

Sweetened Beverage Tax Community Advisory Board

Date: April 21, 2021

To: Mayor Jenny Durkan

From: Sweetened Beverage Tax Community Advisory Board (CAB)

cc: Councilmember Lorena González, Councilmember Lisa Herbold, Councilmember Debora Juarez, Councilmember Andrew J. Lewis, Councilmember Tammy J. Morales, Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda, Councilmember Alex Pedersen, Councilmember Kshama Sawant, Councilmember Dan Strauss, Dwane Chappelle, Michelle Caulfield, Patty Hayes, Helen Howell, Ben Noble

Subject: Recommendations for Request for Proposals funded by Sweetened Beverage Tax revenues

Dear Mayor Durkan,

On behalf of the Sweetened Beverage Tax Community Advisory Board (CAB), we are writing to deliver our updated Recommendations for Request for Proposals which were originally transmitted on August 21, 2018.

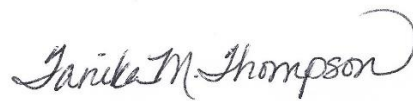
First, we would like to thank the City for creating two new community grant programs that are funded by the Sweetened Beverage Tax. These programs are a direct response to the CAB's recommendations for increased investments in community-driven programs focused on food access and prenatal-to-three services that reduce disparities in outcomes for children and families based on race, gender, or other socioeconomic factors. The CAB also commends the Department of Education & Early Learning and the Department of Neighborhoods for their interest and commitment to working closely with the CAB and other key stakeholders to design and develop these grant programs equitably.

In the spirit of collaboration and continuous improvement, the CAB has updated its Recommendations for Request for Proposals with an eye toward further advancing racial equity. These recommendations are grounded in feedback collected during community engagement activities, in the CAB's research on equitable grantmaking practices, in CAB member expertise, and our [equity-driven values](#). We affirm the City's efforts and offer these updated recommendations as a strategy for the City to continue advancing race and social justice within its funding processes and in the programs and services supported with SBT revenue.

Sincerely,



Jen Moss, Co-Chair



Tanika Thompson, Co-Chair

Recommendations for Request for Proposals / Request for Information funded by Sweetened Beverage Tax revenues

The following recommendations focus on the process for granting Sweetened Beverage Tax funds to community-based organizations and the role of the Sweetened Beverage Tax Community Advisory Board (CAB) in this process.

Foundational principles:

The following principles should guide the RFP design, process, and investments:

Priority communities: All programs and activities should focus on reaching communities of color, immigrants, refugees, people with low income, and English language learners. Youth and elders from these communities are also a priority and should be supported to participate in programs and activities. Youth are also a population disproportionately targeted by the sugary drink industry.

Place-based focus areas: Programs and activities should focus on areas where communities of color, immigrants, refugees, people with low income and English language learners live.

Community-driven: Programs and activities should be led or guided by community-based organizations with authentic connections to the focus community. Include explicit requirements for collecting, using and documenting community input in the design and selection of activities included in proposals. (Authentic connections to the focus community is further defined in our selection criterion for Equity (see *Selection Criteria* section below).

Culturally-responsive: Programs and activities should be culturally responsive and delivered in ways that are accessible and comfortable for the focus population (or community).

Balance prevention and intervention: Programs and activities should strike a balance between prevention and intervention. Where possible, activities focused on food access should include prevention of sugary drink consumption and related health conditions. Investments should also address existing health and child development/early learning inequities by including intervention activities.

Grantmaking structures and processes:

General

- Be explicit about race and social justice so organizations led by and serving **priority communities** know the RFP is intended for them (e.g. see Food Access Opportunity Fund application, Environment Justice Fund application).
- Be explicit about prioritizing funding organizations led by and serving **priority communities**.
- Even within **priority communities**, be explicit about focus populations and racial equity.
- Create a steering committee to get input on the RFP design/process and include:
 - Community stakeholders and representatives (including organizational leaders who can share their experiences applying for grants).

- Other funders who have expertise in grantmaking with a racial justice lens.
- Transparency in who is invited/selected to serve on the committee and why.
- Low barrier processes and compensation.
- Require all City staff working on the RFP and monitoring grantee contracts to apply a racial equity lens that supports systemic and institutional change (see [The Delta Vision](#), [Equity Matters](#), and the [Racial Justice Oriented Grantmaking](#) report).
- Invest in capacity building of grantees through things like flexible funding to support operations and staff, leadership development for grantee staff, and racial justice-oriented technical assistance providers.
- Be careful when holding grantee convenings or peer learning cohorts, and partner with other funders (e.g. Latino Community Fund, Seattle Foundation’s Neighbor to Neighbor, Environmental Justice Fund) or technical advisors (e.g. Delta Vision, Equity Matters) who do this well. Grantee convenings or tools developed by funders may require an enormous amount of time and resources that some grantees may not be equipped to handle. Additionally, grantees may not feel comfortable providing honest feedback about the value of these initiatives due to existing power imbalances.

Eligible applicants and projects:

- The application should be open to a range of entities including nonprofits, coalitions, collectives, neighborhood groups, cultural or language groups, youth and senior groups, and BIPOC – and immigrant and refugee-owned businesses, where applicable and appropriate.
- The RFP should make clear the program is intended to fund organizations led by people of color and serving communities of color and/or low-income communities.
- Projects must advance racial equity and focus on a population subgroup as defined by race/ethnicity, income, geography or language that is more impacted than the more privileged group.

Grantmaking ethos

- Create a grantmaking culture that seeks to build relationships with grantees and honors their expertise and experience.
- Seek to understand grantees, their communities, and their work -- not just be contract and compliance monitors.
- Prioritize collaboration, inclusion, relationships, flexibility, humility, responsiveness, transparency.
- Operate on the knowledge that systemic racism has led to inequitable distribution of resources and ensure the BIPOC led and serving organizations receive an equitable share of the resources.
- Aim for collaboration and consensus building between organizations, not competition. Invite organizations to apply together as coalitions.

Application process and materials:

- The City should pay close attention to the language access needs of linguistically diverse potential applicants, especially from immigrant and refugee communities. For example, all information and materials should be available in Seattle’s top tier languages. This includes using in-language recruitment provided through a separate consultant; in-language/multi-lingual materials to announce and promote the RFP; in-language technical assistance; in-language applications; in-language interview option with interpreter during the review process; and translated guidelines and application.

- The City should promote the funding opportunity widely, taking advantage of ethnic and community media and BIPOC networks (e.g. newspapers, radio, neighborhood online magazines) to solicit proposals.
- The RFP should include an authentic engagement process, including sufficient notice of the meetings so that those most impacted have ample time to review the RFP and apply. Meetings and events should be held in community-based, culturally appropriate and comfortable spaces and enable potential applicants to engage with staff– with translators if necessary – to explain the work and answer questions.
- Provide a “how to apply” webinar. The City should act as a partner through the entirety of the application process and provide support to ensure that the applications meet all the City's requirements.
- Provide free, individualized technical assistance during the application process using a range of BIPOC and racial justice-oriented technical assistance consultants paid for by the funder. Technical assistance should include guidance for newer grantees on how to include and document indirect costs in their grant applications as well as guidance on “tipping” and maintaining public charity status.
- The RFP should not tell applicants how to do the work. That is for the community to determine.
- The process should use a simple application that is short and requires the minimum information needed to allow informed proposal review. The application should ask a few short narrative questions and cap the length of responses while avoiding strict character count requirements. Likewise, the process should use a simple budget template (e.g. see new budget template in use by the county’s Best Starts for Kids initiative). Finally, the application should not require lots of extra attachments and paperwork unless the applicant is shortlisted and likely to be funded.
- The application should include questions that can be used to gauge how race and social justice would be explicitly addressed in project design and implementation. Likewise, the application should include questions that capture demographics of organizational staff, leadership, board, and communities served.
- The City should test application questions to make sure the language is understandable.
- The City should allow a conversation to replace and/or supplement a written application.

Funding levels, terms, and conditions:

- To attract a range of applicants and project types use two funding tiers. One tier should be designed for smaller grants geared, though not limited to, smaller and/or less established organizations (e.g. grants that are \$25,000 to \$50,000 per year, use shorter grant applications, have fewer administrative requirements, etc.). The other tier should be for larger grants (e.g. \$100,000 per year) and intended for, though not limited to, larger and/or more established organizations.
- Operating on the knowledge that systemic racism has led to years of underinvestment and BIPOC-led organizations need support for operations, it should be allowable for SBT grant funds to be used for general operating funds and for equipment purchases, so long as organizations can demonstrate that their use of the operating funds is related to the activities and projects supported by the SBT grants.
- Reimbursement payments need to be timely (preferably faster than the regular 30-day period).

- For smaller entities that may not have the cash flow to support programs/services upfront, funds should be disbursed upfront. Provide “seed money” for those organizations or coalitions who do not have reserves or use a fiscal sponsor. Reimbursement grants, like those offered by the City, disproportionately impact small and BIPOC led organizations.
- Provide multi-year grants (3-5 years) and make the renewal process simple.

Duration of community grants:

- Generally, grants should be 2-year awards. However, organizations requiring additional capacity building support may receive a 2.5-year award to allow for a 6-month planning, training, development or testing phase. Grantees that may not have the available cash flow to support planning and programming (see *Contracting* section below) should be able to receive 6-12 months of funding upfront.
- The City should be equipped to provide—or contract with a consultant to provide—meaningful and responsive technical assistance and support to the grantees during the planning phase (see *Learning and Evaluation* section below).

Role of CAB in the RFP design, application, and selection process

- The CAB should have ample opportunity to review and provide feedback on all the RFP materials and processes (e.g. the announcement, application materials, scoring criteria, selection process, etc.).
- The selection panel should consist of CAB members and other community members who are leaders or experts in the program area, represent priority populations, and who are residents of the City of Seattle or work within the boundaries of the City of Seattle. Racial equity training should be required for all selection and review panelists.
- A selection panel reviewer should not be an application reviewer if:
 - The reviewer is named on the application in a major role;
 - The reviewer (or close family member) would receive a direct financial benefit if the application is funded;
 - People on the application with a major role are from the reviewer’s organization;
 - Within the past three years, the reviewer has been a collaborator (e.g. board member of applying organization, employee of applying organization) or has had any other professional relationship (e.g. served as a mentor) with any person on the application who has a major role;
 - The reviewer wrote a letter of support for the proposal.
- Community members should be paid a consultation fee for their time spent participating in the selection panel.

Selection criteria:

- Grant making should be guided by selection criteria that aligns with the foundational principles described above and prioritizes projects that are BIPOC led and serving (see also *Selection Criteria* below).
- Prioritize organizations led by people of color and serving communities of color and/or low-income communities. For example, assign extra points to applicants that demonstrate they are led by people from the focus community.

- To diversify grantees and contractors, the City should consider an organization’s funding history and whether or not the applicant has ever received a City grant before or is relatively new to City funds.
- Organizations that include youth in program design, delivery, and leadership, where applicable and appropriate to do so, should be given higher priority.
- The selection panel should think holistically about its funding decisions and strive for a portfolio of investments that strikes a balance between projects that can achieve fast outcomes and results and projects that may need time to mature and are led by organizations that require capacity-building support. Additionally, the selection panel should strive for a portfolio of investments that support a range of BIPOC communities and Seattle neighborhoods.
- If an organization is not selected for funding, application feedback should be offered.

Evaluation and reporting

- Be realistic about what results can be achieved for grants of different sizes and types.
- Contracts and the process-related deliverables should be flexible. For example, while there should be clear outcomes and goals established, the interim milestones and timelines should be flexible to account for changes or challenges that inevitably arise.
- Simplify reporting processes and reduce frequency of progress reports—only ask for information that is truly necessary.
- Make the reporting requirements reasonable, streamlined, and right sized to the award—one or two times per year at most.

Learning & Evaluation:

- During the planning and implementation phases of the grant, the City should contract with a consultant or be equipped to offer and respond to grantees with meaningful and responsive technical assistance and capacity-building support that reinforces the community-led process. Every funder-grantee relationship has power dynamics and these become especially important when establishing efficient and responsive technical assistance and capacity building services.
- Host annual or semi-annual workshops with grantees, to foster peer learning and networking, so long as these workshops are intentionally designed to be meaningful and responsive to the interests of grantees.
- The evaluation efforts associated with these activities should be pragmatic, low-barrier, use community-based participatory methods, and be implemented in ways that intentionally increase the capacities of the grantee to evaluate their own performance and outcomes.

RFP Name and Branding:

- The RFP and funds should be named and branded in such a way that maximizes awareness that these grants and projects are supported by Seattle’s Sweetened Beverage Tax revenues.
- Grantees should be required to include the City logo and a funding acknowledgement statement (e.g. *“This project is supported by the Sweetened Beverage Tax”*) in all materials and publications (see also *Contracting* below).

Contracting

- For smaller organizations that may not have the cash flow to support programming upfront, funds should be disbursed upfront.
- Contracts and the process-related deliverables associated with these grants should be flexible. For example, while there should be clear outcomes and goals established, the interim milestones and timelines should be flexible to account for changes or challenges that inevitably arise.
- Contracts should include a provision about a funding acknowledgement statement (e.g. include *"This project is supported by the Sweetened Beverage Tax"* in all materials and publications).

Selection criteria

<p>1. Internal Equity The activity is led by an organization with authentic connections to the community and the activity focuses on that community. The organization’s leadership and project staff reflect the culture and demographics of the focus community or seeks and incorporates feedback from the community they serve.</p>
<p>2. Impact The proposed activities are likely to exert a sustained, powerful positive influence on the outcome of interest and advance the goals of the grant program.</p>
<p>3. Community interest and appropriateness to community The activity is appropriate for or can be adapted to fit the needs, assets, and preferences of the community.</p>
<p>4. Builds capacity The activity builds/strengthens the capacity of community leaders and organizations to lead, develop, implement, and sustain solutions to improve healthy food access and early learning outcomes.</p>
<p>5. Addresses current gap, need and/or builds on community assets The activity complements existing activities, i.e. it fills a gap in existing activities and does not duplicate existing activities, and/or the activity builds on community assets.</p>
<p>6. Feasibility The activity passes the following feasibility factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● a clear path to implementation exists either by replicating a proven model or describing a practical path for implementing an innovative approach;● the organization’s plan for resourcing and implementing the program is realistic● there are sufficient resources and expertise available to successfully implement the activity;● current laws allow the activity to be implemented.
<p>7. Additional criteria/considerations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Does the applicant have the capacity (staff, skills, qualifications and track record) to successfully complete proposed activities? (This criterion should be applied differently to small and large grant applicants)● Is the budget realistic and sufficient to successfully complete proposed work?● Is the rationale for proposed work/selection of approach well described and compelling?● Proposed activities are clearly described (in terms of who will do them, what they consist of, whom and how many people they will reach, etc.)● Is community input/engagement clearly described and adequate?

END