



HR&A

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# Engage, Empower, Implement (EEI) Program

## **Community-Based Organization Roundtable Feedback**

April 2023



The background of the slide is a dark, semi-transparent map of Boston. A hand is visible on the left side, pointing towards the center of the map. The map shows various neighborhoods including Beacon Hill, West End, Charlestown, Downtown, North End, and East Boston. There are several colored dots (red, yellow, blue) scattered across the map, likely representing specific locations of interest. The text "CBO BREAKOUT GROUP DISCUSSION" and "KEY FINDINGS" is overlaid in large, white, bold, sans-serif font in the center of the slide.

# CBO BREAKOUT GROUP DISCUSSION KEY FINDINGS

## Applying for a Grant

Grant applications are often **too long, complex**, and have **strict organizational or budget requirements** that preclude smaller CBOs from participating.

- Grant funding opportunities may not align with a CBOs or community's mission and values.
- Not hearing about a grant opportunity early enough or having enough turn around time to complete an application is limiting.
- Smaller staffed or volunteer-based CBOs may not have the capacity or bandwidth to go through a long and complex application process with technical assistance and support.
- Funding requirements are too strict and required funding match or budget is often too high.
- Pre-made application forms or templates would help to expedite the application process and ensure the correct information is given the first time around.

## Sample Participant Responses

What has kept us applying in the past: 1. misalignment of funder and agency values and approach to the work. 2. Award amount isn't enough to fully fund the proposal

Admin costs are always a challenge for us, considering we're a small org

What has kept me from applying for grants in the past was having the time to apply and also the rate of approval of grants when applying.

Q2: Not having enough bandwidth to apply- small orgs often cannot afford grant writers to come in and meet grant deadlines

The details of the grants are often difficult to breakdown. Staffing limitations are a factor.

## Receiving the Funds

Grant management and reporting is **labor intensive** and there are often delays that result in CBOs front loading costs and **getting paid late for work**.

- Reimbursement grants that require CBOs have enough cashflow to cover initial costs are limiting and where possible upfront funding or advances are helpful.
- Grant management and reporting is labor intensive, especially when there are changes in invoicing requirements throughout the process resulting in CBOs having to resubmit billing and reports.
- There should be a dedicated point of contact at the funder's finance department to address questions and provide technical assistance needed.
- Funders are often slow to execute contracts and process invoicing which lead to late payments to CBOs for work executed.
- Funders needs to be clear about insurance requirements and connect CBOs to no or low-cost insurance opportunities.

## Sample Participant Responses

It is helpful to have a specific point person at the govt agency assigned to our grant as the first point of contact

Having the funding upfront would be fantastic! Where we then provide invoices for all deliverables.

Overall, grants don't always include an easy way to claim grant management costs. The writing and reporting is very labor intensive.

We have experienced a change in invoicing requirements mid-grant, resulting in re-working billing and reports

There should be insurance clarifications upfront or a vehicle to obtain low cost or no cost insurance if applicable.



## Creating a Meaningful Impact

There are opportunities for the EEI Program to **increase collaboration between CBOs and government agencies** to ensure community voices are heard throughout a project planning process.

- CBOs may not have existing connections to government agencies or other types of partners. Helping CBOs expand their network of potential partners based on their mission and project ideas would be helpful.
- Effective CBO and government partnerships occur when government agencies acknowledge and respect CBOs' expertise on local issues.
- Government grant funded projects can be an opportunity for government agencies to help with capacity building and training for CBOs.
- Successful projects that create a meaningful impact on communities are grounded in robust and inclusive community engagement, which must be budgeted for.

## Sample Participant Responses

For CBOs who may have an idea but not partners, would it be possible to host "pitch parties" to share ideas and possible prospective partners?

Q1: good communication, clarity on scope of work (who does what), activities are identified by strength of each partner

Successful partnerships: minimize barriers, cultivate a relationship between community and gov't, community residents are engaged in the process

Getting the word out about new programs can sometimes be challenging. EEI program support in this area would be useful.

An effective partnership relies on the CBO to be the expert on the area. Many ideas come out that are not effective in all neighborhoods.



## Engage, Empower, Implement | CBO Focus Groups #1- #6 Summaries

### Focus Group 1: Existing SACOG Partners

- Applying for Grants
  - CBOs think the contracting process is too complicated, time-consuming, and tendentious. Most CBOs do not have the staff time or in-house capacity to apply for and manage SACOG member grant funding. In general, current SACOG partners want easier grant applications and funding processes.
  - CBOs want to be informed when grants are made available. SACOG should take a multimediuum communications approach, including email, community meetings, and word of mouth.
- Receiving Funds
  - CBOs want SACOG to improve on clearly defining and communicating funding reporting requirements, invoicing, and reimbursement processes. This includes invoicing deadlines, even if they are flexible, invoicing sample documents, budget, reimbursements start dates, and a firm reimbursement workflow.
  - CBOs want funding upfront to account for potential cash flow issues and the delay of reimbursements/invoicing.
- Creating Partnerships
  - CBOs want to be more involved with SACOG's staff and mission. Now that in-person events are happening, there is a willingness to develop relationships over time and meet in person through networking, meet and greets, and other event and outreach opportunities.
  - CBOs would be more likely to build a relationship with SACOG if they promoted its members and previous funding award winners.

### Focus Group 2: Opportunities for New Partners

- Applying for Grants
  - CBOs want direct support in applying for grant funding. High-level technical assistance is needed to understand current grant applications and maneuver the federal, state, and local government application processes.
  - Smaller CBOs often do not have matching funds and cannot apply for grants if matching funds are required. This also applies to insurance requirements. Both matching funds and expensive insurance requirements limit small and new CBOs' involvement.
- Receiving Funds
  - Prospective partners are interested in funding accessibility through an intuitive, easy-to-manage grant platform. CBOs feel easy to use grant and invoicing platforms paired with direct technical assistance can make receiving and managing funding easier. This would also make new partners more likely to apply.



- CBOs would be interested in receiving professional accounting services or services to help them navigate technological barriers to the funding process.
- Creating Partnerships
  - CBOs believe information sharing and social events are the best way to create new partnerships with their community.
  - SACOG should focus on bringing people together and creating a platform for communication for relationship-building and advocacy.

### **Focus Group 3: Geography**

- Applying for Grants
  - CBOs are concerned about being “heard” by SACOG regarding grants and other funding opportunities. Due to the remoteness and distance of many CBOs, the current funding priorities are not in line with the needs, which results in many gaps in services/funding and systematic barriers in the application process resulting from language and other cultural barriers.
  - Many CBOs have never heard of SACOG or their funding priorities. CBOs recommend using elected officials and local community groups to bridge the accessibility gap.
- Receiving Funds
  - Aside from general access to funding, many rural CBOs need help meeting the administrative and staffing requirements that come with receiving funding from federal, state, or local governments.
  - CBOs want more direct guidance and support in managing finances through training and grant workshops.
- Creating Partnerships
  - CBOs in rural communities want an opportunity to give feedback and be included in the conversation. Invitations to public meetings, community workshops, and training access are a good start to forging better relationships with isolated communities and disillusioned community members.
  - CBOs think SACOG should communicate directly with community leaders and CBOs across the region. Working with trusted partners will create relationships.

### **Focus Group 4: Transportation and Environmental Justice**

- Applying for Grants
  - CBOs need more funding options to meet Transportation and Environmental needs.
  - Language barriers and the lack of multi-lingual documents and applications restrict funding to needed projects.
- Receiving Funds



- CBOs want more funding for their project. They feel the opportunity to increase awareness of their needs is critical to providing additional and better-quality services.
- There is a need for unrestricted flexible funding opportunities, specifically to build organizational capacity and grow program scope. Funding should be made available for administrative and staff costs.
- Creating Partnerships
  - CBOs believe connecting with trusted community partners like faith communities, housing representatives, and community health workers can be a good way to disseminate information and create partnerships with Transportation and Environmental Justice CBOs.
  - Lean on strong CBOs such as the El Dorado Community Foundation, Impact Foundry, Sacramento Metro Chamber, and Sierra Health Foundation to connect with other CBOs.

#### Focus Group 5: Racial and Social Justice

- Applying for Grants
  - CBOs express issues with the length and complexity of grant applications through federal, state, and local funding sources. Extensive forms and documents prevent CBOs from applying for and preventing funding to small organizations.
  - SACOG should ensure funding priorities of grant applications align with community and CBO needs and priorities.
- Receiving Funds
  - Grant managers with SACOG are “fantastic.” There is, however, difficulty in using funds when the priorities of the funding agreement are not in-line with the scope of service of the CBO.
  - CBOs want to make sure funding timetables are consistent and set up front. If CBOs need to wait 60 days to be reimbursed, they want to know that before they request the funding.
- Creating Partnerships
  - CBOs put trust in community organizations such as faith-based communities, local justice organizations, and individual advocates that have a long history of serving their community. SACOG could benefit from engaging with these key stakeholders and creating long-term relationships.
  - CBOs find the best way to create relationships with the people we survey is to meet them where they are at. If they have a substance abuse issue or are unhoused, CBOs are accepting and do not limit services.

#### Focus Group 6: Housing and Community/Economic Development

- Applying for Grants
  - The overarching sentiment of the meeting was for SACOG to focus on funding housing programs and related services. CBOs believe there needs to be more





funding for high-need programs, considering the breadth of the housing issue in the SACOG member regions.

- CBOs want a simple and fully transparent application process so they can focus on providing services. Some groups are all volunteer-run and applications take away from limited volunteer time.
- Receiving Funds
  - CBOs that work in the housing space want multi-year funding agreements and allow for a comprehensive set of programs. These CBOs also want sufficient time to create a proposal and gather community partners to develop a complex and comprehensive implementation plan.
  - CBOs believe they have a quality solution to the issues at hand, they just need flexible and an appropriate amount of funding to get to implement a series of solutions which include Permanent Supportive Housing, Transitional Housing, and Emergency Shelters.
- Creating Partnerships
  - CBOs think SACOG can be critical in addressing NIMBYism in their service area. This includes communicating with community members, housing developers, and other CBOs.
  - CBOs want cross-industry accountability and transparency of funding for housing and homeless services funding.

## Engage, Empower, Implement | Jurisdiction Roundtable (July 19, 2023)

### Overview

On Wednesday, July 19, SACOG hosted a Jurisdiction Roundtable for the Engage, Empower, Implement (EEI) Program. Eighteen jurisdiction representatives attended to learn more about the EEI program and provide their feedback on preliminary program requirements and desired outcomes. The roundtable presentation covered the topics listed below.

- **Overview of Engage, Empower, Implement:** Origins of the program; What is EEI?; What do we want to see as outcomes?; The EEI process; What has been done so far and where we are now
- **Community-based organization Focus Group Findings:** Goals of the CBO focus groups; key themes from CBO feedback around applying for grant funding, receiving grant funding, and creating partnerships
- **Jurisdiction Survey Findings:** Key themes from feedback collected through the Jurisdiction Survey so far
- **Overview of the Framework Development Process:** Approach and methodology; how feedback from CBOs and jurisdictions will be incorporated into the framework; opportunities for review
- **Q&A Discussion**
- **Next Steps**

### Participants

A list of the jurisdictions represented at this roundtable are as follows:

- |                          |                           |                           |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| • City of Woodland       | • El Dorado Transit       | • City of Sacramento      |
| • Sacramento County      | • Placer County           | • Placer County           |
| • City of Auburn         | • City of Elk Grove       | Transportation            |
| • City of Rancho Cordova | • City of Folsom          | Planning Agency           |
| • Yuba County            | • El Dorado County        | • City of West Sacramento |
| • El Dorado County       | Transportation Commission | • City of Citrus Heights  |

### Q&A Discussion

Below is a recap of the questions and topics discussed during the roundtable.

- Can jurisdictions review a list of the community-based organizations which have participate in the EEI framework development process so far?
- Is this funding only for new community-based planning projects?
- If there is \$3M available in this first round of EEI funding, are there minimum or maximum grant amounts jurisdictions and CBOs can apply for?
- Public agencies know that with planning dollars, when we talk to the community we are asking them to wait about ten years before that project will be implemented. How can we better communicate with our communities about the implementation side of these projects? And are

there implementation dollars that have already been identified for projects that go through the EEI planning process?

- Community-based planning is difficult to do well without implementation dollars.
- Is there a possibility for jurisdictions and CBOs to go through a project screening process or pre-application period to help gauge if there are specific parallel project interests?
- What happens if a CBO wants to pursue a specific project in our jurisdiction, but our agency does not want to pursue it? How does that affect both entities' applications?
- How will the EEI funding guidelines ensure that both partners uphold their end of the grant agreement? How will project evaluation metrics be monitored and defined?
- There may be a need for CBO partners to balance their role as an "advocate" versus "consultant" through this process.