



**DATE:** June 18, 2025

**TO:** Community Services Commission

**FROM:** Community Services Manager

**SUBJECT** Community Agency Funding Program Improvements: Rubric Updates

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Community Services Commission review and comment on this report.

## **SUMMARY**

This report summarizes the Community Services Commission's (CSC) discussion from the May CSC Meeting discussion, follows up on questions from May's meeting, and proposes changes to the Community Agency Funding (CAF) process scoring rubric for the CSC's feedback. Recommendations to the scoring rubric aim to support the CSC during deliberations, align the CSC's priorities with funding decisions, and increase transparency in decision making.

## **BACKGROUND**

The CAF process is reviewed internally by staff, the CSC, and City Council on an ongoing basis. After the FY 2021–2022 funding process, a subcommittee of CSC members and Councilmembers conducted an extensive review of the CAF process. This led to several improvements, including the development and implementation of the scoring rubric. The rubric was introduced in the FY 2023–2024 funding cycle and has since been included in the request for proposals each year to help guide agencies in preparing their applications.

On March 19, 2025, the CSC reviewed proposed improvements to the CAF process and provided initial feedback and questions for staff follow-up. During the discussion, the CSC showed general support for reviewing and updating the rubric in a later CSC meeting.

On May 21, 2025, staff presented more specific recommendations and options for improvements to the CAF process based on the CSC's March feedback and additional feedback from CAF applicants. The CSC discussed two-year funding contracts, the CSC's role in off-cycle years, the application and interview process, and the scoring rubric. Staff presented options for CSC input on restructuring interviews and implementing priority categories in the CAF process. Commissioners raised the following themes during the discussion:

- If there was enough time, the desire would be to interview all applicants, especially for those who have less grant writing experience. Some Commissioners communicated that interviewing all applicants allows them to review each proposed project with more diligence. On the other hand, some Commissioners expressed that it is important to use

the application as the primary assessment tool and that an interview would not sway their decision if an agency scored extremely high or extremely low.

- There was concern about the conversations around agency distrust, along with encouragement to trust staff in assessing an agency's capacity to administer City funds and supporting newer agencies in the application process.
- There was consensus on prioritizing service types by allocating a set amount of funds to each service category to reflect priority (i.e., larger allocations of funds to higher priority service types) and communicating this information to applicants in the notification of funding availability and request for proposals (RFP). Commissioners in favor of this approach liked that it felt more transparent, simple, and clear. Some Commissioners shared concerns about this approach, noting their appreciation for the current flexibility in making funding decisions and expressing a desire to ensure applicants remain sincere in their responses.
- The CSC had follow-up questions about off-year responsibilities to meet Council's direction to use the CSC's expertise to connect agencies to outside funding sources and provide technical assistance to agencies. Staff proposed a separate work session to discuss these changes to the CSC's scope of work in the next fiscal year.

Informed by feedback from the CSC and agencies, staff will finalize the changes discussed to the CAF process. Some changes can be implemented in the FY 2026–2027 funding cycle this fall, while others will require further CSC input and are better suited for implementation in the FY 2027–2028 cycle, like modifying the Arts and Music funding process.

As discussed in previous meetings, the CSC expressed general support for updating the scoring rubric to better reflect the values of both the CSC and City Council. Staff are now seeking the CSC's input on the current rubric.

## DISCUSSION

### Scoring Rubric Changes

Using the scoring rubric to rank agency applications will provide the CSC with a clear starting point and more structure during deliberations. It will also promote consistency and objectivity across all reviewers. Under this proposal, rubric scores will be published on the City's website after funding recommendations are made. This will allow applicants to review their scores and allow them to improve their performance by integrating the CSC's feedback in future funding cycles.

Staff recommend the following changes to the rubric (see Attachment II):

- **Scale:** Update the scoring scale to a 0 through 6 points system where each point has its own column representing a specific level (as opposed to the points range in the current rubric). For each scoring category (individual rubric rows), there will be a standard category definition. The rating scale will be the same regardless of category. This change is intended to make the scoring clearer and reduce ambiguity associated with multiple point amounts being available for one performance level.
- **Impact:** Adjust the definition of impact to reflect the variability in service projects and associated impact (e.g., cost of food is lower compared to services for supporting unhoused individuals, so more people can be served per dollar by food security programs than some homelessness/housing programs). Move language about fiscal impact to the sections focused on the agency's program budget and request.

- **Equity:** More clearly define racial equity. Racial equity can be discussed in several different ways and staff recommend developing a clear understanding of what aspects of racial equity are most important to the CSC to reflect in the rubric. When assessing whether an agency's leadership reflects the racial demographics of their participants, staff plan to review this information and provide this information to the CSC prior to application review. Staff will include Hayward's demographics in the RFP for applicants to reference which will also be shared with the CSC.
- **City Priority:** Remove the "City Priority" row to reflect the changes to the prioritization process which will be implemented primarily in deliberations through specific funding allocations to specific services projects.
- **Combine Scoring Categories:** Combine "Funding" and "Funding Sustainability" into one category named "Program Sustainability." Combine the "Impact" and "Community Needs" sections to a new row named "Community Need and Program Impact." Revise scoring category definitions to reflect these changes.

In addition to the above suggestions, staff would like to hear from the CSC about any areas for improvement regarding the scoring rubric and would like specific guidance on any additional preference points for funding agencies and if they would like to include weighting in the rubric.

- **Preference Points:** In previous years, the CSC considered new programs or agencies, minority-owned agencies, women-owned agencies, and/or locally owned agencies factors that should be prioritized or given preference in funding decisions. Staff would like the CSC's input on whether these preferences need to be updated and ways to best incorporate these categories in the decision-making process.
- **Weighting Scoring Categories:** There is an option to include a weighted scoring model which would assign weighted values to specific criteria. While all criteria are important, a weighted criteria model would provide strong justification for the level of prioritization of each criterion. If the CSC believes this to be important, the CSC can discuss what criterion should be prioritized. If the CSC chooses not to weigh criteria, then all categories on the rubric will be weighed equally.

### **May 21, 2025, CSC Meeting Staff Follow Up**

In previous CSC Meetings, there were questions and themes for staff to address. Staff have prepared the following responses to questions from the CSC:

*Is there an opportunity to engage the Youth Commission to recommend allocations for youth services?*

Allocating funding through the Youth Commission would constitute a significant change to that Commission's scope of work. Such a change requires specific direction from City Council.

*What would happen to the CAF process if all agencies received high rubric scores?*

This question was asked when staff proposed options for the CSC to discuss new interview structures in the upcoming fiscal year. Staff included scenarios in which the CSC would not interview the highest scoring applicants and some of the lowest scoring interviews. In the event the majority or all services applicants receive extremely high rubric scores, the CSC will interview all the applicants and would need to meet over several Special CSC Meetings in January. Additionally, staff propose establishing a

threshold for low scoring applicants: No low scoring applicants would be removed if there are no applicants that scored below 15% of the available points in the rubric.

*What will the CSC's scope of work be during the off-cycle years?*

With two-year contracts, the CSC would only be reviewing and making funding recommendations every-other year. The CSC requested additional discussion on the role of the CSC during the years when they are not making funding recommendations. City Council has expressed interest in leveraging the CSC's expertise to support applicants. There are also opportunities to engage the CSC more in the review of agency performance. Staff recommend scheduling a work session with the CSC after this upcoming funding cycle in May 2026 to discuss the CSC's scope of work in detail.

## **PUBLIC CONTACT**

Staff engaged FY 2025-2026 funding applicants and current funding recipients to receive their input on changes to the CAF process. There were also opportunities to make public comment on proposed changes to the CAF process at the May 21, 2025, CSC meeting.

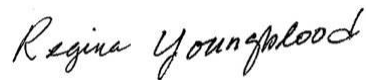
## **NEXT STEPS**

Staff will incorporate the CSC's feedback to finalize the scoring rubric and changes to the CAF process to incorporate in the RFP which will be released in September. Changes to the rubric will be reflected in the application to ensure the application asks questions that directly respond to the CSC's concerns. Staff will return to the CSC in October to begin the process for the FY26-28 funding cycle.

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Regina Youngblood, Assistant City Manager