

Steamboat Springs Education Fund Board

February 5, 2020

5:30PM

Human Services Board Room

Education Fund Board Directors present included Sam Jones, Jeanne Mackowski, Cristina Magill, Norbert Turek, Kandise Gilbertson, Jim Beers, Jon Wade, Jill Brabec and Julie Tourigny. Adam Alspach was absent. Also in attendance were Jenny Maxwell (Grants Commission); Linda Thomas (SSEF accountant); Jay Hamric, Katy Lee and Brad Meeks (SSSD); Rim Warson (Soroco); and Brian Hoza (HSD). Sarah Katherman prepared the minutes.

- **Call to Order:**

Sam Jones called the meeting of the Steamboat Springs Education Fund Board to order at 5:30 PM.

- **Public and Advisory Board Comment:**

Brian expressed concern that the level of scrutiny employed in the grant review process has increased to a new level that is perhaps unnecessary. He suggested that the process threatened to inhibit the school districts from making the choices they need to make. Following some discussion, it was decided to revisit this issue during the discussion of accountability reports.

- **Meeting Minutes – November 13, 2019:**

MOTION

*Cristina moved to approve the EFB meeting minutes of November 13, 2019 as written. Jeanne seconded the motion. **The motion carried unanimously.***

- **Committees Reports**

- Governance

Norbert distributed a handout of the Policies and Procedures Statement of Purpose. He reviewed the document, noting that goals should be defined to support each policy, and that the procedures should describe the actions that are taken to achieve the goals. The handout includes an example of policies and procedures regarding communications. Norbert reviewed the list of areas that will need to be addressed in the Policies and Procedures document. He said he would work with Jenny on the policies and procedures of the Grants Commission. The other areas to be addressed will be assigned to the appropriate EFB member(s). Norbert said that the policies should not restate the by-laws, but reference them as necessary. It was decided that once outlines are drafted, a meeting would be scheduled to refine the document.

- Communications

Jeanne said that she would like to re-write the communications plan and incorporate into it action items to be reviewed at each meeting to ensure that the plan is being carried out. Jim and Julie volunteered to help with this project.

- **Sunshine Law Resolution**

Sam read the Sunshine Law Resolution that states where meeting notices will be posted. He corrected the date on the document.

MOTION

*Cristina moved to approve and authorize the President's signature on the Sunshine Law Resolution for 2020, as amended. Jon seconded the motion. **The motion carried unanimously.***

- **Accountability Reports**

Jenny discussed the process through which the GC reviews the accountability reports and compares them to the original applications to determine if the grant plan was fulfilled. In reference to the comments made earlier by Brian, Jenny noted that this year the accountability report summary was sent to the current applicants. The applicants were asked to review the GC comments and, if any of them pertained to current applications, to add a comment on their current applications to address the issues cited. This process was designed to close the gap between the accountability reports and the new applications. Jenny noted that not meeting goals does not mean that a grant plan was unfulfilled. The important thing is for grantees to understand and explain *why* their goals were not met. She added that many factors can affect whether goals are met, and the SSEF wants to encourage meaningful “stretch” goals. Sarah offered that in the future it would be best if the accountability report reviews could be completed before the new applications are due, thus enabling the applicants to use the accountability report evaluations to improve their grant requests. Jenny acknowledged that a balance must be found between the SSEF’s responsibility to ensure that tax money is being used effectively and the potential for the process to overburden the grantees. She suggested that applicants should be surveyed periodically in the effort to improve the application process.

Noting that many salaries are paid for through SSEF grants, Julie asked if there was any feeling or perception on the part of teachers and other staff that their positions were vulnerable because they are dependent on grant funding that is allocated annually. Kandise stated that teachers are aware if their positions are funded by SSEF, and that it this can cause concern. Katy Lee agreed that having to go through the process annually for certain positions does make people in those positions nervous. Cristina noted that the communication to the community regarding how/why cuts are made is very important. Sam stated that because SSEF funding is sales tax-based, it will vary. Kandise noted that in the past the SSEF funded value-added “extras” and now the SSEF has become a crucial part of the funding for essentials. She offered that the SSEF ends up making decisions that it is not qualified to make. She suggested that with the exception of the “value-added” elements of the districts’ requests, no specific positions or elements of technology should be required as line items in the applications. There was a discussion of what level of specificity was appropriate and whether specialist positions could all be grouped into a single application. Jon pointed out that the districts choose which positions are funded by the SSEF. He added that there needs to be honesty in acknowledging that if SSEF funding dips, positions are at risk. It is up to the districts, not the SSEF, to determine where cuts are made.

It was decided that the level of specificity to be required within each application would be a good topic to discuss at the summer work sessions.

- **Financial Report, Audit and Tax return**

Linda reviewed the financial reports included in the meeting materials. Year-to-date SSEF revenues are up 10.62% over forecast. The expected funds available for granting, net the 10% cash flow cushion, is \$4,437,868.00. Sam said that the final budget for granting would be set in March. Regarding the amount to allocate for administrative costs, Sam suggested that the amount be based on the past 3 – 5 years’ actual costs. Cristina reviewed the draft budget spreadsheet.

- **Preliminary Grant Application/Process Discussion**

In response to a question from Sam, Jeanne said that the only grant requests that stood out for her were the requests for capital investments by SSSD, given the recent bond issue. Cristina agreed. Jeanne added

that she thought that the requested amount for the applied engineering programs seemed low. Sam added that the SSSD tech request was up 23% over last year.

Jenny asked the EFB to consider changing the “collaborative” allocation to “collaborative and leveraged funds.” She stated that although SSSD, HSD and Soroco do not have to include the grant to support their grant writer in their respective allocations, MVMCS must include the request for grant writer funding in its regular allocation. There was a discussion of the history and rationale behind the collaborative grants, and the benefits to be gained from leveraged funds. Jenny noted that MVMCS would like to participate in the grant writer collaboration, but currently that position does not have the capacity to take on another school. Julie offered that although it might be appropriate to change the definition in the future, a change should not occur in January, in the middle of a grants cycle.

MOTION

Jill moved to retain the current definition of the Collaborative Grants category, noting the importance of encouraging collaboration between the districts. Kandise seconded the motion.

Under discussion, Sam said that a place should be designated in the grant allocations for future possible grants that would leverage SSEF funds. Cristina offered that such grants could be assigned to the respective districts, unless they were collaborative. Jenny stated that the grant writer application issue is a matter of fairness to MVMCS. Sam agreed that it is an allocation model issue, and reminded all that the allocation model is just a guideline. He added that the issue could be revisited in the future.

The motion carried unanimously.

- **March meeting**
 - Budget
 - Policies & Procedures

- **April meeting**
 - Communications Plan
 - Preliminary review of GC recommendations
 - Upcoming vacancies on EFB & GC
 - Review of contracts

The EFB meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.