

City of Portland

CDBG Allocation Committee



Thursday, February 27, 2025 at 8:00 AM Via Zoom

REMOTE ACCESS INFORMATION:

CDBG Annual Allocation Committee will conduct this meeting by remote methods/technology at the Zoom link provided below, in accordance with the requirements of 1 M.R.S. section 403-B and the City Council's Remote Participation Policy Public Remote Access Information:

*The CDBG Allocation Committee will conduct this meeting remotely via Zoom pursuant to the Remote Meeting Policy adopted by the Portland City Council. Allow your computer to install the free Zoom app to get the best meeting experience. If you are not able to attend live either in person or via Zoom, a recording will be available in the Agenda Center following the meeting. For public comment via Zoom, you will need to use the "raise your hand" feature. To raise your hand via the telephone, please hit *9. You will be unmuted by the host when it is time for public comment. This particular meeting will not take public comment.*

Please click the link below to join the webinar:
<https://portlandmaine-gov.zoom.us/j/88585053688>

1. Open Meeting and Roll Call
2. Approval of Minutes from 2/20
 - a. Minutes 2/20
3. Review Social Service Scores and Discuss Comments on Recommendation Letter
 - a. Draft Committee Letter
4. Vote on Recommendation Letter to City Manager
5. Next Meeting: TBD
6. Adjournment

CDBG Allocation Committee

February 20, 2025

8:00am-9:30am

Remote Meeting via Zoom

In Attendance:

Robby Perkins-High, Chair, Todd Morse, Vice Chair,
Wendy Harmon, Natalie King, Teale Kenneth Smith, Kim Vandermeulen,
Lawson Condrey
Staff: Mary Davis, Rowen McAllister

Meeting Minutes

Roll Call

Motion to Approve the minutes from the last meeting with a revision on the date at the top of the page from Teale. Todd seconds. Unanimously passes.

Discuss Social Service Scoring

Staff identified that social service scores are due 2/25. Staff pointed out that the Location and Sustainability have been removed for the Social Service scorecard, but that it is otherwise the same as what you previously used to score the development applications. Members asked whether applicants are revisiting their budgets due to threats on federal funding. Staff confirmed that only one applicant has provided an updated budget due to an unrelated budget shortfall. Staff advise that we proceed with the submitted budget. If an organization is partially funded, through CDBG or other expected sources we would allow them to proportionately revise their units of service. Staff further confirmed that it is common that the CDBG awards are made and then the budget for CDBG is passed, which sometimes prompts adjustments. Members also brought up how to consider the size of the CDBG ask. Members responded that generally they rate based on merit of the application and see where the funding falls. Other members identified how to get a good “bang for your buck” can be measured during the Measurable Impact when considering how the dollars impact the people served.

Staff also raised the correspondence from Jim Hall, a former Co-Chair of the CDBG Task Force in 2020, and his intentions for the New Applicant Set Aside to be used for new programs. Staff asked for members' thoughts about the current way Set Asides are working and whether they would recommend exploring opportunities for new programs in addition to new applicants. Staff reminded the committee that new applicants have to score a 75 points average score or higher to be considered for the set aside. Members responded that the New Applicant set aside seems to open the door to new applicant less familiar with the process, but find new programs to also be interesting.

Discuss Committee Letter to City Manager

Staff shared a draft version of the letter with the committee. It outlines the funding requests and total deficits, as well as the final rankings (left blank in the draft version) for the applications. The letter highlights the requirements of the process and other guidelines that the committee was working within. The committee reviewed the narrative portion at the end of the letter and began talking through preliminary comments about the scoring process. Members identified that letters of support may be weighted higher than the effort usually put into them. Members discussed whether it is fair to ask more of the letters of service or if they would recommend decreasing the value. Members generally agreed that they had to judge the quality of the letters based on the type of project. Some projects lend themselves more easily to letters of support. Another member raised that as a new member he sometimes felt unclear about the process of the committee and how to navigate the many different types of funding requests, especially given staff's interactions with the subrecipients. Members responded that they felt staff's role is to help understand the continuity of the program and the overall changes to the goals, and it is the individual members who bring particular expertise. Staff confirmed that the comment letters try to provide that additional context for scorers, but staff is always open to feedback about what would be helpful during the onboarding process for the committee. Committee members identified that sustainability and location scoring categories for development applications could be improved upon in the future, and perhaps could even be staff scoring categories. Staff confirmed that they would share the draft version with the committee to provide their feedback for next meeting.

Next meeting: Thursday, February 27, 2025

Time: 8:00-9:00am

Location: via Zoom

February 27, 2024

Danielle West
City Manager
Portland City Hall
389 Congress Street
Portland, Maine 04101

Dear Danielle:

We are pleased to submit the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Allocation Committee's recommended budget for the 2025-2026 program year.

This letter includes a description of this year's process, how the applications were reviewed and scored, along with our recommendations for funding.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Development (HUD) has not released the 2025-2026 allocations. This information should be available in the coming months and we are unsure whether the funding will remain level with the previous year's funding.

The need for CDBG funds, in general, exceeds the available resources.

The Administration Planning submission was joined by 10 Development Activities projects (one more as last year) and 20 Social Service projects (four more than last year). The Committee's allocation recommendation, the funding requested, and the resulting difference are represented in the following table.

CDBG Year	ALLOCATION	REQUEST	DEFICIT
Planning and Administration	\$411,693.00	\$411,693.00	\$0
Social Service Activities	\$633,317.03	\$1,818,215	\$1,184,897.97
Development Activities	\$1,003,454.97	\$1,605,500	\$602,045.03
TOTAL	\$2,048,465.00	\$3,801,421	\$1,752,956

Application Review Process

The mandatory applicant meeting was held on October 17, 2024. CDBG Applications were made available on October 21, 2024, and submissions were due Monday, November 18, 2024, by 4:00pm.

The Committee will meet 10 times between December 16, 2024, and March 6, 2025, to discuss Administration and Planning, Development Activities, and Social Service applications. The Committee members read each application individually prior to the meeting and discussed each as a group. When questions about the applications arose, staff documented the questions and forwarded them to the applicant to respond, and the applicant's responses were then shared with the Committee and reviewed. Allocation Committee members then scored each application individually, using the scoring matrix structured in accordance with the priorities established by the City Council.

After all the scores were received from Allocation Committee members, staff organized the applications by score from the highest to the lowest within each application category. The City Council has directed the Committee to recommend full funding based on the request of each applicant; therefore, each applicant was awarded full funding in descending order, by total score, until the anticipated funding was exhausted.

Funding Caps and Set Asides

The funding caps for individual projects are set at \$150,000 for Social Service applicants and \$250,000 for Development activities. Administration and Planning funding is limited to 20% of the entire CDBG budget. City applicants are eligible for up to 85% of available funds for Development Activities, with a minimum 15% reserved for outside organizations. In addition to the 85% cap, a public infrastructure set aside of up to 60% of the City's maximum 85% request remains in effect.

This year's allocations again features a structure where 20% of available funds for Social Services is set aside for projects submitted by applicants that have not previously received CDBG funding. These projects must receive a minimum average score of 75 but then are ranked among the subset of new applicants for the 20% funding set aside. This year 3 applicants met these criteria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Administration and Planning Funding

The Committee reviews information regarding Administration and Planning but does not score the application competitively. Administration funding is essential for operating the CDBG program and reporting to HUD. The Housing and Economic Development Department submitted a budget of \$411,693.00 with the understanding that Administration and Planning funding is limited to 20% of the entire CDBG budget. This year, the 20% cap is estimated to be \$411,693.00.

Development Activities Funding

The Committee received 10 eligible Development Activity applications requesting \$1,605,500 which includes both construction activities and economic development initiatives. For 2025-2026, \$913,454.97 is available for Development Activity funding. The following table lists in descending scoring point order the applicant organization, program, funding request, and committee recommendation. There is a deficit of \$602,045.03 needed to fund all Development Activities.

If there are contingency funds available the committee recommends allocating funds to the next highest score in Development Activities.

Organization	Program	Request	Points	Committee Recommendation
City of Portland Department of Parks, Recreation, and Facilities	Tyng Tate Playground and Age Inclusive Courts	\$248,000.00	90.43	\$248,000.00
City of Portland Department of Public Works	Cumberland Ave Sidewalk Improvement	\$200,000.00	82.43	\$200,000.00
City of Portland's Housing and Economic Development Department (HEDD) and Portland Development Corporation (PDC)	Business Assistance for Job Creation Program	\$205,000.00	82.32	\$205,000.00

Organization	Program	Request	Points	Committee Recommendation
Youth and Family Outreach	Resource Hub	\$250,000.00	81.57	\$242,592.94
City of Portland Department of Public Works	Tate Street Sidewalk Improvement	\$175,000.00	81.43	\$17,862.03
City of Portland's Housing and Economic Development Department (HEDD) and Portland Development Corporation (PDC)	Microenterprise Grant and Training Program	\$212,500.00	81.14	\$0.00
Alpha One	Critical Access Ramp Program	\$50,000.00	71.00	\$0.00
Upwards	Microenterprise Childcare Boost Program	\$80,000.00	69.71	\$0.00
Catherine Morrill Day Nursery	Playground Ramp Replacement	\$155,000.00	66.29	\$0.00
Port Resources	Group Home Repaving Projects	\$30,000.00	65.43	\$0.00

Social Service Funding

The Committee received 20 eligible Social Service applications. A total of \$1,818,215 in Social Service requests were received with an estimated \$633,317.03 in available funding. The following table lists in descending scoring point order the applicant organization, program, funding request, and committee recommendation.

Organization	Program	Request	Points	Committee Recommendation
Quality Housing Coalition	Housing for Systems-Involved Youth and Families	\$150,000.00	93.00	\$150,000.00
Wayside Services Program	Direct Services Program	\$40,000.00	91.14	\$40,000.00
Hope Acts	Asylum Seeker Assistance	\$150,000.00	91.00	\$150,000.00
Portland Fire Department	Mobile Medical Outreach	\$50,000.00	90.00	\$50,000.00
Greater Portland Family Promise	Homeless Prevention and Housing Stabilization	\$131,419.00	88.71	\$100,653.62
Milestone Recovery	HOME Team	\$107,000.00	88.61	\$0.00
Preble Street	Joe Kreisler Teen Shelter	\$35,000.00	88.57	\$0.00
Preble Street	Emergency Food Programs	\$55,000.00	88.29	\$0.00

Organization	Program	Request	Points	Committee Recommendation
Through These Doors	Community Based Domestic Violence Services	\$59,968.00	88.29	\$0.00
Spurwink	Ashlea's Place	\$144,419.00	87.14	\$0.00
Catholic Charities Maine	Immigrant Legal Services	\$135,072.00	86.42	\$0.00
Commonspace	Brackett Street Housing	\$68,000.00	84.71	\$0.00
Maine Needs*	Maine Needs	\$119,641.50	84.67	\$119,641.50
MaineHealth*	MaineHealth Food Pantry	\$68,105.00	84.29	\$3,021.91
Youth and Family Outreach	Relocation for Expansion	\$60,000.00	83.71	\$0.00
Presente! Maine*	Emergency Services & Food Assistance	\$142,632.20	82.04	\$0.00
Portland Health and Human	Immediate Nutritional Support	\$56,566.00	81.29	\$0.00

Organization	Program	Request	Points	Committee Recommendation
Services Department				
Boys and Girls Clubs of Southern Maine	Boys and Girls Club Transportation Program	\$149,947.35	80.32	\$0.00
Our Place	Youth Mentorship Program and Family Advocacy Services	\$57,993.60	76.04	\$0.00
Maine Academy of Modern Music*	Extracurricular Youth Development through Music	\$45,000.00	71.14	\$0.00

*Indicates new applicants

Additional Considerations

There are **three** points related to the submitted projects that deserve additional consideration beyond the scoring rubric we have applied in the above allocations.

1. First, the set aside funds for 'New Applicants' is producing positive if somewhat mixed results after 4 funding cycles since being implemented. Having any new applicants is evidence of a healthy program and our expectation is that this set aside will continue to increase interest going forward. This year, three new applicants scored well enough to meet the 75-point minimum threshold needed to qualify for funding and a fourth new applicant did not score high enough to qualify for funding.

Specifically, the qualifying applicants meet the minimum threshold for the Set Aside, but their scores are markedly lower than several other Social Service applicants. As the 'New Applicant' set aside is seeking a balance between established applicants and new applicants, it is expected that organizations new to CDBG may not score as high. The committee also notes that Quality Housing Coalition was a first-time applicant during the

2022-23 cycle and this year submitted the highest ranked proposal which we take as evidence that the new applicant process yielded positive results this year.

2. Secondly, the Committee is aware that the City Council can authorize an allocation of \$20,000 from the Cotton Street parking lot sales proceeds towards CDBG Social Service Activities. In its advisory capacity, the CDBG Allocation Committee recommends applying these funds toward Greater Portland Family Promise to bring that application—which is currently recommended for partial funding—closer to the full amount requested. The Committee also recommends reallocation of the approximately \$3,000 from Maine Health to Greater Portland Family Promise, since the minimum grant request is \$10,000.
3. Finally, while the CDBG Allocation Committee is not suggesting immediate changes to the scoring process, the Committee is looking ahead to the next iteration of the CDBG Priority Task Force and opportunities to revisit the process for scoring applications and allocating CDBG funds. There is a strong consensus within the Committee that the limits of the scoring system and funding availability mean that we are leaving competitive applications and critical services unfunded. There are two types of potential remedies to this that we'd like to suggest for consideration:
 - There have been motions in recent years to adjust funding caps or reduce existing set-asides (or both). The committee believes that these should be reconsidered in light of a post-COVID environment where community need continues to increase and shift.
 - The other potential remedy for discussion is an allocation that is either more widely distributed or gives some proportion of funding to the entire group of highest scoring applicants. In practice, this would mean partial funding above a threshold score, perhaps 90 points; alternatively, all projects scoring above 90 would be selected for funding based on a lottery.
 - The Committee also indicated that there may be a greater weight on Letters of Support and Demonstrated Outreach than necessary. The effort put into the rest of the application generally exceeds the effort demonstrated in the letters of support, despite the high scoring value placed on the letters. Members question whether to reduce the scoring category to align with the general quality of the letters of support, or to hold applicants to a higher standard for such letters and demonstrated outreach as to be deserving of the full 15 points.
 - The Committee would welcome further review of the Location and Sustainability scoring categories. Members feel there is an opportunity to clarify the intent and interpretation for scoring Development Activity applications.

We respect that you may have different priorities from those reflected in the Committee's allocation recommendations, and that you have the flexibility that is not afforded by the structure of the Committee's scoring system. We look forward to learning of your and the City Council's conclusions regarding CDBG allocations.

Summary

Portland is fortunate to have a diverse and talented community of organizations seeking the development of the City and the redress of the needs of its residents. All projects that applied to the program would benefit our City, but scarce funding prevents us from funding all of them. This is a competitive process; each applicant competes against all other applicants in their respective Development and Social Services categories.

We thank you for your commitment to this program and hope you are satisfied with the results. We take the opportunity to serve on this committee with the utmost seriousness and diligence and feel the outcomes above reflect our best adherence to the rules and guidance provided.

We offer our recommendations for your consideration. We look forward to seeing you during your upcoming meetings and hearing your response.

Sincerely,

The CDBG Annual Allocation Committee for Program Year 2025-2026:

Robby Perkins-High, Chair

Todd Morse, Vice Chair

Lawson Condrey

Natalie King

Teale Kenneth Smith

Kim Vandermeulen

Wendy Harmon

Non-Voting Members include: Kristen Dunphey and Andrea Levinsky

Attachments: CDBG Allocation Committee Funding Recommendations 2025-2026 (spreadsheet)