MEETING MINUTES
Advisory Workgroup on a Strategic Plan for County
Grants
July 30, 2025 – 2:30 p.m.
Virtual Meeting

Workgroup Members Present:
-Jason Fastau, Program Manager, Department of Recreation (DoR) – Designee for Adriane Clutter,
Acting Director, Departement 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
-Rafael Murphy, Directory, Office of Grants Management (OGM), County Executive staff
-Hillery Tsumba, Chief Operating Officer, Primary Care Coalition of Montgomery County

Workgroup Members Absent:
-Dr. James Bridgers, Director, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
-Dr. Sultan Chowdhury, Chairman, Muslim Community Foundation
-Sara Watkins, Director of Institutional Advancement, Catholic Charities

County Staff Present:
Tara Clemons Johnson, County Council
Mark Hodge, DHHS
Allison Hoy, OGM
Cecily Thorne, County Council, Office of Council President Kate Stewart
Gregory Weissman, OGM

The Joint meeting was called to order by Workgroup Co-Lead Clemons Johnson at 2:34 p.m.

I.   Presentation – Cost-Sharing Capital Grants (CSCG)

Workgroup Co-Lead Rafael Murphy provided an interactive presentation covering Cost-Sharing Capital Grants.

Mr. Murphy noted that the County's competition for Cost-Sharing Capital Grants are limited to capital projects with a focus on partners with cost sharing resources from the federal or state government (chiefly state), as well as public-private partnerships. State Bond Bills always exceed available County funding, thereby requiring a competitive awarded process for County resources. These funds are allocated in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget, and not in the Community Grants Non-Departmental Account (NDA). Traditionally, these funds are broken into Arts and Non-Arts funding categories. Montgomery County Arts and Humanities Council (MCAHC) managed the competition for the Arts funding and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) managed Non-Arts, but OMB began managing both categories beginning in Fiscal Year (FY) 2020.

These capital grants were issued as reimbursable procurement contracts administered by the Department of General Services (DGS).

The County has been awarding prioritized State Bond Bill matches, along with some non-Bond Bill awards. Starting approximately in FY20, the State began issuing other capital awards outside of Bond Bills, also counting as State matches. Similar to the traditional Community Grants process, the County Executive (CE) recommended awards for the program with the County Council adding or modifying awards during the budget process.

During the FY24 competition, the grant program had broad, open-ended parameters with proposals from numerous sectors. State capital awards to County nonprofits significantly exceeded available funding, and it became difficult for nonprofits to get a sense of how competitive their projects would be for County funds and most applications did not have a match from the State. OGM received almost 80 proposals, which significantly delayed the review process. For equity purposes, awards were issued as true grant agreements with approved applications receiving 30% of project funds distributed up front, and the grant recipient receiving reimbursement for the remaining expenses.

The CE recommended, and Council approved, a focus on solely State-matched award applications in the FY25 application process, resulting in only 13 total applications and a much faster awarding process.

Currently, both Arts and Non-Arts CSCG categories are limited to projects with an appropriated State Bond Bill or other form of capital funding. This focus matches a political/practical priority of leveraging State funding to support County nonprofit capital projects.

Ms. Clemons Johnson noted that [Council's budget staff packet of May 6, 2025](), provides additional information and context of CSCG and current FY award recipients.

Montgomery County Government (MCG) Departments have also used OGM to compete and award capital grants outside of the CSCG process when a specific capital need has been identified. Examples include FY24 Enhanced Mobility funding from the Department of Transportation and FY25 Food Recovery Network Infrastructure from the Office of Food Systems Resilience.

Mr. Murphy then opened the floor for a discussion of whether the current CSCG program goal of matching State awards is the right focus or should it be broadened to projects without a State match.

Workgroup members generally concurred that aligning County funding with State-recognized projects, with narrow parameters for application consideration, are the correct focus for CSCG. It was emphasized that awarded projects should also be "shovel ready," rather than still in a strictly conceptual phase of development. There was some difference of opinion amongst participants on whether awarded projects should exclusively have social service provisions or not. A common application for all capital grant funding was also suggested, as well as continued emphasis by OGM on their pre-screening process for applicants, and feedback sessions for applicants who are rejected.

OGM clarified that in FY25, the 11 awarded CSCG recipients were 3 Arts grants and 8 Non-Arts grants, though that doesn't include multi-year awards carried over from FY24.

In response to a question, OGM confirmed that CSCG would need to be re-evaluated if the State ever had to withdraw funding for multi-year awards, given the current fiscal climate.

II.   Presentation – Grant Program Standardization

Workgroup Co-Lead Rafael Murphy provided an interactive presentation covering Grant Program Standardization and identifying areas for Workgroup recommendations therein. Mr. Murphy presented the entirety of the County grant process in stages.

Stage 1 is the Appropriation Stage, where the priorities and structure for grant programs are established by appropriations passed by the Council. The Workgroup should examine how grant programs can be standardized in appropriations to set clear goals, priorities, and parameters for a grant program. Initial feedback from participants was to clarify the goals and parameters of all grants during the appropriations process (the Council does incorporate public hearing testimony and feedback when drafting the language of resolutions appropriating grants) while also ensuring grant appropriation is broad enough to avoid eliminating grant applications with innovative and creative solutions.

Stage 2 is the Design Stage, where OGM works with MCG departments to design the specifics of a grant program to best implement the appropriation. OGM also works to integrate Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) considerations, grants management best practices, and legal requirements. The Workgroup should examine what standardized practices OGM should use during the design of grant program Notice of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs) crafted during this stage. Participants noted that as much standardization as possible would be valuable. Complexity should also be minimized.

OGM's information sessions are valuable for prospective applicants but usually more so as a resource to refer to, rather than an event to attend in real-time.

Stage 3 is the Preparation Stage, where, with a NOFO finalized, OGM prepares to launch a full competition by building a module in [Euna Grants](#), develops marketing materials, and drafts slide decks for information sessions. The Workgroup should examine what standard practices OGM should use when preparing a competition for launch. Participants encouraged OGM to publicize the number of anticipated awards for each grant program, and host office hours for interested parties to learn more.

Stage 4 is the Competition Stage, where OGM and departments focus on supporting applicants as they develop proposals for the competition by holding and recording an information session/bidders conference, providing office hours for technical support, and answering questions submitted by applicants. The Workgroup should examine what standard applicant support OGM and departments should add, focus on, and/or deprioritize during the competition.

Stage 5 is the Review Stage, where, when the competition closes, OGM reviews applications for eligibility and departments focus on scoring and evaluation. OGM first conducts an Administrative Review to assess legal eligibility requirements. Departments also sometimes have an interim programmatic eligibility stage. Departments recruit a pool of panelists to evaluate and score applications and OGM vets, trains, and assigns applications to panelists in Euna Grants. The Workgroup should examine how OGM and Departments should standardize application reviews for eligibility, how recruitment and/or training of reviewers could be standardized, and what steps (i.e. interviews) could or should be included in a standardized review process.

Stage 6 is the Awarding Stage, where, with all applications scored and recorded, OGM and departments focus on reviewing the data to determine award recommendations for the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). OGM downloads and conducts a basic analysis of the scoring data and possibly statistically rescaling. Departments develop award recommendations based on the criteria established in the NOFO, scoring data, and other factors. OGM then vets their methodology and justification for compliance with NOFO and other factors and CAO reviews and approves (or pushes back) award recommendations which become the final awards. The Workgroup should examine standardizing the awarding process, specifically for the target grant programs.

Stage 7 is the Notification Stage, where, after the CAO returns an approved award list, OGM and departments focus on notifying all applicants of the results and pivoting to developing grant agreements with award winners. OGM also posts the awards publicly on their [Grant Program Results website](#). The Workgroup should examine how could or should the notification process be changed to be more standardized.

Stage 8 is the Clean Up Stage, where OGM updates Euna -- converting winning applications into awards within the platform. OGM and departments shepherd grant agreements through the final review/approval and Direct Purchase Order creation processes. OGM also updates internal databases and data sets with key data points for tracking purposes. Additionally, OGM and departments host a Kickoff meeting for award winners outlining the final results, compliance requirements of grants, and how to use the Euna Award functions (or separate platform if that is used). The Workgroup should

examine standardizing the transition from applicant to award, specifically for the targeted grant programs.

Stage 9 is the Implementation Stage, where grant award winners begin implementing funded projects within the agreement scope. Reports are submitted, reviewed, and payments given with assigned department providing oversight. For context, OGM currently administers/oversees implementation of 218 grant agreements across Community Grants (21), Community Projects Fund (42), Nonprofit Technical Assistance and Management Support Grant Programs (144), and Underserved Communities Projects (11). The Workgroup should examine standardizing administration and oversight of grant awards during implementation, specifically for the target grant programs.

III.   Presentation – Grant Competition Data

Mr. Murphy gave a brief presentation noting that all past grant program competition results are posted publicly on the [OGM Grants Program Results webpage](#), as well as linked to the Euna solicitation page (if applicable).

IV.   Correction and Adjournment

Mr. Murphy corrected a misleading chart reviewed by the Workgroup during its first meeting on July 7, 2025. While the delineation of $162.8 million in FY25 County grant program funding between Department grants, CSCG and Community NDA programs, and other nonprofit contracts held by the County were identified correctly, the cumulative figure does not represent the totality of nonprofit grant funding and contracts across the County government.

Ms. Clemons Johnson thanked members for their participation and informed them that she would poll them to determine the date and time of the Workgroup's next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 4:36 p.m.