

# Highlights from the March 14, 2024 Meeting

Madison Dane County Violence Prevention Coalition

## Session 1 – Discussion panel with two grantees from Public Health's last round of Violence Prevention funding.

The purpose of this session was for coalition members to learn more about what each other are doing, share successes and challenges and ideas, and identify opportunities for collaboration.

- **Moms on a Mission**, or MOMS, is a violence prevention and intervention program at East High School. MOMS creates a nonviolent environment by being present, by creating relationships, by de-escalating conflict, and by bringing community volunteers together to make a difference, right away, on the ground. For more information on MOMS or to volunteer, please see additional information at: <https://justdane.org/moms/>.
- **Urban Triage** is a non-profit organization that empowers Black families and children by developing and managing life-changing programming and mobilizing community resources to distribute them to those most in need. The information shared during the coalition meeting focused primarily on Urban Triage's housing services, including housing navigations services and services focused on youth ages 17-24. For more information on these and Urban's Triages other services, visit: <https://urbantriage.org/>

## Section 2 – Small group discussion on collaboration within and outside of funding, as well as opportunities for collaboration around schools, housing and community.

The purpose of this session was to continue the collaboration discussion that started during the previous coalition meeting, but with a focus on tips, tricks and pitfalls to avoid, as well as exploring opportunities for connection and collaboration. The following key theme emerged across the multiple discussion groups:

### What is needed for successful collaborations, within or outside of funding

- Buy-in to collaborate and decision-making must occur at all levels, from the leadership down to the front-line workers
- Collaborations between agencies with a shared value system, or that are similar or have similar passion for the topic
- Managing expectations through written Memoranda of Understanding or other clear delineation of roles and responsibilities
- Ensuring there is a defined orientation and onboarding process if staff from one agency will be working within another agency's existing process. Respect your collaborator's existing processes.
- We need more people who can make connections between potential collaborators
- Clear communication, especially during tough times
- Even though there is competition between agencies for limited funding, still being able to support each other when one agency is not funded

- Trust (which takes a long time to build!)
- Unrestricted funds will allow agencies to collaborate around the work they are already doing, rather than trying to fit their work to the money
- Collaborating with organizations already doing the work
- Central repository or hub of available funds would make it easier to collaborate
- Being creative with resources that are not money – skills, volunteers, space
- Identifying achievable metrics of success
- Longer funding cycles (> 1 year)

### Opportunities to improve collaboration around schools, housing & community

- New MMSD superintendent presents an opportunity to highlight community concerns and solutions
- A structure for regular check-ins to understand who is doing what and identify a plan for change
- Creating a system where school districts can align with organizations that can complement their school and overall mission.

### **Session 3 – Funding panel with representatives from the Oscar Rennebohm foundation, City of Madison Community Development Division, United Way of Dane County and Dane County Department of Human Services.**

The purpose of this panel was for funders to share information regarding processes, decisions, and challenges, and for coalition members to ask questions. Key themes are documented below and more detailed notes can be found on the pages that follow.

- All panelists acknowledged the challenge of more qualified applicants than the amount of funds available.
- The grantees were transparent about how funding decisions are made and who makes them. The processes involved Boards, various community oversight committees and the City of Madison Common Council. For those requesting funding from the City of Madison, make sure you have a relationship with your Alder.
- Common grant application mistakes: forcing programs to fit, or submitting a proposal that doesn't fit, the funding priority; not following instructions; assuming that whomever is reviewing the application already knows about your agency and programs (tell your story and assume the reviewers know nothing); copying and pasting responses from previous applications (the questions change from year to year!), over-promising what can be achieved; referring to other sections of the application in your response (sections are scored individually, therefore information should be repeated if necessary), submitting applications too close to the deadline and therefore the application is not *received* by the deadline.
- Advice for smaller organizations: find a fiscal agent that is well-aligned with your vision, do what you do well and find others to assist, attend grant-writing workshops and engage in other opportunities to learn, ensure your Board members can also assist with the work- for example, assisting with grant writing.

# Funding Panel Full Notes

The funding panel consisted of representatives from the following granting entities:

- [Oscar Rennebohm Foundation](#)
- [City of Madison Community Development Division \(CDD\)](#)
- [United Way of Dane County](#)
- [Dane County Department of Human Services](#)

## Description of agency & funding priorities

**Rennebohm:** The board discusses their ideas for multiple topics, then prioritizes a smaller number for additional research by staff. Current funding priorities: older adults, mental health among K-12 youth, prison education and re-entry.

**CDD:** priorities within CDD include school-aged children and youth, employment, funding Madison's 15 neighborhood centers, crisis intervention & prevention, and services for older adults. Anything they do starts with community engagement. They "support the people who support the people".

**United Way:** they do a community needs assessment and listen to partner agencies through focus groups and listening sessions to determine their funding priorities. They also focus on communities with disparities.

**County:** County Human Services has services that they are mandated to provide via funded contractors, for example housing services, services for people with disabilities, youth justice and prevention services like employment, therapeutic services and Restorative Justice.

## Challenges/What they wish grantees knew about the process

**Rennebohm:** They give fewer grants, but of larger value, usually with 2 years of funding. There are too many good programs for the amount of available funds.

**CDD:** Similar sentiment that there are more good programs than the amount of available funds. One common misconception is that City staff decide which agencies receive funding. City staff can only recommend who should be funded. They pass their recommendations to a Community Oversight Committee, who then passes their recommendations to the Common Council for the final decision. As Alders are part of both the Community Oversight Committee and Common Council, make sure you have a relationship with your Alder!

**United Way:** They have chosen to invest in organizations with 501(c)(3) status. Therefore, agencies must remain compliant with 501(c)(3) regulations. Their process for the final funding decision was also laid out: Community Solutions Team → Vision Council → Board of Directors. They would like to start funding smaller organizations and are always trying to re-evaluate and revise their processes based on user feedback. They also intend to increase availability of unrestricted funds provided at an agency level – not limited to a specific program or project within the agency. They are also making adjustments to the metrics used to measure success.

**County:** They fund grantees with the connections to those most in need. As County services are mandated, there is a strict process that may be hard for small agencies who might lack the required infrastructure. They are required to be put service delivery out for bid at a minimum every 5 years.

## How is the rubric/scoring system determined, and what are some common application mistakes?

**Rennebohm:** There is no set scoring system. The Board votes, and the vote must be unanimous. One common mistake is not contacting the Foundation first to learn whether, or how well, the proposal fits into the current funding priorities. Agencies interested in applying should contact Jennifer first before spending too much time developing a proposal that doesn't fit with the current funding priorities. Another mistake is being too vague in describing how the money will be spent.

**CDD:** CDD takes a holistic approach to making funding decisions, of which the formal "score" is only one piece. No funding decisions are made solely on the score as this is inequitable. Other considerations include: type of service, demonstrated need, past grant performance if applicable, coordination and collaboration with other providers and connections to the population. Common mistakes include not following instructions, trying to force programs/projects to fit the funding priority, assuming that City staff will be reviewing the application and are already familiar with the agency. Agencies are encouraged to tell their story when applying and should assume that the reviewers don't know anything about their agency or programs. CDD wants to develop a process for agencies that are not awarded funding to be able to receive feedback on their application.

**United Way:** Their rubric is transparent and described in the funding announcement. Common mistakes including copying and pasting responses from previous applications (questions change from year to year!), over-promising what can be achieved and not aligning well with the funding priorities.

**County:** County is moving toward a scoring rubric, but they don't have one yet. Currently they review SMART goals and outcomes. Common mistakes including referring to other sections of the application- sections are scored individually, therefore information should be repeated if necessary. Space should be used carefully- be complete but concise. Submit applications on time- the deadline is when the application is received, not when it is submitted. It may take a few minutes between the time the application and submitted and received, so don't submit at the last minute.

## Advice for smaller organizations to be more competitive

**Rennebohm:** Because the foundation awards larger amounts of money, smaller agencies may not have the capacity to manage these large amounts. They are looking to support events where multiple funders come together on-site to give smaller agencies more access to funding.

**CDD:** Agencies that don't have 501(c)(3) status should identify a strong fiscal agent that buys into and understands the vision and is well-aligned. Mis-alignment can cause chaos and confusion. Smaller organizations often try to do everything themselves- find those that can assist. Ideally Board members for smaller organizations would also help write grants and obtain funding. The City would like more joint applications from multiple organizations, but they don't get many. Joint applications are good because

they increase the project capacity and allow programming that might not be able to happen otherwise. They are also a way to model how we want to see our community work together, and joint funding helps to strengthen and build community connections.

**United Way:** They are looking for smaller agencies and start-ups to apply. They are also interested in women-led organizations. They currently have small seed grants to invest in the future of small businesses. Regarding collaboration-make sure all partners have the same definition of “collaboration”, and that there is a written document that describes how you will work together. Tell the story of both organizations and have ongoing communication.

**County:** Collaborative applications work well when one entity has the administrative background and the other has the community connections. Funders will vet stated collaborations – make sure you are having those conversations and clearly identifying what the collaboration means specifically. Do not say you are in collaboration in an application if you haven’t made contact and developed that understanding. For smaller organizations: attend grant writing workshops, focus on what you do well, take advantage of opportunities to learn, including the Wisconsin Philanthropy Network - <https://wiphilanthropy.org/>. Agencies have the opportunity to get feedback on their application if not funded.