gabrielle continued on to work through the remaining elements on the Mural Board before finally arriving at Grant Limits and walking through the question "Should there be a grant or budget floor"?

- **Gabrielle Brown:** \$10,000 as a project floor, how does that sound?
 - **Committee Member:** Does that include matching or?
 - **Gabrielle Brown:** No, that's the entire project.
 - **Committee Member:** I personally think that should be a lot higher. Looking at the other grants, I think a lot of them were half a million to a million dollars.
 - **Gabrielle Brown:** Previous versions of this have had much higher floors. Trade off here, if you make it \$10,000, you're creating an opportunity for smaller projects, neighborhood stuff.
 - **Crista Gardner:** It's important to consider if we are thinking small bucket and large bucket, \$10,000 might be the minimum for small funding allocations, which is in line for a smaller project, and then you have a higher limit for a larger project. If we had two categories, it would be \$10,000 to \$100,000 and then \$100,000 to \$250,000. So, really the floor of the larger projects would be \$150,000.
- **Gabrielle Brown:** I'll get back to the question of the pots, how much goes into the big one and how much goes into the small one, which we will establish once we decide things like "what's the bare minimum on small projects?", "what's the absolute maximum on large projects?", and we'll get into the nitty-gritty of where that threshold is between the two. And how much money goes into one pot vs the other.
 - **Crista Gardner:** The presentation that I put together, looking at the dollar amounts of these, and I used \$2 million as an example, kind of how many projects would be funded if you divided that small and that large differently.
- **Crista Gardner:** If you all don't really have strong feelings on this or you want to get through some of the other phases, don't feel pressured that you have to make this decision right now. Gabrielle and I can make some suggestions for how to handle the issues and you can tell us if you agree.
 - **Gabrielle Brown:** Also, let us know what information you need to make the decision or to feel better about your evaluation.
 - **Committee Member:** I fall in the category of not having extremely strong opinions, it just feels early in the process for me to make decisions on this. Maybe later down the road.
- **Committee Member:** I feel like it's a little hard to come up with a number right now. My way of thinking is I would support having some large and some small, don't know how small that would be. Smaller scattered projects create more extensive than intensive impacts, if that makes sense. I don't have a good number in my head for discussion right now, but that's where I am right now.
- **Gabrielle Brown:** Talking about the 2016 capital grants program, for context, the grant floor was \$16,600, which meant a project floor cost of \$50,000, given the 2-1 grant match requirements, there was a maximum grant request of half a million. That was for a fund of \$1.7 million. We're talking

about a similar pot of money; we don't know how much it will be right now. But for a similar pot of money, that's what we'd be looking at.

- **Committee Member:** I think a question is what kind of CBOs we want to involve in these projects. I was looking at the previous ones and they were all white-led volunteer groups. Looking at the previous funding, in terms of how much it costs to keep staff, doesn't line up with the funds received. I think if we want to attract certain organizations that are culturally specific, it's going to have to be a million or higher
 - **Gabrielle Brown:** Couple important notes on that, one it's going to be a community vote, it won't be in our purview to make that decision, the community will decide and then pass on the recommendation to Metro council. Also, the amount that goes to organizations is limited by the legislation. I think that's important, and I was going to get into it when we got to the thresholds, but speaking of last time, it's worth mentioning now that from the legislation, it says "no more than 10% of grant funds will be used for staff time directly related to the project, projects that address racial equity may exceed the 10% if they're approved by Metro council. Overhead and/or indirect costs are not reimbursable but can be used to meet matching requirements". All of this to say that the intent of the capital grant program is to fund capital grants, funding the organizations that do that work is part of that, but the point of the grant itself is not to fund things like the operating costs.
 - **Committee Member:** I think the restrictions on the funds have been mentioned to us several times before. Thinking about the participatory budget I'm working on right now, we are also having restrictions on what we can use certain funds for, as the organizations executing those projects, let alone project implementers. Not to say Metro needs to take on an additional role of finding other funding sources, but that might be what's needed. If we are trying to engage BIPOC-led, grassroots, and smaller organizations that we know need more support to execute the work. Otherwise, we are going to get the same types of organizations going after the funds.
 - **Crista Gardner:** Thanks for the segue to the project development process. That's exactly what we are trying to do with that project development process, bring in different funding to fund those budget summits where a lot of that project development can be done at the table with the CBOs, the jurisdictions, and the community together. That can be paid for from a less-restrictive source that Metro is still working on finding. This is a little different than other projects, in this is our test for using participatory budgeting. That is our workaround, this project development process.
- **Crista Gardner:** So, I'm hearing an overarching concern about funding for CBOs, especially smaller ones and ones that haven't typically been funded by this program before. I also here a desire for those groups to be offered a different type of support.
- **Gabrielle Brown:** I would reiterate, this is a pilot program, which is a really valuable lesson learned, that other funding sources could be used for other PB processes. Doesn't necessarily change the context of this particular program, and unfortunately with the grants themselves, we're limited. We can move on from there.

Allison checked with the committee members to see if they felt this was a good summation or if they wanted to wait to move on. Committee members were generally alright with the summary.

- **Gabrielle Brown:** So, the threshold for the funding pots. There didn't seem to be much debate around the 100,000 threshold between small and large projects, there was much more about the balance between the two. There was a split in the committee between leaning more toward small

projects vs. big projects. So, we'd like to get back into that conversation. Looking at determining what that funding can be used for, does that change anyone's opinion on what that balance is between them? You've also seen how that impacts the project balance and the number of projects that we can do. What do you all think about that?

- **Committee Member:** Don't know if it's too related to this, but the past budgets, it makes me wonder for larger projects, when I looked at some of them, especially restoration projects where there's not a ton of community feedback or interaction, maybe that should be thread in, maybe make more of a requirement for these.
 - **Crista Gardner:** Yes, so, a lot of the 2006-2016 capital grants projects, especially in the restoration category, funded a lot of jurisdictions led projects that had very little community input. Thinking about, is that the right fit, do we want to fund larger projects like that through this category, do we want to fund smaller projects, or just put in our requirements that larger projects need more community input. That is the difference, between the 2006 and the 2019 bond legislations, that they require racial equity and community engagement in each one of those projects. Did that capture what you were saying?
 - **Committee Member:** Yes, that was better, thanks.
- **Gabrielle Brown:** In talking about this balance, for me, would like your opinion, small vs large projects, if you lean toward more small projects you are talking about very diverse community-led small project interventions led by the community base. Leaning toward large projects, you get more larger interventions, larger organizations, and more intensive projects. It's not an easy decision, but that's what we're asking you all to do. Do you want to lean toward a portfolio with more small or more large projects, before we put in front of the community to vote?
 - **Committee Member:** Are you saying that large projects don't have a community impact?
 - **Gabrielle Brown:** No, large projects are more regional and less neighborhood based. Going to favor larger orgs that can pull off that type of work. It's just a question of scale. Do you want lots of small projects going through neighborhoods and communities, or just a few larger interventions?
- **Committee Member:** It's a difficult question for people to answer right away. I think it would be easier for me to answer if it was like a poll to vote on. Just judging from the silence.
- **Gabrielle Brown:** 2/3 small, half and half, and 2/3 large – if we ran a poll between those, would that work?

The group agreed to a poll. Allison addressed why the question is important, acknowledging that it is important to give staff enough lead time, and that direction is critical from the group.

Gabrielle implemented a poll between the options. The results are as follows:

- **2/3 large; 1/3 small** – 2 votes
- **Half and half** – 1 vote
- **2/3 small; 1/3 large** – 1 vote

Allison noted that this is not a consensus. Only four members were present, though Alisa would be joining soon. Allison asked Crista for clarity on what would happen with the information.

- **Crista Gardner:** I think we should take an official vote and get another committee member to participate in this decision. The idea is that we can then begin to write up the guidebook in a way that allows us to focus our criteria on those large projects and how we are going to do the

matchmaking for those large projects and put a little less budget into those project development pieces for those smaller projects.

- **Committee Member:** I voted for 2/3 small, my thinking is having more opportunities for diverse groups, there's more flexibility with that. I am still on the fence still. I like larger for more capacity. My question, in the Portland or the area, are there other smaller grants that fill that need. Are we better off doing larger or smaller?
 - **Crista Gardner:** Great question, there are a few organizations that provide some of those smaller grants depending on your geographic location. Yes, for the smaller grants, there are other opportunities for smaller groups to get funding however this is a pilot project of the participatory budgeting process, as well, so thinking about what would type of grants would work better for this participatory budgeting process and that community engagement piece of it.
- **Gabrielle Brown:** I also think that this is something that we don't need to make a final decision on right now, we can come back after we've had an opportunity to discuss the different components of the project development process. That way you can get a better idea of what this decision means in practice.

Group took a break for 5 minutes.

Project Development

Allison noted that the budget issues addressed in the previous meetings could kind of difficult to work through. Gabrielle suggested the group should work on project development and shared her screen with the corresponding Mural Board and provided some background. She shared that the goal for the day was to go through the components and ask what needs to be done so it adheres to your vision There would also be some focus on strategic and process-based elements.

Gabrielle began her overview with a review of the pieces of the project development process and elements to keep in mind throughout the process. She then moved into the first part of the committee's work, by examining the question of how the Committee will use the established criteria to vet projects and narrow the project pool for Summit development. Gabrielle reviewed the scoring process and how the work done so far would inform the process and assist in vetting.

Vetting

- **Committee Member:** Would we expect hundreds of proposals to go through at this stage?
 - **Crista Gardner:** We don't really know, my hope is it is not going to be too many, but it is a range since this is the first time we are doing this, and we don't know exactly what to expect.
 - **Gabrielle Brown:** We don't usually get a lot of bad project ideas, but since it's a pilot program, we might get some projects that just don't meet the minimum criteria. So, the vetting role will be important.
- **Committee Member:** It sounds like having some kind of a mechanism to vet this stuff, because of how many potential projects could come in, is really necessary, but it doesn't prevent discussion about it and like "where's the line, where do we draw the line".
 - **Crista Gardner:** The point at this level is to budget correctly. We need to know how many projects we are going to have to allocate resources correctly. It's a little flexible, but we are trying to get an idea.

- **Allison Brown:** Can we talk about “weighting”? What are the feelings on that and what should be weighted?
 - **Committee Member:** Is it correct, when Gabrielle was introducing the weighting, was it based on a personal preference or-?
 - **Gabrielle Brown:** The example was meaningless, it’s up to you all what that weighting looks like.
 - **Committee Member:** I feel like since we voted on what criteria we felt were more important, I feel like there should be more weight on the ones that received the most votes. I feel like that should mean something in the process.
 - **Gabrielle Brown:** We can actually return to that and choose the weight for each.
 - **Allison Brown:** Getting the sense that maybe “we can come back to this” but that there should be some kind of weighting.

Budget Delegate Summit/Schematic Design

Gabrielle moved the group on to discussion of the Budget Delegate Summit/Schematic Design, with the central question of “Does/can a Budget Delegate Summit meet the intent, goals, and values of this program?”

- **Allison Brown:** Blanca, do you have any thoughts on this since you are working on similar projects?
 - **Committee Member:** Right now, I don’t know, we are also doing a pilot, it’s the very first stage. I don’t think we’ve even gotten into what the budget delegate phase looks like. I guess it just depends on what communities we are trying to reach, does it make sense to host a one-time thing, are we trying to meet people where they are at? It’s tough.
 - **Gabrielle Brown:** Great things that we will discuss, I think right now we are just asking “can it work?”
- **Gabrielle Brown:** I think we’ve come away with an understanding that the project development process is really complex and difficult. I think bringing people together for multiple things and engaging communities over a longer period of time is key.
- **Allison Brown:** I think the question here is “Is this a good idea and could this work?”
 - **Committee Member:** Yes, I think it depends on how it’s done.
 - **Committee Member:** I’m all for this approach for bringing this community together.
 - **Committee Member:** It’s hard to attract the community to these kinds of events. It’s usually easier if we go to their events. I feel yes, but only if it’s done intentionally.
 - **Allison Brown:** So, I’m hearing yes, it could be a really good tool, but I am concerned about how, and there could be some barriers.
- **Committee Member:** Yes, I just wanted to share that we will be discussing the “how” next week. I appreciate everybody flagging all these things, it’s important to make things accessible.

Large Project Matchmaking

The group moved on to discuss Large Project Matchmaking and the central question of “Does/can a community survey and matchmaking process meet the intent, goals, and values of this program?”

- **Crista Gardner:** One of you added a question in the previous box about how has matching been done before between jurisdictions and community? It’s largely been left up to individuals to figure that out, and that’s hard for communities, because not everybody has that access to jurisdictional staff or elected officials, and so one of the things we wanted to address was a matchmaking component.

- **Gabrielle Brown:** To reiterate, generally what this will look like is a survey sent out to the communities that we are targeting or within the geographic area asking about what their priorities are. Then you all, the program design and review committee, take those responses and pull themes and ideas, take them to the jurisdictions and see what they have on the books. Then you would identify projects that fit or could be modified to fit and then take it back to the community. Is this the right direction?
 - **There was a similar attitude as the last topic. This seems like a good idea, but the key information lies in the “How”.**

Gabrielle noted that due to time constraints it would be best to move on to the next point of discussion.

Preliminary Community Vote

Gabrielle introduced the topic of a Preliminary Community Vote with a goal of answering the central question of “How many projects will be approved through this vote for further development (more development = more unfunded)?” Crista noted that the goal is to relieve some of the burden on communities for some of the projects that don’t really have a chance of moving forward.

Allison noted that this question and the following question will warrant more discussion, as the group is out of time.

Next Steps and Closing

Allison reviewed some of the accomplishments made in the meeting before handing things over to Gabrielle to address the meetings moving forward.

Gabrielle noted that the timeline is important to consider, and that Metro is aware of the tension between the goals and the schedule. She explained that there are limited contracts in place and the group is trying to reserve the meetings for the actual vetting processes that will come later. She noted that the goal was to get the decision-making all done by the end of June, but that has been difficult, so there is discussion about extending the deadline of the pre-June program design phase beyond that. Gabrielle explained that they would like the committee’s opinion and asked that they participate and provide feedback on the Jamboard that Allison provided to the group.

Allison brought the meeting to a close.

Appendix A: Zoom Meeting Chat

Crista Gardner (she/her): May, Group A: Alisa/Theresa/Jairaj

May, Group B: Blanca/Jeffrey/Kevin

June, Group A: Alisa/Blanca/Jairaj

June, Group B: Jeffrey/Theresa/Kevin

July, Group A: Alisa/Kevin/Jeffrey

July, Group B: Blanca/Jairaj/Theresa

Crista Gardner (she/her): Great questions! Yes, we'll talk in more detail about those summits on the right side of the mural board next meeting.

Brandon Goldner: Honestly it's just a weird word (that I had never heard of until a year ago...)

Allison Brown (she/her):

<https://jamboard.google.com/d/198YA7UvdoqncgNhD6CbpTUUIc3krXCZAE5V1XC34TBU/viewer?f=0>

Appendix B: Land acknowledgement – Oversight Committee

The greater Portland area is built upon the ancestral homelands, villages and traditional use areas of multiple Indigenous tribes and bands who have stewarded these lands we cherish since time immemorial.

The lands at the confluence of the Willamette and Columbia rivers have long served as a major crossroads for the economic, social and political interactions of tribal nations for thousands of years and a place of significance in the homelands and traditional territories of many tribal nations.

We owe a special acknowledgement to the many tribes and bands and their descendants who ceded these lands in treaties with the United States.

We recognize the strong and diverse tribal nations and Native communities in our region today and offer respect and gratitude for their stewardship of these lands past, present and future.

Metro seeks to establish meaningful relationships and explore opportunities to collaborate and consider tribal priorities and interests in our work, including our parks and nature bond work.

We are building our understanding of tribal interests in the greater Portland area as we implement our parks and nature work.

As we learn more, we hope to refine Metro's approach to land acknowledgements in the future;

We recognize land acknowledgements are important and can be sensitive. We are hoping to learn more to integrate this into our work appropriately and in a good way honoring tribal interests going forward.