

MEETING MINUTES
Advisory Workgroup on a Strategic Plan for County
Grants
October 8, 2025 – 2:30 p.m.
Virtual Meeting

Workgroup Members Present:

- Jason Fastau, Program Manager, Department of Recreation (DoR) – Designee for Adriane Clutter, Acting Director, Department of Recreation (DoR)
- Rafael Murphy, Director, Office of Grants Management (OGM), County Executive staff
- Hillery Tumba, 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
- Ron Halber, CEO, Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington
- Brigid Howe, Executive Director, Nonprofit Montgomery
- Kim Jones, Executive Director, Montgomery County Black Collective
- Sara Watkins, Director of Institutional Advancement, Catholic Charities

County Staff Present:

Tara Clemons Johnson, County Council
Mark Hodge, DHHS
Ruth Semple, OGM
Gregory Weissman, OGM

The Joint meeting was called to order by Workgroup Co-Lead Clemons Johnson at 2:44 p.m.

I. Presentation – Legacy Community Grants

Workgroup Co-Leads Clemons Johnson and Murphy provided an interactive presentation covering Legacy Community Grants.

Ms. Clemons Johnson began by noting that resolving the Legacy Community Grants issue is a top priority for the County Council. A goal of the Workgroup is to make recommendations for resolving and transitioning the Community Grants Legacy awards. The workgroup must evaluate all potential options, including: integrating grants into departmental base budgets, reassessing grant awards based on a recommended criteria, developing a new grant program, or discontinuing the legacy grant programs with a structured plan to mitigate the impact on nonprofit organizations.

Prior to the creation of the OGM in 2019, the County Council and County Executive (CE) provided funding to some nonprofit organizations in the County each year through “Community Grants” to support organization with services provided to Montgomery County residents. Both the Executive and the Council designated organizations in the budget – at their discretion – to receive grant funds and the organizations were able to apply for a community grant from the Council, Executive, or from both. However, following the publication of [Office of Legislative Oversight \(OLO\) Report #2018-9](#) that raised serious concerns with the traditional process, the County begin implementing a series of grants reforms.

Beginning with Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21), the CE and Council grant programs were merged into a single Community Grants Non-Departmental Account (NDA). During the pandemic, the County froze community grants application process to provide continuity of funding to community grants recipients. Between FY21-23, many grants (which were non-competitive contracts) were shifted from the Community Grants NDA to departments base budgets that have been administering the same grant/contract—meaning that the funding base was moved but the award/contract remained unchanged.

FY23 was the first year OGM began administering the Community Grant program after the creation of the office. During FY23, grant awardees continued to receive funding, without reapplying, at the FY22 level plus an inflationary adjustment given to all nonprofits. Funding was discontinued for any organization or grant program that was no longer active or not in compliance with contractual obligations.

FY24 was the first year of the new Community Grants application and award process. Awards were announced April/May 2024. In May 2023, during FY24 budget discussions, the CE recommend that all FY23 Community grant applicants receive an extension of funds (bridge grant awards) through October 30, 2023. This was to avoid a service gap between old and new funding for continuing grant programs and allow time to wind down or close out programs that weren’t provided grant awards.

The Council ultimately approved a further extension through December 31, 2023, to allow

additional time for application review and award determination given the new process. In November 2023, due to the volume of applications and Countywide constraints, OGM faced challenges with reviewing and scoring applications. After the Council's Government Operations & Fiscal Policy (GO) Committee worksession discussion that November, the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) approved an extension of the bridge grants awards through April 30, 2024.

In FY25, year one of the new multi-year Community Grants program began (with the length of awards comprising a three-year period of FY25, FY26 & FY27). While competed in FY24, new awards started with FY25 due to the delayed results. After the FY25 operating budget was approved by the County Council, the County Executive approved an additional year of funding for FY23 Community Grants recipients who applied for FY24 community grant funding but did not receive an award. The FY25 legacy awards were thereby provided to 102 organizations for a total of \$4.7 million.

For the FY26 budget, the CE recommended funding for the legacy grants of \$4.7 million. Nonperforming or nonresponsive awardees would not receive a grant agreement. Renewal applications were collected through [the Euna FY26 Legacy Renewal awards module](#). The site also contained guidance, a support/demonstration video, and other resources for awardees. The GO Committee, reviewing the FY26 recommended budget, approved the funding but reiterated their concern and frustration with the Legacy grant process, specifically noting the absence of a structured and competitive application process for community organizations seeking funding.

To put the scale of the legacy awards in perspective, at \$4,775,260 they comprise 36% of the Community Grants NDA budget in FY26.

In summary, the outstanding issues with the legacy awards are as follows:

- Limited performance or outcomes-based measures. OGM and administering departments are doing a more robust review of the FY26 legacy grantees and their performance however it is challenging to develop new performance/outcomes measures for existing grants that have received long term funding without or limited parameters.
- These grants have been awarded automatically for over 5 years.
- Funding amounts/levels have remained the same over those 5 years, except for inflationary adjustments, with no further assessment from Montgomery County Government (MCG) – save for eliminating awardee recipients who no longer responded or performed.
- Lack of a competitive process/continued overlap with other County grant programs where nonprofits must compete for funds.
- Lack of Subject Matter Expertise in MCG on many Legacy Awards (i.e. academic preparation, job preparedness, college prep) that make it difficult to evaluate impact/ensure tax dollar value.
- The awards do not necessarily align with County's equity goals since the awards pre-date County's focus on Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) and requirements to integrate RESJ considerations into all County grant management practices.

Ms. Clemons Johnson and Mr. Murphy concluded the presentation by outlining the potential options for Legacy Grants that the Workgroup may choose to recommend to the Council:

- Discontinue the Legacy Grants as of FY27. The County would need to provide prior

notification to legacy awardees that the grants will not be funded. Current awards last through June 30, 2026.

- Integrate legacy grants into County departmental base budgets, and provide recommended criteria for grants meriting this shift (in terms of awardee performance, project outcomes, etc.)
- Reassess all legacy grant awards, based on a recommended criterion, for continued allocation of funds.
- Develop a new program for which legacy awardees may apply.

Other ideas and recommendations from the Workgroup outside of these parameters would also be welcomed by the Council.

II. Discussion – Future of Legacy Grants

Following the presentation, Ms. Clemons Johnson and Mr. Murphy encouraged Workgroup members to share their feedback and perspective on Legacy Grants.

Regarding the idea of integrating these grants into County department base budgets, participants noted that the grants would then become non-competitive contracts at a time when the Council has publicly expressed a desire to reduce the numbers of such contracts. It would also place an additional burden on departmental staff who are already inundated with managing non-competitive contracts. A participant asked if any funding would become duplicative, considering other contractual work already supported by County Departments. Mr. Murphy responded that MCG conducted a 2023 survey across all departments to identify areas of grant and contract funding duplication that it likely would have already identified areas of duplication concerning Legacy Grants and other spending.

If all Legacy Grants were competitively reassessed for continued funding, a participant questioned how MCG would evaluate performance-based outcomes of the awardees to date in a manner that would ensure a fair competition. Mr. Murphy responded that OGM has adopted some criteria to this end, and that most awardees have continued to communicate their progress with OGM throughout the last five years.

Participants requested to review MCG's stated intent for choosing to maintain these grants as legacies, and how that could shape any future criteria for evaluating these grants. Ms. Clemons Johnson noted that the Council's original intent was to sunset the Legacy Grants in their current form at the end of FY24 until the CE recommended otherwise.

Mr. Murphy noted that if OGM, acting on behalf of the CE, published a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) to replace the Legacy Grants, it would still be the prerogative of the Council to step in and override the NOFO with their own guidance and goal posts for the future of the program.

Participants considered that the \$4.7 million currently allocated for Legacy Grants could be subdivided into different pools or categories to ensure a diverse array of needs were being addressed with it. Mr. Murphy urged the Workgroup to consider that new priorities and needs for County funding may be identified to address the ongoing loss of other Federal and State funds. He also noted that the level of effort for OGM to manage any given grant is roughly equal, regardless of whether the grant in question is worth millions of dollars or a small-dollar grant. A recent trend finds that some local nonprofit organizations are also beginning to decline reduced/small-dollar award amounts, as managing those grants becomes more trouble than its worth from a manpower standpoint. Given that many small nonprofits no longer have the staff bandwidth to apply for and manage small-dollar

grants, a participant recommended the County explore sub-granting.

A participant encouraged staggering the application period for Legacy Grant funding (i.e., an organization awarded in a FY27 application cycle could not reapply in FY28 but would become eligible again in FY29). This would lead to a higher degree of subjectivity in the County's application vetting process but would also help ensure the County recognizes new and innovative proposals beyond existing programs.

Participants raised the idea of maintaining the Legacy Grants for another year (through FY27), to ensure continuity of impacted programs), before implementing a competitive model for the funding in FY28.

Mr. Murphy noted that the Council's [Supplemental Appropriation #23-9](#), appropriating grant funding for abortion, reproductive healthcare, and related services, offers an ideal example of defining the goals and parameters of a grant program in a manner that OGM can effectively implement. The reach of the grant program was broad but very clearly defined. Typically, departmental grants are very specific and not broad.

A participant concluded the discussion by recommending that the Legacy Grants be sunset at the end of FY26 in favor of a competitive process based upon criteria and departmental feedback. The Workgroup collectively agreed that the Legacy Grants should be sunset but declined to coalesce behind a single recommendation to the Council at this meeting due to the breadth of the discussion and the need to incorporate the feedback of Workgroup members unable to attend.

III. Next steps

Ms. Clemons Johnson noted that the Workgroup's interim report for the Council will be circulated to Workgroup members for review and comment in the coming days. The Workgroup's final recommendations are due to be delivered to the Council on November 1, 2025, however there is some degree of flexibility with that date. The next meeting of the Workgroup will be at the end of October or beginning of November. Members will be polled to establish a time.

The meeting adjourned at 4:24 p.m.
