



To: First 5 Alameda County Commission

**From: Janis Burger, Deputy Director
Malia Ramler, Community Grants Administrator**

Date: June 25, 2009

Subject: Community Grants Initiative Funding Priorities

REQUESTED ACTION

Approve following items concerning the Community Grants Initiative (CGI) funding cycle that begins in January 2010

- Funding priorities
- Funding terms (length of grant cycles)
- Modified review process for the Partnership grants

BACKGROUND

The Community Grants Initiative (CGI) promotes and advances the mission of Every Child Counts through: grant making to, capacity building with, and convening of community partners.

The next funding cycle of the CGI will begin in January 2010. Requests for proposal will be made available in July of 2009. Applicants may apply for grants in one of three categories:

- Community Support (maximum of 25K)
- Targeted (maximum of 75K)
- Partnership (maximum of 80K)

PROPOSED FUNDING PRIORITIES BY GRANT TYPE

A. COMMUNITY SUPPORT GRANTS

Community Support grants applicants may apply in any of the strategic plan outcome areas. Community Support is the least prescriptive grant category. Applicants are free to respond to community identified needs for children 0-5 and their families within the broad parameters of the desired outcomes set forth in the Every Child Counts Strategic plan.

B. TARGETED GRANTS

A F5AC cross-agency work group worked with the grants team to develop CGI funding priority recommendations to bring to the Commission. The task of the group was to create funding priority guidance for the targeted grant category. ECC Outcomes were evaluated using the following criteria.

Criteria

- The outcome reflects community priorities identified during strategic planning community focus groups.
- The outcome contributes to the reduction of known disparities in the community
- Activities funded to support this outcome through the CGI will not duplicate activities funded through other First 5 programs or allocations
- The outcome will focus the activities of grantees in order to increase the likelihood of impact
- There is an expectation in the strategic plan that the funds to support this outcome will come from the CGI
- The outcome is understandable to applicants

Testing the strategic plan outcomes against these criteria yielded four outcomes and related funding priorities that are proposed for the targeted grant category.

Outcome 1B Improved children's social and emotional well being

- Developmentally supportive services for children with developmental and/or social-emotional concerns
- Support for social-emotional well-being of children whose parents or caregivers are experiencing adverse circumstances i.e. mental illness, substance use, domestic violence, homelessness etc.

Outcome 1D Improved school readiness and transition to kindergarten

- Promotion of early literacy activities for families and children
- Socialization opportunities for children not enrolled in formal early learning programs

Outcome 2A Enhanced parenting and support

- Improved parent/child relationships
- Increased formal and informal social support for parents of children 0-5
- Enhanced parent understanding of child development and parenting skills

Outcome 2B Increased ability of families to meet basic needs

- Increased family access to basic needs
- Improved financial literacy for parents of children 0-5

C. PARTNERSHIP GRANTS

Outcome 1D Improved school readiness and transition to kindergarten

- School readiness activities offered at public institutions i.e. parks and recreation sites and neighborhood libraries

Imagine an Alameda County where every family with a young child can walk to a play group at the park or enjoy toddler story-time at the local library. In strategic planning focus groups, respondents expressed a clear and consistent wish for neighborhood based services. The proposed partnership model responds to this by building relationships with existing public neighborhood institutions. We hope to incubate developmentally specific program offerings that will find a permanent and sustainable home within departments of parks and recreation and libraries. In some cases we may be supporting the alignment of existing programs with best practices in family support and early learning. In other cases, we may be stimulating new programming. Grants staff has completed a series of key informant interviews to assess the feasibility of this concept with 14 potential applicants. Key findings include:

- Potential institutional partners have an interest in and commitment to expanding and enhancing 0-5 services; many stated that they would apply to participate.
- There are significant opportunities to expand access to existing neighborhood resources by enabling 0-5 programming that is subsidized and available in languages other than English.
- Our traditional method of working with community based partners would need to change to accommodate the nature of these institutions. They are not familiar with ECC and our work, and we are not familiar with their unique strengths and constraints. Consequently this partnership will require sufficient time to build relationships, learn what makes sense, and design a partnership model accordingly.

FUNDING TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

GRANT TYPE	TERM RECOMMENDATION
<i>Community Support</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 15% of the CGI budget ▪ Approximately 14 grants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One 18 month term January 1, 2010 – June 30 2011 ▪ One 24 month term July 1, 2011 – June 30, 2013
<i>Targeted</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 65% of the CGI budget ▪ Approximately 21 grants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One 18 month term January 1, 2010 – June 30 2011 ▪ One 24 month term July 1, 2011 – June 30, 2013
<i>Partnership</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 20% of the CGI budget ▪ Approximately 6 grants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It is possible that the partnership term would not start in January 2010 in order to allow time for program planning. ▪ The partnership would work with a single cohort of grantees over the two grant terms covered by the current strategic plan.

Rationale for longer terms for Partnership grants

- The institutional partners will be new to us, and we to them. If, as anticipated, we begin with a 6 month planning period, an 18 month cycle will leave scant time to scale up new programming. Consequently we suggest that eligibility for the 2011-2013 partnership grants will be restricted to incumbents who have demonstrated satisfactory performance in the initial grant cycle. Our experience with partnership grants is that it takes time for the participating agencies and First 5 to establish shared expectations and a productive capacity building relationship.

REVIEW PROCESS RECOMMENDATIONS

The previous CGI review process has included the following:

- Staff screening for eligibility and completeness
- Scoring against a rubric by a facilitated community review panel
- Recommendations to Commission for approval

For the grant term beginning January 2010, we recommend that the above process be used for the Community Support and Targeted grant categories.

For the Partnership Grant category, we recommend that applications be scored by staff, rather than a community review panel and that the selection process for Partnership be expanded to include an applicant interview.

The Partnership grantee experience is significantly different than the other grant categories. Partnership grantees have requirements in addition to providing funded services. Partners must make significant commitments to a learning community that includes attendance at cohort meetings and participation in on-site assessment and consultation. In order to be successful, applicants must understand the nature of the partnership commitment and have an organizational structure that allows them to make good use of intensive professional development. It is difficult for community reviewers who have no experience of the Partnership model to assess applicants' readiness and likelihood of success. For this reason the CGI staff prefers that funding recommendations for the Partnership be held internally by staff in a process that includes applicant interviews.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The fiscal impact of this recommendation is \$3,600,000 for fiscal years 2009 -2010 and 2010 – 2011. Funding for FY 09-11 Community Grants was approved as part of the overall budget at the May 28th Commission meeting.

Submitted by:

Reviewed by:

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Janis Burger,
Deputy Director









