

**MEETING MINUTES**  
Advisory Workgroup on a Strategic Plan for County  
Grants  
July 7, 2025 – 3:00 p.m.  
6<sup>th</sup> Floor Council Conference Room  
Council Office Building

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*Workgroup Members Present:*

- Dr. Sultan Chowdhury, Chairman, Muslim Community Foundation
- Jason Fastau, Program Manager, Department of Recreation (DoR) – Designee for Adriane Clutter, Acting Director, Department of Recreation (DoR)
- Ron Halber, CEO, Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington
- Brigid Howe, Executive Director, Nonprofit Montgomery
- Kim Jones, Executive Director, Montgomery County Black Collective
- Douraking Rosarion, Special Assistant to the Director, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) -- Designee for Dr. James Bridgers, Director, DHHS
- Hillery Tumba, Chief Operating Officer, Primary Care Coalition of Montgomery County
- Sara Watkins, Director of Institutional Advancement, Catholic Charities

*Workgroup Members Absent:*

- Rafael Murphy, Directory, Office of Grants Management (OGM), County Executive staff

County Staff Present:

Tara Clemons Johnson, County Council  
Mark Hodge, DHHS  
Allison Hoy, OGM  
Gregory Weissman, OGM

The Joint meeting was called to order by Workgroup Co-Lead Clemons Johnson at 3:00 p.m.

## **I. Introductions, Remarks, and Roles**

Council President and Government Operations & Fiscal Policy Committee Chair Kate Stewart welcomed the members and gave remarks highlighting the evolution of County Government (MCG) policies surrounding grants in recent years and requesting the Workgroup assist the Council in level setting and becoming more strategic about the use of County grants moving forward. She specifically asked the Workgroup to focus on the Community Grants Non-Departmental Account (NDA), legacy grants from the Community Grants program that have been given special extensions in the current and previous fiscal years, and Cost Sharing Capital Grants.

Ms. Clemons Johnson introduced herself and then asked members of the Advisory Workgroup on a Strategic Plan for County Grants to introduce themselves.

Ms. Clemons Johnson provided an overview presentation for the Workgroup and reiterated its goals as outlined by Council President Stewart:

- 1.) Develop a proposed strategic plan for the Community Grants program that MCG can implement in time for the next round of grant solicitations that will occur in Fiscal Year 2027 (FY27).
- 2.) Make recommendations for resolving and transitioning the Community Grants Legacy awards. The Workgroup should consider all possible options— integrating these legacy grants into County Department grant programs, reassessing the existing awards, developing a new grant program, or discontinuing the legacy grants.
- 3.) Develop proposed criteria and process for the annual Cost Sharing MCG: Capital Improvements Program (CIP) that should detail engagement with organizations who have applied for Legislative Bonds and a timeline for awarding County grant funds that corresponds to award notifications from the state.
- 4.) Establish a standardized and centralized approach for advertising all County grants, regardless of the administering County department.

In accordance with the resolution establishing it, the Workgroup must submit its interim report to the Council by August 31, 2025, and a final report by November 1, 2025.

Ms. Clemons Johnson clarified that County and State procurement regulations [e.g. Maryland State Department of Assessment and Taxation (SDAT) Good Standing status for grant applicants], the Department of Finance and its payment processes and vendor registration system, the County Attorney, and County Department oversight of grant agreements (beyond that of OGM) would be considered outside the focus of the Workgroup.

## **II. Overview and Background**

Ms. Hoy provided a background and overview presentation on the current County Grants program. She detailed the creation of OGM – resulting from a 2018 Office of Legislative Oversight

report and the enactment of Bill 36-19. The presentation also covered the difference between a County grant and a procurement contract, and how the determination about whether a special or supplemental appropriation will be a grant or procurement contract is made once the appropriation has been recommended by the Executive and approved by the Council.

Ms. Hoy outlined the funding distribution of County allocations for non-profits in the FY25 approved budget. The \$162.8 million in continuing nonprofit funding was comprised of:

- \$15.6 million in targeted grant programs managed by County departments
- \$133.4 million in other County contracts with nonprofits managed by County departments
- \$13.8 million in Community Grants managed by OGM, the focus of the Workgroup.

Ms. Hoy also covered what OGM has found in the distinction between “Open” (those with broad scopes or goals, and open to all applications) versus “Targeted” (Department-led grants targeted to address specific community needs) grants. OGM has assessed that targeted grants tend to be better aligned with the given nonprofit applicant base, are more likely to have County project managers and grant reviewers with existing expertise in the subject matter in question, and have faster and easier application processes. Open grants tend to have a higher volume of applicants, therefore the ratio of total applicants to awarded applicants is more dramatic – resulting in wasted effort from many nonprofit applicants and gaps in application quality that are likely to favor larger, more established organizations over newer, smaller ones.

A Workgroup member requested additional information on the budgeting process for grants and outcome data for appropriated grant funding be made available at future meetings. Members also requested more specific background on the Community legacy grants that have been extended, as well as information on how County subgrantees (e.g. the Montgomery Coalition for Adult English Literacy) allocate funding.

### **III. Discussion**

Ms. Clemons Johnson led an informal discussion on strengths, gaps, and opportunities in County grants. Members raised the following points:

- OGM has been successful in addressing the recommendations contained in the OLO report that spurred the office’s creation, but the Workgroup should take the opportunity to evaluate how OGM can better meet community needs moving forward.
- Certain grants have exceeded their projected timelines, creating confusion and in some cases resulting in grant funding not being bid out in the same fiscal year.
- MCG initiated a process for “community reviewers” to help evaluate applications based upon their expertise on the ground, but this initiative was subsequently revoked without a full public explanation.
- The Workgroup should focus on making grant application processes more accessible and standardized.

- The need to change existing public narratives and stigma regarding the competitiveness of County grant applications, as well as confusion surrounding the differences between grants and procurements.
- Interest in strategically targeting some grants toward new or smaller nonprofits while also recognizing the significant work preformed by large or established nonprofits that have extensive existing grant relationships with MCG.
- Maintaining a diversity of grant options between large programmatic needs and smaller niche projects.
- Many regional nonprofits could benefit from having a streamlined or simplified translation of what MCG grants are available and when. The creation of an MCG ombudsman to serve the nonprofit sector might prove valuable.
- How MCG can develop grant categories that align with emerging community needs as well as evolutions within the regional nonprofit sector.
- Whether grants should be allocated based upon nonprofit locations in different regions of the County, or if that would dilute the impact of MCG grant funding.

#### **IV. Next Steps and Questions**

Staff noted several administrative matters for members:

- Open Meetings Law – Meetings of the Workgroup are subject to the Maryland Open Meetings Act and are open to the public. There is a link to the Workgroup on the Council webpage with meeting schedules, agendas, and minutes.
- Minutes - Minutes will be distributed prior to the next regularly scheduled meeting and subsequently posted online.
- Future meeting schedule - Staff recommended that the Workgroup hold an additional meeting in July, as well as one in August, prior to the interim report due date of August 31, 2025. Two additional meetings in September and one in October were also recommended prior to the final report due date of November 1, 2025. All future meetings will have a virtual/hybrid option for members, and staff will poll members to determine the dates and times of future meetings.

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*The meeting adjourned at 4:56 p.m.*