

**PARTNERS FOR HEALTH
Montclair, New Jersey**

**GRANTS COMMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday, May 31, 2023 @ 6:00 PM
Via ZOOM Video Conference**

PRESENT: D. Candelejo and G. Essoka, Co-Chairs; D. Bauer, V. Gupta, P. Gutierrez, A. Idelbi, K. Kelly, M. Mazza, G. Reiter and T. Sears

EXCUSED: L. Amato, S. Elnakib, D. Harrison, F. Fdyfil-Horne, D. Van Wie and A. Yasin

ALSO PRESENT: P. Scott and K. Smith

WELCOME

Gloria Essoka, Co-Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. She announced that the meeting was being recorded. Proxies were assigned as follows: D. Van Wie to D. Bauer; S. Elnakib to G. Essoka; K. Kelly and G. Reiter to G. Essoka for the portion of the meeting they would miss upon leaving early.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the minutes of March 15, 2023.

REVIEW GRANT APPLICATIONS

Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) - Project Grant

Amount requested: \$35,000; Decision to table

This project will enhance two programs related to supportive housing. The first will focus on opportunities to leverage federal funding through the just-approved Medicaid 1115 waiver for housing-related services. The second will identify and increase state funding for supportive housing for people who were formerly homeless or leaving incarceration.

- Kate – Shared concerns that CSH is a nationally based organization; it does not have a strong presence in New Jersey. How easy would it be for them to make connections locally? Are they tapped into the local Medicaid network? Are they already doing Medicaid work in NJ?
- Glenn – Noted CSH’s annual revenue of \$47 million versus expenses of \$36 million; do they need our money?
- Kathy– Met CSH at the National Alliance to End Homelessness conference in February, where CSH led a Medicaid waiver workshop. After the conference, they introduced her to CSH’s NY/NJ/PA office.
 - Kathy consulted with the Taub Foundation, which has funded CSH for the past five years, before reaching out to CSH about working together regarding the waiver.
- Diana – Would this be PFH’s first grant to a CDFI (Community Development Financial Institution)?
 - Kathy – Yes, and this is part of the reason that CSH’s financials are so substantial.

- Doug – Should we focus our efforts with Monarch Housing?
 - Kathy – The plan for Monarch is to guide the work moving forward and to share lessons learned in Montclair with surrounding communities, and encourage them to invest in more affordable housing. We can also see if Monarch has expertise in the implementation of Medicaid waivers. We might need more than one organization to address the housing needs within our service area.
- Kathy – CSH is not likely to work within our service area communities without this funding. This investment would leverage larger streams of federal dollars in the long run if more of our local agencies were able to bill Medicaid for their behavioral health and/or housing services.

A motion was made to table the discussion of the proposal from the Corporation for Supportive Housing, pending further due diligence by the staff. The motion was seconded and passed with one abstention (Essoka).

Montclair Local – Project Grant

Amount requested: \$25,000; Amount recommended: \$25,000

PFH initiated this proposal to fund a half-time reporter devoted to a health care beat. This reporter will address related topics such as homelessness, housing, childcare, mental illness, poverty, and the climate. The reporter will look at the ways these issues impact the health of Montclair residents.

- Diana – The subjects and people interviewed will be treated with dignity. The goal is to inform and educate the local community.
- Gloria – The news coverage will also raise awareness and increase compassion for the issues some community members are dealing with.
- Kathy – The Local will launch a new online platform this summer.
- Paula – This grant will amplify messages around the Social Determinants of Health and other relevant topics.

A motion was made to approve Montclair Local’s Project Grant request for \$25,000. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

The Bridge – Project Grant

Amount requested: \$20,000; Amount recommended: \$20,000

The Bridge is seeking \$20,000 to help support the salary of a data analyst to expand their capacity to serve more mental health and substance use disorder clients, and to comply with reporting changes in the field. The analyst will streamline data entry for clinicians, reduce the time needed for record keeping, and increase the time clinicians have available to treat clients. Data analysis will improve client and staff experiences, measure efficiency and effectiveness, and track health equity goals.

- Ammar – You cannot underestimate the value of data and efficiencies that can be gained.
- Kathy – they serve a large number of clients who are on Medicaid. The billing for this is tricky; they need help drawing down the dollars.
- Paula – How much are they budgeting for this position?
 - Pam – \$71,200 is listed in the project budget. They indicated they would draw from event revenue if additional dollars are needed.

- They have a CQI (Continuous Quality Improvement) committee, which is a sign they are determined to remain current.
- Kathy noted that Felicia Fdyfil-Horne knows the Bridge well; she supported the invitation for them to apply for this grant.
- The data analyst will support the implementation of a new Electronic Health Record system, and help The Bridge to be in compliance with the Substance Use Disorder Interoperability System (SUDIS) of the State of NJ that will be implemented soon.

A motion was made to approve The Bridge’s Project Grant request for \$20,000. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Northeast Earth Coalition (NEEC) – General Operating Grant

Amount requested: \$30,000; Amount recommended: \$30,000

NEEC works at the community level to protect the environment and promote local sustainability and food security. It was founded in 2016 by Executive Director Jose German-Gomez. This volunteer-driven organization has trained more than 750 volunteers to plant and maintain community gardens. It founded the Free Little Pantry Network that is coordinated by more than 250 volunteers. The program projected a distribution of 220,000+ pounds of food for 2022; it has increased this projection to more than 330,000 pounds for 2023.

- Diana – the Little Pantries allow them to be tuned into the needs of the community, 24/7. NEEC is also a community activist, with a strong partner network.
- The pantries are well run; they are never empty. People take what they need, and they are respectful of the needs of others.
- Ammar – They do a lot to stretch a small budget. There is a lot of enthusiasm around this work.
- Kathy – NEEC is developing a talent bank, so they can be responsive to more requests; they do a lot to knit the community together.
- There are a total of 18 Little Pantries in Montclair, Clifton, Bloomfield and Cedar Grove; there is also one in East Orange.
 - Paula – One pantry is in a laundromat; they are meeting people where they are.

A motion was made to approve the Northeast Earth Coalition’s General Operating grant request for \$30,000. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Diana Candeledo, Co-Chair, presented the following proposals:

Perinatal Health Equity Initiative – Project Grant

Amount requested: \$30,000; Amount recommended: \$30,000

The Perinatal Health Equity Initiative is a grassroots community organization. They are dedicated to actively working toward eliminating health care disparities for Black moms and their babies through advocacy, education, community engagement, research, collaboration, and direct clinical support.

The lactation support funded by this grant will advance systemic change by filling a gap in the local healthcare system, which currently cannot give sufficient, culturally congruent support to

Black mamas experiencing difficulties that lead many to stop breastfeeding/chestfeeding, increasing the risk of health issues for both mamas and babies.

The project goal is to help Black mamas from West Orange, Bloomfield, and Montclair to overcome their lactation challenges, which are generally greater than for mothers of other races, and continue breastfeeding/chestfeeding.

- Gloria – How will they recruit clients from our service area?
 - They have partnerships with Zufall Health in West Orange which serves a large number of perinatal clients; they are also partnering with Tribeca pediatrics which is opening an office in Montclair.
- Issues around breastfeeding go across all income levels. PHEI accepts Aetna insurance, and they offer a sliding scale of self-paying options. The goal is to alleviate disparities for mothers who cannot afford to pay for lactation consultations.
 - Gloria – breastfeeding is about more than feeding your baby; it is tied to other health variables. The importance of this practice needs to be more widely publicized.
- When indicated, PHEI gives new mothers a blood pressure cuff to monitor their pressure at home.
- Kathy – PHEI is engaged and connected to others in the area. Brittany Wright, PHEI’s Director of Programming, serves on the Healthier Essex Coalition which is developing a community health improvement plan for Essex County.
- PHEI offers peer groups so that moms s can support each other.
- Diana – Individual lactation sessions can be expensive, up to \$350 per session. This presents an advocacy opportunity – to make these more affordable.

A motion was made to approve the Perinatal Health Equity Initiatives Project Grant request for \$30,000. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

New Jersey Citizens Action – *General Operating Grant*

Amount requested: \$35,000; Amount recommended: \$35,000

The New Jersey Citizens Action Education Fund (NJCAEF) seeks general operating funds to advance social, racial, and economic justice for all, increasing economic opportunities for New Jersey’s vulnerable, marginalized, and underserved communities. For more than 40 years, NJCAEF has empowered people and communities by educating policymakers and the public on the need for common-sense policies and programs, while operating free, direct services to lift people from poverty and connect them to public benefit programs.

For purposes of this project, NJCAEF will expand its programs and services to undocumented children, immigrant parents, low and moderate-income individuals, BIPOC communities and workers located throughout the 13 communities in Essex County and two communities in Passaic County served by the Partners for Health Foundation.

- NJCA focuses on policy and education, including financial literacy and how to access benefits.

- Gloria – they were very enthusiastic during the site visit. They’ve worked to provide access to health insurance for undocumented children and are working to lower the costs of prescriptions.
- The Cover All Kids program was launched to get coverage for 16,000 children; since January 2023 - 11,700 children have been enrolled.
- Families put off the health needs of their children when they don’t have insurance; in the long term, this can lead to hospitalizations.
- Doug – Do we know how many undocumented families are in our service area?
 - Kathy – we can ask NJCA for estimates. We do know that the Hispanic population is the fastest growing population in our service area; they may not all be undocumented.

A motion was made to approve the New Jersey Citizens Action Education Fund’s General Operating Grant request for \$35,000. The motion was seconded and passed with one abstention (Bauer).

REVIEW FUNDING RANGES

Produce Purchasing Grants for 2023-2024

Amount recommended and approved: \$115,000

This funding range will extend the PFH produce purchasing grants for another year. The grant dollars are awarded to the Salvation Army, Toni’s Kitchen, Human Needs Food Pantry, Grace-Pointe Seventh Day Adventist Church and St. Peter’s Haven Food Pantry.

- This is the only PFH grant that requires recipients to submit receipts; we want to ensure the funds are being used to purchase produce.

A motion was made to approve a Funding Range of *up to* \$115,000 for the Produce Purchasing Grants Program for 2023-2024. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Year-end Matching Grants for 2023

Amount recommended and approved: \$315,000

The matching grants are used to leverage donations from the community and are an important component of participating organizations’ year-end fundraising campaigns. Since 2018, PFH has capped matching grant dollar totals, as well as the amount disbursed to each grantee. The organizations that participated in the 2022 Matching Grants program each met their allocations, taking full advantage of available matching dollars.

- Kathy – The 2023 Budget for matching grants was \$290,000, slightly less than the amount awarded in prior years. It isn’t the year to cut back, given all that is going on.
- Organizations complete a General Operating grant application, and they participate in site visits with the staff; these are used to determine the allocations. They are notified in the fall of their awards, and they can then incorporate messaging about the matching funds in their year-end appeals.

A motion was made to approve a Funding Range of *up to* \$315,000 for the Year-end Matching Grants Program for 2023. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

PROPOSED CHANGES – GRANTS CYCLE & SMALL GRANTS

Staff proposed reducing the number of grant cycles from three to two, beginning in 2024. A second proposal was to increase the threshold for Small Grants from \$10,000 to \$20,000.

A motion was made to table the decision on the recommendation to move to two grants cycles in 2024, and to increase the threshold for Small Grants, pending more information about how the Small Grants program would be structured.

UNHOUSED MONTCLAIR

Kathy Smith provided an overview of the *Strategic Plan to End Unsheltered Homelessness* prepared by Monarch Housing. The plan and slides will be distributed to all Committee members.

- Doug – Everyone has a little bit of responsibility for addressing housing issues, but no agency is taking on housing first as their priority.
 - Kathy – Family Promise works with families and children using housing first. There are many competing issues and services within the local housing agencies, and not enough available housing stock.
- Some cities are hiring real estate experts to make the case to landlords to make more of their apartments affordable.
- As a next step, Monarch will form subcommittees to move toward improved systems, and a task force will be formed to oversee all committee activity.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 PM.

Submitted by,

Kathleen Smith
Program Director

UPDATE

Following the meeting, we learned that the Montclair Town Council is sending a letter of intent to purchase the building and property at 34 Union Street. This property is already used for affordable housing. The Council's final vote on the purchase is scheduled to take place on June 13.