Grants in Aid Advisory Commission
Kōmike A ʻoaʻo Hoʻolako Kākoʻo
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU
925 Dillingham Boulevard, Suite 200• Honolulu, Hawaii 96817

Kaipo Kukahiko, Chair
Grant Kagimoto, Vice Chair
Malia Haumschild, Commissioner
Camron Hurt, Commissioner
Sandra Larsen, Commissioner
David Sgan, Commissioner

February 11, 2025

The Honorable Tommy Waters
Chair and Presiding Officer
and Members
530 South King Street, Room 202
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Waters and Councilmembers:

As required by Chapter 3, Article 15 (Ordinance) of the Revised Ordinances of Honolulu 1990, please find attached a report of the Grants in Aid Advisory Commission's (Commission) activities since Fiscal Year 2021. The report details the purpose, accomplishments, challenges, and recommendations of the Commission as requested by said Ordinance.

The Commission wishes to express its appreciation to the Council for its support and the opportunity to report the work that the Commission accomplished in the last six (6) years.

By this letter, we are pleased to extend an invitation to you and other members of the City Council to attend these meetings as your schedule allows. Our understanding is that the Department of Community Services will be keeping your office apprised of meetings as notices/agendas are posted online and with the City Clerk's office.

Thank you and please contact me if you have any questions at (808) 768-7709.

Sincerely

Kaipo Kukahiko, Chair
Grants in Aid Advisory Commission

Attachment

Grants in Aid Advisory Commission

Purpose

Section 9-205 of the Revised Charter of the City and County of Honolulu 1978 (2017 Edition) (RCH), created the Grants in Aid Fund, which, with a few exceptions, is the sole source of city funds to award grants in aid to federal income tax exempt non-profit organizations. The charter also established the Grants in Aid Advisory Commission (Commission) to advise the City and County of Honolulu (City) on the grants issued under the provisions of the Charter. The Charter further mandates that the Commission consist of seven members appointed by the mayor who serves for staggered terms of five years and until their successors have been appointed and qualified. Section 6-302 of the RCH administratively attaches the Commission to the Department of Community Services (DCS).

Chapter 6, Article 52, of the Revised Ordinances of Honolulu (ROH) further defines the Commissions responsibilities by stating that the Commission "shall review applications for the grants in aid monies and advise the city on projects to be funded with grant monies from the fund. The recommendations made by the grants in aid advisory commission regarding recommended expenditures from the fund shall be consistent with the priorities established by the council by resolution." Currently. Resolution No. 20-263 CD1 and Resolution No. 24-118 establishes the policies and priorities for the use of the Grants in Aid Fund.

Accomplishments

Each fiscal year, the Commission, reviews and scores grant applications based on the Council's priorities as established by Resolution 20-263 CD1 and Resolution No. 24-118. ROH Chapter 6, Article 52, also establishes strict timelines in which the Commission must review applications.

The Commission and DCS have worked together to create an application and scoring criteria that

Between Fiscal Year 2020 to 2024 the Grants in Aid Advisory Commission accomplished the following:

- From Fiscal Year 2020 to 2024. The Commission reviewed 701 grants that requested $96,619,388
- Of this amount, the Commission recommended 291 grants worth $47,077,659 for funding.
- The largest amount of grants awarded was in Fiscal Year 2024 with 67 grants and $10.6 million being awarded.
- The largest number of grants applications to be reviewed will be in Fiscal Year 2025 with 176 applications to be scored.

Challenges

One of the major challenges that has faced the Commission is a shortage of members. Currently the Commission has six appointed members with one vacancy.

While four new Commissioners have been appointed during the last two fiscal years, there will still be one vacancy due to a Commissioner's resignation. While the Commission understands the challenges faced in finding qualified and willing candidates to fill Commission vacancies, the vacancies present challenges to the Commission's work. The Commission would like to continue to work with DCS and the City Administration to fill its vacancies more expediently.

Improving Transparency

The Grant solicitation process follows the City's procurement guidelines. Public notice is posted upon issuance of the Request for Grant Proposals (RGP). Solicitation requirements and Grant scoring criteria are published as part of the RGP Solicitation issued by DCS. To ensure fairness, any questions about the Solicitation Process is only answer via Budget and Fiscal Services Department's Division of Purchasing. All questions asked of the Solicitation or during the information sessions are made publicly available as addendums to the Solicitation.

The Commission adheres to the requirements outlined in the State's "Sunshine Law" as defined in Chapter 92, Hawaii Revised Statutes. All meeting notices, materials, and minutes are posted online on the Commission's webpage at: https://www8.honolulu.gov/dcs/gia-advisory-commission-meetings/ . All of the Commission's meetings are open to the public and any one from the public may testify.

Improving Responsiveness

While there has been no direct inquiries made, the Commission is prepared to work with the DCS to respond in a timely manner to any inquiries by the City Administration, City Council, or the public.

Annual Costs

Fiscal Year	Expenses	Explanation
2021	$400	Supplies related to meeting notices and minutes, Zoom Platform subscription for virtual meetings.
2022	$400	Supplies related to meeting notices and minutes, Zoom Platform subscription for virtual meetings.

2023	$400	Supplies related to meeting notices and minutes, Zoom Platform subscription for virtual meetings.
2024	$400	Supplies related to meeting notices and minutes, Zoom Platform subscription for virtual meetings.

The annual costs for the Commission are about $400 a year in direct expenses. These include meeting notice publication, as well as Zoom virtual meeting platform subscription to allow the Commission to meet virtually.

The Commission does not have any full time staff assigned to it, and any administrative duties related to the Commission is performed by the Office of Grants Management as part of its duties of Administering the Grants in Aid Fund.

Recommendations

Resolution No. 20-263 CD1 and Resolution No. 24-118 states that "each Council District be awarded no less than $250,000 annually to organizations that provide services specific and exclusive to each district;". This has been interpreted to mean that each Council District must fund, up to $250,000 of grants per Council District of organizations that provide services to residents of only that District. In order to comply with this requirement, the Commission has recommended funding for organizations that have scored well below other organizations recommended for funding.

Further, while the Commission has strived to meet the $250,000 specific and exclusive funding level for each Council District as provided for in Resolution No. 20-263 CD1 and Resolution No. 24-118, there have not been enough organizations applying to fund services in each Council District to meet this requirement.

The Commission would like to recommend a more equitable solution. ROH Chapter 6, Article 52, already mandates that a minimum of $250,000 be allocated to each Council District. This requirement is met annually not just by grantees in one specific District, but by those that serve the entire City. The Commission believes that an equitable solution would be to base recommendations of funding strictly by the score that a proposal receives. This will allow organizations with the highest quality applications to receive funding and provide a fair award process.