

**LEGAL SERVICES TRUST FUND COMMISSION
HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION FUNDS COMMITTEE MEETING**

Meeting Summary and Action Items

Friday, October 29, 2021, 1:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m.

State Bar of California (Conference Call via Zoom)

Roll Call

Members Present

Chair Jim Meeker
Banafsheh Akhlaghi
Amin Al-Sarraf
Eric Isken
Tammy Mahoney
Kim Savage
Christian Schreiber

Liaisons

Bonnie Hough

Public Members

Kimberly Tyda, Judicial
Council of California
Zach Newman, Legal Aid
Association of California

Staff

Donna Hershkowitz
Danielle MacRae
Chris McConkey
Doan Nguyen
Kim Warmesley

Members Absent

Richard Reinis

OPEN SESSION

Chair Jim Meeker called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m.

I. ROLL CALL

Roll call was taken, and quorum was established.

II. CALL FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

The chair invited members of the public to comment on any items on the agenda. No public comment was made.

III. CONSENT

A. Approval of Meeting Summary and Action Items from the October 1, 2021, Meeting

The committee approved the October 1, 2021, meeting summary and action items by majority roll call vote (Isken moved, Schreiber seconded). The vote was as follows:

Yes (6): Meeker, Akhlaghi, Isken, Mahoney, Savage, Schreiber

No (0): None

Abstention (1): Al-Sarraf

IV. HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION (HP) III GRANTS

A. HP III Competitive Grant Rubric Calibration (Apply the Scoring Rubric to a Sample of Applications)

Prior to the meeting, committee members received a 2022-2024 homelessness prevention (HP III) competitive grant review guide and sample of five applications to score.¹ The sample of applications were submitted by:

- California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc.,
- Disability Rights Legal Center,
- Family Violence Law Center,
- Immigrant Legal Resource Center, and
- Justice in Aging.²

Acting Program Supervisor Chris McConkey and Chair Jim Meeker stated that their goals for the committee meeting were for the scoring team to observe how the committee interprets the scoring rubric so that it can then apply the rubric to the full set of grant applications. They noted that the goal was not to reach a consensus score on each of the five applications.

Thirty-four programs (29 QLSPs and 5 support centers) submitted applications requesting a total of about \$33,750,000 in funding. The average request was about \$992,600. The available funding for HP III competitive grants totals \$19,500,000. Twenty-three applicants reported they would focus on serving rural populations; all 34 said that they would focus on serving underserved populations.

The committee spoke at length about how members implemented the scoring rubric when scoring the sample of applications. The committee discussed each criterion and how it applied to each sample application. The committee also discussed the description of each criterion provided in the scoring rubric and included below for reference. The following specific guidance was provided to the staff-committee scoring team, among other feedback about the rubric:

Project impact and strategies

Criterion description: “The applicant proposes a project that significantly and directly addresses or will address a compelling need for the particular homelessness prevention intervention(s).”

¹ For guidance from State Bar staff to the committee, please see the review guide at <https://board.calbar.ca.gov/docs/agendaitem/Public/agendaitem1000028218.pdf>.

² To view the applications that were discussed during the meeting, please see the attachment at <https://board.calbar.ca.gov/docs/agendaitem/Public/agendaitem1000028329.pdf>.

The committee noted that it considered the number of clients served as well as ingenuity and uniqueness when evaluating this category. The committee noticed a comparatively tenuous connection to housing work in some applications, which was reflected in lower scores for project impact and strategies. If a program fails to make an explicit connection to homelessness prevention—and the connection is not otherwise obvious—that could merit a score of “below expectations.” Liaison Bonnie Hough agreed and noted that the Department of Finance and federal government will look at the outcomes of this funding as it relates to housing.

Organizational capacity

Criterion description: “The applicant demonstrates that it has the qualifications, experience, resources, and/or partners that it needs to meet the proposal objectives.”

The committee viewed this category as referring to applicants’ expertise, staffing, and access to other resources to succeed at the project. The committee noted that it would consider a score of “meets expectations” or higher for programs that have a record of strong services and grant compliance. It would consider a score of “below expectations” for programs that have a history of non-compliance with State Bar grant requirements.

Focus on rural populations

Criterion description: “The applicant articulates a focus on addressing homelessness in rural communities.”

The committee observed that a project might fall “below expectations” if it would serve rural clients but without describing its outreach to or identifying the impacts on rural communities. The committee also considered the number of rural versus non-rural clients served by the project. The scoring team may reference the 2019 California Access to Justice Commission report that grouped California counties into rural, rural-urban mixed, urban-rural mixed, and urban based on the proportion of residents living below the poverty line in rural or frontier Medical Service Study Areas (MSSAs).³

Focus on underserved populations

Criterion description: “The application articulates a focus on addressing homelessness in particularly underserved communities.”

³ See “California’s Rural Housing Crisis: The Access to Justice Implications” (2019) at <https://www.calatj.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/2019-CA-Rural-Housing-Crisis.pdf>.

The project may score highly if the population is well-defined, particularly underserved, or the reason the population is underserved is particularly well-articulated. Because all projects must serve indigent Californians, proposals should describe how the population faces even higher barriers to accessing civil justice than does the low-income community generally.

Project evaluation

Criterion description: “The applicant details an evaluation strategy to acquire data that it can use to refine the project’s strategies to increase its effectiveness in addressing homelessness.”

Projects that propose to comply with required outcomes reporting—but without describing any other significant evaluation measures—may score a “meets expectations.” A project could receive “exceeds expectations” for doing more than the required evaluation, such as by hiring an external evaluator. A relevant factor here might be whether the applicant budgets for evaluation costs. A project may receive “below expectations” if the description lacks detail.

Special consideration

Criterion description: “Applicant articulates a focus on partnerships and evidence-based advocacy strategies to address individual or systemic homelessness.”

Projects may receive points in this category for having partnerships, and possibly for providing subgrants to partners. Additionally, points are available for proposing to offer full-scope representation and litigation services, the efficacy of which have a basis in evidence. The scoring team should not differentiate between IOLTA-funded partners and non-IOLTA-funded partners in conferring special consideration points. A project would be unlikely to receive a high score for special consideration without both having partners and providing full-scope representation and litigation services.

The committee also discussed whether future application forms might be shorter and how to score innovation, if at all, in future grant cycles. Staff noted that the committee removed innovation from the rubric on August 31 to reflect the federal government’s preference for evidence-based interventions.

B. HP III Formula Grant Update

This agenda item required no update or discussion.

V. ADJOURN

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:27 p.m.

