



Community Benefits Listening Sessions Feedback & Comments

COMMUNITY BENEFITS
ADVISORY COMMITTEE

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

JUNE 27, 2018

• Introduction •

On Tuesday, May 15 and Wednesday, May 16, the Community Benefits Advisory Committee (the “Committee”) hosted Listening Sessions to solicit feedback on its [Framework for Community Benefits Funding](#) from nonprofit providers and other community members. Following the Committee’s presentation on the Framework, attendees responded to the phased approach, proposed timeline, funding amount and the use of the funds, the selection and evaluation criteria, the target populations, and the Committee’s goals of innovative approaches, and partnerships and collaboration across organizations.

This document summarizes what was shared across both sessions, with comments and questions from the attendees, as well as comments received via email, in bold font (**Example**), and responses from the Committee in regular font (Example). These sessions were attended by over 30 participants, representing over 20 Cambridge-based nonprofit organizations. The list of attendees and their organizations can be found at the end of this document.

Moving forward, the Committee will continue to work towards releasing the Request for Proposals later this year. As the Committee responds to feedback and develops its Request for Proposals, we encourage organizations to start thinking now about their potential interest in partnering with other organizations, and innovative approaches to responding to the Top Tier Needs.

For more information and process updates, please visit the Community Benefits Advisory Committee’s webpage at: www.cambridgema.gov/communitybenefits.

Question? Comments? Please contact Wendell Joseph at: communitybenefits@cambridgema.gov.

Community Benefits Advisory Committee

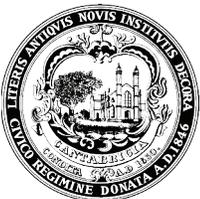
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City of Cambridge
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• Background •



City Ordinance 1375 (adopted 12/21/2015) established the Committee, and articulated that its purpose is to identify community benefits needs of the residents of Cambridge based on the Guiding Principles for Community Benefits Funding, established by the City Council. The Committee will make recommendations to the City Manager for the approval of grant awards with nonprofit organizations to deliver services that benefit Cambridge residents and help address their unmet needs.

The ordinance defines “community benefits” as *programs or services that directly benefit Cambridge residents including but not limited to human services, the arts, cultural enrichment, sustainability measures, public health, housing, educational programs focused on science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (‘STEAM’) and other areas of community enrichment provided by a non-profit entity registered pursuant to 26 U.S.C. § 501(c)(3)*. In adopting the Community Needs Assessment in May 2017, the City Council adopted the Needs Assessment’s recommendations as the funding priorities for the Committee.

• Phased Approach •



Will the Planning Phase automatically lead into the Implementation Phase?

- No, the selection for a Planning Grant does not automatically lead to an Implementation Grant. Lead Organizations must submit a proposal for the Planning Phase. If the proposal is selected, a Planning Grant of up to \$30k will be awarded. The Planning Grant provides resources for grantees to figure out how the targeted needs (i.e. Top Tier Needs) will be addressed. At the end of the proposed 3-5 month planning time frame, each Planning Grant recipient will submit to the Committee its **Plan for Implementation**, and the Committee will then determine which group(s) will be awarded an Implementation Grant.

Once the \$30k is committed for planning, what would be the hurdle for proceeding to implementation? What would be an eliminating factor between the planning and the implementation round?

- Based on questions and feedback received, the Committee will continue to discuss and clarify this item. We recognize how challenging building collaborations are, so we would like to see what comes out of the Planning Phase. Possible eliminating factors may include the following: partnerships did not work out, or did not receive from the Planning Phase what they wanted or expected; questions and concerns surrounding capacity; the Committee is not persuaded that the proposal is viable or likely to produce the desired results.

If an entity is interested in gathering some partners to engage in planning towards implementation, and the Committee is not convinced of the resulting proposal, these planning efforts are going to die, but money would have already been spent. What happens to partnerships that receive Planning Grants but don’t receive Implementation Grants?

- The Committee will continue to consider and articulate its role in creating an environment that encourages innovation and collaboration among potential grantees. To these ends, the Committee recognizes the Planning Phase as an important opportunity for organizations to determine how best to collaborate in support of addressing the Top Tier Needs. Even if a partnership does not advance to the Implementation Phase, the Committee expects important experiences and learning to emerge from the planning process that will benefit the organizations involved, the Committee’s process, and the broader community.
- The Committee does not anticipate adding more partnerships if some were eliminated after the Planning Phase. We wish to support groups that may be working together for the first time and may need more help to develop a Plan for Implementation, and we look to provide support to long-standing partnerships as well. Some proposals may require adjustments to strengthen them, others may need a longer-term horizon, or different partners involved. The Committee wants to allow space for innovative thinking and creative ideas and partnerships. Those who do not advance to the Implementation Phase might be better prepared for future funding rounds.

If the goal of the Planning Phase is to hash out a potential project, what do we have to do to make it to the Planning Phase? Will the Committee provide technical support to nonprofits to develop a proposal?

- Referring back to selection criteria in the *Framework for Community Benefits Funding*, the Committee would consider a number of factors, including: How does the partnership plan to make a difference? What is their history? Who are the families the partnership is prepared to reach? How have they addressed needs before?
- The Committee sees the Top Tier Needs (Affordable Housing & Homelessness, Financial Security, and Behavioral Health: Mental Health & Substance Abuse) as interconnected, and believes the best way to support families in addressing one of these needs is to provide support for all three, as needed.
- The Committee is determining the supports that it may be able to provide partners to develop a proposal.

Our hope is that organizations are not operating in isolation and without thought about how future funds and opportunities can be leveraged. Has there been any consideration given to projects leveraging additional funds to meet goals beyond the community benefits process?

- The Committee understands that up to \$750k over three years may not be enough to address the underlying and structural factors that contribute to the Top Tier Needs. More resources may be incorporated in the future, and asset mapping has been suggested as a way of getting a better sense of what is available and what is missing from the current landscape of resources available across the city. The Committee has not yet made a final decision on asset mapping and will continue to discuss this item. In the interim, we would direct interested parties to *Find It Cambridge* (<http://www.finditcambridge.org>), an online directory of Cambridge service providers.
- Additionally, the Committee is building this process around engagement and fresh ideas, with enough permeability and malleability to be able to open up dialogue and make the necessary changes over time and into the future. The Committee also recognizes and encourages opportunities for this initial round of funding to serve as a catalyst to leverage additional resources beyond the 3 years.

• Timeline & Timing •



When will the Request for Proposals (RFP) be released? Nonprofit organizations will need enough lead time to plan.

- The Committee is targeting an early Fall release for the RFP, but this may be subject to change.

During the Implementation Phase, the Committee talked about family engagement/feedback, but my concern is that this isn't until Implementation Phase, which seems too late. A 3-5 month Planning Phase doesn't seem like a sufficient amount of time to engage families and elicit feedback. Perhaps the Committee would consider a longer Planning Phase to better accommodate this.

- The Committee sees community engagement and the soliciting and integration of input from families to be served as critical in the development of the Plan for Implementation, which would be developed during the Planning Phase. Additionally, the Committee anticipates that ongoing feedback from families served during the Implementation Phase will be an important part of continuous learning and process improvement for each partnership, for the Committee, and for the broader community.

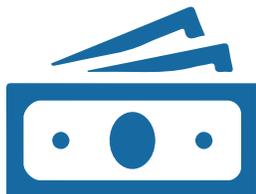
Committee Question: How much time would nonprofit organizations need to develop a Plan for Implementation as part of the Planning Phase?

- **Nonprofit organizations would need closer to 6-12 months because, even with technical assistance, 3-5 months might be too short. The Committee's emphasis on partnerships and collaboration means that planning will take much longer. This is the piece that needs the most amount of time. Are there structures that the Committee can provide to help facilitate this?**

Committee Question: What are the perspectives on time in the funding timeline?

- **Proposals should be due 10 weeks from the release of the RFP to allow for different cycles of funding that nonprofit organizations are dealing with. (This suggested timeframe was supported by three other participants.)**

• Funding Amount & Use of Funds •



Can we consider a larger pool of money for the Planning Phase? A grant of up to \$30k is not enough for even one staff person.

- The Committee has weighed various factors in determining a suitable amount for the Planning Phase, and wants to clarify that this \$30k does not include additional supports that Committee anticipates making available during this phase. The Committee is considering hiring an evaluator, beginning from the Planning Phase, that would be available to all applicants, and will take this additional feedback into consideration.

I'm having some difficulty following numbers in the funding slide. In terms of grant amount, up to \$750k is the total grant amount? What per project do you anticipate funding?

- The Implementation Grant is up to \$750k/per proposal, for up to 5 proposals, over 3 years.

What does the Ordinance say about this money and how it can be used? Will there be any restrictions on project budgets or use of funding? What restrictions will there be on the grants? Has the Committee given some thought on this? We would recommend keeping it as flexible and simple as possible, recognizing that nonprofit organizations are very thoughtful about their budgets.

Since one of the first priorities was housing, I'm surprised to see how heavy the Framework is on service. How does the provision of services address this? Has there been any discussion on using this money to directly tap into affordable housing? Perhaps we can see more creative solutions, since housing is sometimes tied to service provision. What was most exciting for me was seeing this process as a way to fund things in different ways that are sometimes difficult to fund (e.g. community organizing).

- Community Benefits Funds are designated for the provision services and are considered public monies, so there are restrictions on what they may be used for, and their use must be well documented. However, as stated in the ordinance, "provision of services" may have some latitude for interpretation.
- The ordinance also states that "the Committee shall not consider Applications requesting expenditures for an Applicant's capital or infrastructure projects or general operational expenses." (*Code of Ordinances, Section 2.127.060.C1*)
- The funds would be allocated to the lead organization – a Cambridge-based 501(c)(3) – who should work across the community and with various community partners. The Committee does not see these funds going to corporate entities or the City (i.e. the Cambridge Health Alliance could be a partner, but not the lead organization).

I'm still not clear about the permissible uses of the funds. What does a broad definition of permissible use mean?

- The Committee has marked this as a key question, and will discuss it further.

As a member of the Cambridge Nonprofit Coalition, is there hope of cross-sector engagement with businesses, nonprofit organizations, and the City, to invest this money in a collective impact fund? That's when the needle moves, when all the sectors work together on the problem. My fear is we will have a feeding frenzy and lose sight of bigger prize – that we want to effect change.

- The Committee has discussed and recognizes potential opportunities for longer-term systems change as a goal that could begin with and/or be informed by this process.
- As part of its understanding of *resilience*, the Committee recognizes that the systems change necessary to reach our goals will take a long time. This includes engaging external stakeholders, affecting policy and legislations, and including business perspectives. We don't know that we can mandate that through this project, but this may be something that we can learn through this process.

The Framework focuses on the "things", rather than the root causes of those things. I think there's a need to address the source, the "why". Also, the Priorities are somewhat "things" oriented. I feel like what is missing is examining the root causes of why these problems exist. I'm hoping that this is not ignored. Sometimes, we see a "revolving door syndrome" at our organization where people are with us, we provide services for however long we can, they leave, but then they come back.

- The Ordinance does limit what the Committee can fund, but we would be looking for proposals that could address longer-term solutions as well as immediate actions. The Committee does not wish to underestimate what comes out of this process, and we expect that the work to be done is not done in silos and can influence policy. So, this process is not only about short-term goals; there is also a long-term component. The Committee's focus on the Top

Tier Needs reflects the desire to address systemic factors that contribute to some of the adversities and barriers that families face. We wish to cut down on the “revolving door syndrome”, and we hope that proposals can address the long-term goal of family wellbeing and child and adult resiliency in a coordinated fashion, even if we are not able to solve the root causes of poverty.

These issues are regional, not just citywide, and many organizations that address problems are regional. I would recommend providing some flexibility in proposals to allow for regional coordination.

We ask that the Committee consider the relationship between the promotion of nutrition education and the positive influence on Cambridge families. A focus on food and health has holistic benefits that directly complement solutions for homelessness, mental health improvements, and the fortification of resilience. Low-income minorities and especially single mothers lack the most nutritional resources and are most susceptible to health conditions. Strong health and increased access to resources will allow the Cambridge community to prosper, facilitating equality and inclusion at the same time.

- Due to the interconnectedness between the Top Tier Needs (Affordable Housing & Homelessness, Financial Security, and Behavioral Health: Mental Health & Substance Abuse), the Committee’s focus remains there, with the expectation that proposals will address all three of the Top Tier Needs. This understanding does not necessarily preclude addressing other needs identified in the Community Needs Assessment or including services that respond to other pressing needs in the Cambridge community.

• Proposal & Selection •



Is there a preliminary process for submitting ideas and/or concepts, or a way to discuss these with the Committee?

- The Committee is still early in its process but will consider ways of helping to germinate ideas and facilitate partnerships across organizations in conjunction with the issuance of the RFP.

Could we get more information on the process for selection? How open will that be?

- To date, all Committee’s meetings have been public. We have not yet determined if the Selection Committee would be a subgroup of the larger Committee, although aspects of the deliberations will be made public. Naturally, there will be recusals if Committee members are part of organizations that have applied for Community Benefits Funds.

Who will write the RFP? Will there be two RFPs – one for the Planning Grant and another for the Implementation Grant?

- The Committee and City will be writing the RFP. There may be some additional pieces added to the overall process, but we do not anticipate issuing a separate RFP for the Implementation Phase. The Committee is committed to efficiency throughout the process for nonprofit organizations that may seek to partner and submit proposals.

Has the Committee has imagined a scenario where multiple applications are submitted for the same areas? How would the Committee handle this? Would you support two proposals in the same area? Would there be competitive partnerships? Are you looking to get a proposal for each area of need, or are you going to go with whatever you get? How will the Committee allocate funding among top tier needs and/or between top tiers and other tiers?

- Based on questions and feedback received, the Committee will continue to discuss this item. As stated in City Council’s *Guiding Principles for Community Benefits Funding*, the provision of services should be looked at in a holistic and integrated way, and the Committee will be looking for proposals that addresses the Top Tier Needs equitably, and propose innovative ways to address them.
- There is no specific dollar amount allocated to each need. The Committee understands that moving the needle on one need would require addressing many needs, so we will look to partnerships to make a case for what that should be. We are asking that partnerships consider the target population and to work with these families to determine what their specific needs are.

Regarding the selection process, does Committee prefer continuing programs, something with a proven track record, or is the Committee looking for something new and innovative?

- The Committee recognizes that some organizations have long-standing partnerships and a history of working well together, and also wishes to create room for new and innovative partnerships and proposals.

• Supporting Partnerships •



The Committee should find ways to engage organizations with each other prior to the Planning Phase – capacity is a concern. Is there a role for the Committee to convene folks? For example, Lemelson-MIT Group (Foundry Building) acted as a convener and invited everybody that was on a list to come over for coffee. How can we allow nonprofit organizations to tap into an “organizational pool” of potential partners, and contact one another outside of the Cambridge Nonprofit Coalition (CNC)? Perhaps we could opt-in to have contact information sent out. Maybe the Committee’s webpage could even have an open forum for organizations looking for partners during the grant process. Additionally, houses of worship are not involved in CNC, so the City/Committee should do outreach to churches, religious organizations, etc. The Committee should look for points in the process where it can coordinate with organizations and help build capacity.

- Based on questions and feedback received, the Committee will continue to discuss this item. The Committee is open to acting as a convener and provide opportunities for organizations to network with each other.

Would it be possible to have the information of people who attended these sessions?

- Individuals in attendance and organizations present can be found at the end of this document.

What might be an appropriate partnership organization? Public schools? City agencies/programs? Corporate/for-profit organizations?

- This has been an ongoing conversation for the Committee. Potentially any of these types of organizations could be part of a partnership as a supporting organization, not as a lead organization. Due to the nature of these public funds, however, corporate and for-profit entities are not eligible to receive funds.

What’s missing in the Committee’s framework is a philosophy around partnerships. As an applicant, what’s unique is the partnership aspect of this framework. This is the essence of what makes the grant exciting. If we don’t go into the application knowing what the Committee’s assumptions are, we may be less prepared. What sort of framework you are looking for? Are there opportunities for cross-sector partnerships? What are the limitations? There ought to be more transparency on the framework, the philosophy of the partnerships, and nonprofit organizations should know what these are.

- In keeping with the *Guiding Principles for Community Benefits Funding*, the Committee see partnerships and collaboration between organizations as an essential component of this process, and will work to provide further clarification moving forward.

Can nonprofit organizations engage with data about target population prior to submitting application? Can we get more data related to Cambridge population? Where are the targeted families located? Who are the organizations currently working on specific issues? A deeper dive into the data and the demographics of the city would help in getting a better sense of who we are serving, when, and why.

- The Committee intends to make available all relevant data used for the proposed framework on our webpage (www.cambridgema.gov/communitybenefits), and will continue to consider other ways to share this data in support of potential partnerships.

Has the Committee given any thought to partnering with nonprofit organizations outside of Cambridge? In thinking of ourselves as collaborators, if partnerships aren’t available in Cambridge, can we reach out to leverage relationships in other towns or communities? How favorably would partnerships outside of Cambridge be considered?

- These funds are meant to serve Cambridge families and residents, and provide support to Cambridge nonprofit organizations. While this does not automatically exclude organizations outside of Cambridge from being partners, the lead organization must be a Cambridge-based nonprofit organization. This is something the Committee will discuss further.

The nonprofit community could benefit from an asset mapping or organizations and the services they provide, especially smaller nonprofit organizations. How do we get data on what organizations work on what issues? Who is measuring impact? Where families are located and where the children are going to school? Could this be done within the context of the Committee's priorities? A good example of asset mapping can be found in São Paulo, Brazil, called [Catraca Livre](#). We would like for Cambridge to be a pilot for this type of asset mapping, and be a model to surrounding community and rest of the country.

- This has been an ongoing conversation and, based on questions and feedback received, the Committee will continue to discuss this item. In the interim, we would direct interested parties to *Find It Cambridge*, an online directory of Cambridge service providers, their specific services and areas of focus, and invite those organizations who are not yet listed in this directory to do so. This directory can be found at: www.finditcambridge.org.

• Evaluation •



Throughout the process, we will have to evaluate our own success at serving who we set out to serve. That is what is so challenging in terms in funding and time. The evaluation criteria ought to be developed with nonprofit organizations, and it would be great if the City could provide technical support, in addition to having the capacity/time to evaluate the data to determine the success of these projects.

- The Committee is considering hiring an evaluator, beginning from the Planning Phase, that would be available to all applicants so that no one organization or partnership would be at a disadvantage. All the information the Committee has used to help craft this framework is available on our webpage: www.cambridgema.gov/communitybenefits.

It would be helpful to have a presentation of all this data. Also, to have someone there to help fill out that evaluation with the folks who are doing the project.

I feel like there will be so many great things we can learn out of the grant process, that I want to encourage us to develop ways to highlight what those will be.

- This has been an ongoing conversation and, based on questions and feedback received, the Committee will continue to discuss this item.

• Target Population •



Please address the income levels that are to be served and where those numbers come from. Even if you're above these limits, you may not be able to weather the ups and downs. When I looked at the income numbers that you provided, I noticed that my staff qualify for the grants.

- The Committee's focus is on families that are low-income (household income is equal or less than 50% AMI) or living in poverty. These income thresholds are established by HUD (the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development). Unfortunately, there are many individuals and families in Cambridge that fall into these categories, especially those that are headed by single women. In thinking about the "most vulnerable" of residents, and how we can best move the needle, the Committee decided that it should focus its efforts on this population.

Where does the Committee's definition of the target population leave our senior population? We are concerned that the funding focuses mainly on families with children and leaves aside the growing elderly population, which is living longer with very limited resources. We understand how important child and family issues are, but also see many more resources focusing on that population, and very little for the elderly population.

- For this first round of funding, the Committee will focus on families with children, particularly those headed by single women, with the expressed desire of moving the needle as much as possible. The Committee is open to revisiting its definition of the target population for future rounds of funding. Through what is learned and measured in this first round, it may be necessary to expand the scope of the target population.

What is the plan for the target populations to get heard?

- The Committee looks to lead organizations and their partnerships to include in their proposals a plan for engaging with the target population during the Planning and Implementation Phases.

• Additional Comments •



How was the Committee formed? Are you reflective of the Cambridge community as a whole?

- The Committee was formed by City ordinance, and comprises City staff, residents, and members of the business community, institutions, and the nonprofit community. These categories were determined by City Council, and Committee Members are appointed by the City Manager. Based on applications received, consideration was given to select candidates that represent the diversity of the City, but the Committee recognizes that it is not reflective of all communities in Cambridge.

Has the committee looked at models from other cities that have had done similar things?

- Yes, the Committee has looked at similar work being done in cities across the country, and will post resources on its webpage. Part of the Committee's process has been trying to understand what works and what doesn't, as well as where service needs are not being met. This first round of funding is an opportunity to see what works, what can have a greater impact, which is why "collaboration" and "collective impact" are such important phrases.

Can these funds be used as seed money with a longer viewpoint in mind? In the areas where the Cambridge Nonprofit Coalition wants to work in partnership, sometimes we find ourselves in competition for programming with the City.

- The Committee's understanding of and approach to partnerships and collaborations extends to include the City, the business community, universities, and other government and non-government institutions in Cambridge. Part of the engagement effort during the Planning Phase may include reaching out to these entities and exploring ways to coordinate programs to avoid a duplication of efforts.

The word *resilience* really stands out for me – the capacity to adapt. This is especially true for the Cambridge Nonprofit Coalition where we want to work on supporting the health of our own organizations, but also community through partnerships with industry and public sector. I would say to keep hold of this idea of really trying to improve collective community, and how the nonprofit sector can interface with the public sector. Hopefully we can be open to having those conversations together, and develop new ways of interfacing with each other and with the broader community.

• Attendees •

- Amy O'Doherty – *The Possible Project*
- Anna Jacobs – *Eradicate Childhood Obesity (EChO)*
- Ashley DiFraia – *Boston Area Rape Crisis Center*
- Audrey Schulman – *Home Energy Efficiency Team (HEET)*
- C.A. Webb – *Kendall Square Association*
- Carlos Peralta – *Cambridge Redevelopment Authority*
- Darrin Korte – *Cambridge Community Center*
- Delphene Mooney – *On The Rise, Inc.*
- Elena Sokolov-Kaufman – *Cambridge Nonprofit Coalition*
- Eryn Johnson – *Community Art Center, Inc.*
- Ester Serra – *Transition House*
- Eva Martin Blythe – *YWCA*
- Gerry Zipser – *Just A Start*
- Helen Snively – *MAAP*
- Ivy Moylan – *Brattle Film Foundation*
- Jennifer Fries – *Cambridge School Volunteers*
- Jessie Fu – *Eradicate Childhood Obesity (EChO)*
- Jessica Tsang – *Eradicate Childhood Obesity (EChO)*
- Joan Squeri – *Cambridge Nonprofit Coalition*
- Laurant Adamowicz – *Eradicate Childhood Obesity (EChO)*
- Lee Erica Palmer – *Cambridge-Somerville Legal Services*
- Liz Olson – *Windsor House*
- Lois Josimovich – *Mass Alliance of Portuguese Speakers*
- Maria LaPage – *Agassiz Baldwin Community*
- Michael Delia – *East End House*
- Samuel Gebru – *Cambridge Community Center*
- Sharon Zimmerman – *Cambridge Camping Association*
- Sophie Gildesgame – *Boston Area Rape Crisis Center*
- Stacy Carruth – *Community Health Network Area 17 (CHNA 17)*
- Susan Fleischmann – *Cambridge Community Television*
- Susan Richards – *Agenda for Children Out of School Time (OST)*
- Steven Browne – *First Church Shelter*
- Theresa Sullivan – *Just A Start*
- Tianhao Li – *Eradicate Childhood Obesity (EChO)*
- Tina Alu – *Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee (CEOC)*
- Wei-Chih Tsai – *Eradicate Childhood Obesity (EChO)*