

Preliminary Report

2019-20 Funding Results and Process Feedback

Introduction

This preliminary report summarizes results from PCL's 2019-20 grant application process. Results come from 3 sources: data collected in grant applications; PCL's survey of applicants in June 2020; and PCL's survey in February 2020 of community volunteers that read and scored grant applications. PCL staff prepared this analysis for PCL's Allocation Committee and all PCL stakeholders. This preliminary report tries to answer the question, "***Did process changes move PCL in the direction recommended by Community Engagement and Grantmaking Improvement reports?***"

Background: PCL's Two-Year Planning Process

In advance of PCL's 2019-20 grantmaking process PCL conducted a nearly two-year planning process. In the summer of 2018, Portland Children's Levy staff prepared a report, [Portland's Children: Overview of Key Local Data](#), summarizing data from various local and state sources on population characteristics and outcomes in the context of the Levy's six program areas. These data helped inform funding priorities.

Community Engagement: PCL hired Empress Rules Equity Consulting to conduct a 9-month community engagement process. Empress Rules surveyed 400 community members and 100 service providers and hosted 8 focus groups reaching 85 people. Participants included a very diverse range of lived experience and perspectives. The [Portland Children's Levy Community Engagement Report](#) outlines findings and highlights in each of PCL's six program areas. The findings emphasize equity as key to making real change in the community. The report recommended services funded need to be culturally relevant and responsive. Direct service staff need to reflect the cultures and speak the languages of those being served. People of color need to be in leadership positions at the organizations providing services and at the Levy. Organizations need to include families in planning and evaluating programs and services, and the Levy needs to include marginalized communities when allocating resources and making investment decisions. Community Engagement results report were also incorporated into PCL's [Program Area Strategies for 2020-2025](#).

Grantmaking Process Improvement: PCL also contracted with Portland State University's Center for Improvement of Child & Family Services to review the 2014 Levy grantmaking process and recommend improvements. PSU's qualitative evaluation assessed strengths and challenges, particularly focused on equity and transparency. The research team reviewed all application materials, funding results, feedback surveys, the City Auditor's report, and videos of past Allocation Committee meetings. They interviewed 59 stakeholders including past applicants (funded and unfunded), other local funders, and Allocation Committee members. PSU's final report, [The Portland Children's Levy: Review of the Grantmaking Process](#) includes 30 recommendations primarily focused on improving transparency and/or equity practices throughout the process. Recommendations for equity also included creating a small grants fund focused on smaller organizations who have not had access to Levy funding in the past.

PCL's 2019-20 Funding Process

In response to community engagement and the grantmaking improvement recommendations, PCL implemented several changes to its grantmaking process, such as:

- Redesigning the Request for Investment application and scoring criteria to focus more on applicant organizations' commitment and practices for racial equity, diversity, and inclusion

- Providing more transparent, ongoing, support to applicants through and FAQ, a weekly email digest to applicants of all questions they submitted and PCL staff's responses; using PCL website to consistently provide access to all application materials and pre-application supports
- Frequent email and social media communication updates from PCL staff to applicants about process timeline and steps
- Extensive community volunteer reviewer outreach, screening reviewers for experience in PCL program areas and with organizational practices focused on racial equity, diversity, and inclusion, training and individual check-ins with reviewers, providing stipends to reviewers
- Providing applicants with staff's funding recommendations and with reviewers scores sheets prior to applicant testimony and Allocation Committee funding decision meetings, and providing written and video public testimony options to submit to the Allocation Committee

2019-20 Funding Results and Process Feedback: Preliminary Analysis

Total Grant Awards, by Type of Applicant

PCL received 116 applications across its 6 programs areas, requesting \$114.1 million for \$68.4 million in projected resources over 3-years (\$1.7 for every \$1 available). PCL funded 85 grants and allocated all resources projected to be available.

- \$56.6 million for 63 grants to continue programs funded in 2014-2019; 18 of which received funding to expand services.
- \$11.7 million for 22 new grants; either the program (12) or the program & organization (10) did not have PCL grants in 2014-19

Table 1. Total Number of Grants and Three-Year Grant Award, by Type of Applicant

	Total Number of Funded Grants	Total Awarded	% of Total Awarded
Continuing Funding, No Expansion	45	\$ 38,232,907	55.9%
Continuing Funding Plus Expansion	18	\$ 18,385,794	26.9%
New Programs	22	\$ 11,780,900	17.2%
TOTAL	85	\$ 68,399,601	--

The Committee's program area allocations varied slightly from the percentage allocations planned in Fall 2019. Variances occurred due to the number, type and quality of applications in each program area.

Table 2. Three- Year Allocations by PCL Program Area, Compared to Total Funds Requested

Program Area	Planned % Allocation	Final % Allocation	Total Funds Requested	Final \$ Allocation
Early Childhood	30.7%	30.5%	\$ 23,399,258	\$ 20,889,002
Child Abuse Prev. & Intervention	19.8%	18.0%	\$ 18,622,999	\$ 12,291,411
Foster Care	10.8%	12.5%	\$ 26,625,913	\$ 8,520,021
After-School	18.8%	18.5%	\$ 18,474,274	\$ 12,653,161
Hunger Relief	10.9%	10.7%	\$ 9,136,051	\$ 7,307,975
Mentoring	8.9%	9.8%	\$ 17,913,565	\$ 6,738,601
Total	100%	100%	\$114,172,060	\$68,399,601

Staff Demographics of Organizations Receiving PCL Grants

A total of 44 unique organizations received funding. Based on data submitted in grant applications, 19 of those organizations have a majority of staff who identify as Black, Indigenous or Person of Color (BIPOC). Grants to these 19 organizations total \$34.2 million over 3 years, 50% of the \$68.4 million awarded. Three organizations listed staff demographic data as “Not Given” for more than half of total staff members.¹ Staff demographic data includes direct service and management staff.

Table 3. Funded Organizations, Amount of Funding Awarded and Organization’s Staff Demographics

Organization Staff Demographics	Number of Organizations	3-year Award Totals	As % of Total Funds Granted
Majority BIPOC Staff	19	\$ 34,272,245	50.1%
Majority White Staff	22	\$ 28,105,910	41.1%
Insufficient data	3	\$ 6,021,446	8.8%
TOTAL	44	\$ 68,399,601	--

Among PCL’s 22 new grants, 15 grants and 74% of the funding awarded went to organizations with majority BIPOC staff. Among the 18 grants that included expansion funding, 7 grants and 62% of the funding awarded went to organizations with majority BIPOC staff.

Application Scores and Funding Status

Application scores from community volunteer reviewers played a significant role in determining which applications PCL funded. Funded applications had an average score approximately 10 points higher than unfunded applications.

Table 4. Application Average Scores, by Funding Status of Application

	Average Total Score (of 100)²	Average Sec. I Score (of 36)	Average Sec. II Score (of 54)
All Applications	85.0	29.7	46.0
<i>Funded</i>	87.6	30.8	47.4
<i>Unfunded</i>	77.9	26.7	42.2

Reviewer Feedback

Of the 63 community volunteer reviewers, 54 responded to an online, anonymous survey PCL sent soliciting their feedback for process improvement. Among respondents, 26 of 53 (48%) identified as BIPOC while 4 did not answer the question and 24 identified as white. Overall, they provided generally positive Likert-scale responses indicating the review process worked well.

¹ These organizations are El Programa Hispano, Morrison Child and Family Services, and Human Solutions.

² A third section on program budget was worth 10 of the 100 total points. The variance in that section across funded to unfunded applicants was minimal: 9.3 to 9.0.

Table 6. Reviewer Perspective on Review Process: Likert Scale Survey Responses³

Survey Statements with Number of Responses	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree
The application questions focused on racial equity, diversity & inclusion (Section I) helped me understand the applicant’s commitment to racial equity, diversity & inclusion.	21	32	1	0
The criteria in the score form were effective to assess the level of organizational commitment to racial equity, diversity & inclusion.	15	31	7	1
The application questions about program design (Section II) provided a clear framework for understanding proposed programs.	18	33	3	0
The criteria in the score form were effective for evaluating proposed program design.	16	34	2	2
Overall, being a grant reviewer for PCL was a positive experience.	40	14	0	0

Still, 38 respondents identified the need for strengthening parts of the process. More reviewers identifying as BIPOC (n=21) responded that the process needs improvements compared to white reviewers (n=15, and not given =2). The multiple-choice options for improvement marked most frequently were the application’s focus on racial equity, diversity, and inclusion; application questions, and the score form. The survey asked reviewers to offer suggestions for improvement. No clear themes emerged from open-ended responses; reviewers sometimes suggested different remedies for similar problems. Some reviewers suggested more training and practice scoring would be helpful. In addition, 18 of those 38 provided comments of appreciation for their experience and being part of the process.

Applicant Feedback

The Applicant Feedback Survey distributed by PCL did not elicit extensive feedback. Fewer than 35% of individuals receiving the survey responded (n=44 of 131). The online survey was anonymous, so PCL cannot determine how many applicants are represented by the respondents. PCL suggests caution in interpreting Applicant Survey results.

According to Likert-scale responses, the majority of respondents indicated general satisfaction with the RFI, the Q & A process prior to application submission, receiving staff recommendations and score forms before providing testimony and with the testimony options PCL offered. Respondents were generally satisfied with PCL staff’s communication during the funding process. Respondents expressed the most dissatisfaction with the process and rationale the Allocation Committee used for its decision-making, and staff’s rationale for its funding recommendations. They also had more varied responses, including neutral perspective, on how PCL recruited volunteer reviewers and on the scoring criteria. Respondents’ comments echo range of perspectives on the funding process with no clear themes.

Conclusion

Taken together, these findings suggest that some shifts PCL made in its grant making process and funding priorities helped address equity issues. Funds increasingly went to organizations with staff that reflect the racial and ethnic identities of families and youth served. Applicants and reviewers expressed satisfaction with several equity-informed features of the process. Reviewers noted satisfaction with the RFI’s focus on racial equity, diversity, and inclusion, and they gave feedback to help continue and

³ No respondents answered “strongly disagree” to any of the Likert scale questions shown in the table.

strengthen that focus in the future. Applicants noted satisfaction with increased communication from PCL staff, transparency in the review process, and flexible options to provide testimony.

Some reviewers and applicants offered ways in which PCL can continue to prioritize and improve equity in its grantmaking process. Both reviewers and applicants indicated some need to improve the scoring criteria. Applicants also noted improvement needed in how PCL staff communicate and explain their funding recommendations and rationale.

At this time, PCL staff has not offered recommendations for future process changes informed by these report results. The PCL Small Grants Fund, created in 2019-20, is using different approaches including an ad-hoc process design team, a two-step application process that includes interviews, and facilitating application reviewers (rather than PCL staff) to recommend funding awards. After the Small Grants process finishes in December 2020, PCL staff will consider lessons learned, data reviewed in this report and further analysis to craft recommendations for advancing equity in future grantmaking processes.