M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Austin Community Technology & Telecommunications Commission

FROM: 2013 GTOPs Grant Review Working Group
           Via: John Speirs, Program Coordinator
                   Office of Telecommunications & Regulatory Affairs

DATE: September 12, 2012

SUBJECT: 2013 GTOPs Review Working Group Recommendations

The purpose of this report is for the Commission to review and approve the recommendations of the 2013 Grant for Technology Opportunities Program (GTOPs) Task Force chaired by Melvin White, with members Chip Rosenthal and Kedron Touvell in attendance.

Introduction

The GTOPs program provides matching funds to Austin organizations and citizens' groups for projects focusing on use of information technology and connecting our citizens with computers and the Internet.

The task force recommends the Commission discuss the vision, mission and goals at the conclusion of this report, and recommend any changes as necessary.

Vision: A community where all citizens have access to the facilities and the necessary skills to participate in an emerging digital society.
Mission: To provide matching grant funds to Austin organizations for projects that create digital opportunities and foster digital inclusion.
Goals:
- Support programs that provide public access to computers and information technology, especially among underserved segments of our community.
- Support programs that provide information technology literacy, education, and training.
- Support programs that use information and communication technologies in innovative ways that serve the community.
- Provide seed funding for Austin community and non-profit organizations for their technological outreach efforts.

Recommendations

1. **GTOPs Marketing and Outreach**

Building on the success of last year's marketing and outreach program. Staff will continue to market the grant to local service providers and non-profits through our engagement efforts. These efforts include

email blasts, postcard mailings, press release and information posted to our website. Staff also meets 1:1 with organizations with potential capacity to submit a program application to GTOPs.

In Austin's own communities, internet access is lowest among underserved populations: the least educated, the poorest, Hispanics, and recent immigrants. Seven organizations directly linked their program to the tech survey, with two winning proposals (Literacy Coalition of Central Texas and Austin Free-Net) now successfully serving underserved areas of the Community by gearing their GTOPs program to underserved residents as a direct response to the Tech Survey.

Recommendation Options and Alternatives:

(1) Staff recommends the Commission approve the GTOPs Marking and Outreach as recommended.

(2) The Commission can reject and amend the plan and provide additional direction to staff.

2. **Attracting Innovative GTOPs Proposals**

The Working Group of the Commission discussed the perennial problem of attracting smaller, grass roots, innovative programs to apply. The Working Group identified one solution that we could do within schedule of the 2013 process is to encourage these groups to partner with another org to act as fiscal agent and provide support by including the following statement in the application package on page 6 under "Application Information and Timeline" at the end of the "GTOPs Requirements" section.

The Commission wishes to encourage small, grass-roots, innovative programs to apply for GTOPs funding. To facilitate this, we encourage small groups to partner with an established organization that can serve as fiscal agent and assist in the grant process. The Grant Review Committee will consider a quality partnership positively when evaluating "community support" of a proposal.

Recommendation Options and Alternatives:

(1) Staff recommends the Commission approve the Attracting Innovative GTOPs Proposals Plan as recommended.

(2) The Commission can reject and amend the plan and provide additional direction to staff.

3. **Online Application**

The Working Group of the Commission allowed for flexible orientations to be scheduled throughout the month of October for organization representatives to learn about GTOPs 2013. Staff will also use these flexible scheduled orientations to distribute their online application training and login information.

The proposed mandatory orientation will be marketed as an introduction to the GTOPs 2013 cycle and provide information and resources for organizations applying for GTOPs. The mandatory orientation are proposed to be held throughout the month of October at varies times and locations.

Application requirements linked to GTOPs Program requirements, as approved by the Commission.

Staff will distribute the Grant Application for 2013 Grant Cycle. This will serve as the official Grant Information and technical assistance packet. Organizations will be uploading all of the required information and backup documentation to an online portal. This same portal serves as the grant management system used currently by the City, and organizations who are selected for GTOPs 2013 will utilize the information already entered into the online application. The City of Seattle uses a similar online portal to manage its application for their Technology Matching Fund Program, staff inquired with City of Seattle representatives regarding this and the online management of applications has helped to

strengthen applications, decrease variances and errors providing for a uniform and format to the applications submitted.

Recommendation Options and Alternatives:

(1) Staff recommends the Commission approve the GTOPs Online Application Plan as recommended.

(2) The Commission can reject and amend the plan and provide additional direction to staff.

4. **GTOPs Funding Range Adjustment of $10,000 to $25,000.**

Recommendation to adjust range of funding per organization from ($10,000 to $30,000) to ($10,000 to $25,000). The task force recognizes the importance of GTOPs funding within our community, ensuring consistent with the realistic funding requests being received for GTOPs. In keeping with the realities of funding requests received for the program, staff proposes adjusting the award amount to ($10,000 to $25,000). The only revision will be adjusting the maximum amount awarded to $25,000, this is based on the lack of applications in 2012 seeking the $30,000 amount, and this could also serve to provide funding for an additional organization depending on other award amounts.

Recommendation Options and Alternatives:

(1) Staff recommends the Commission approve the GTOPs Funding Range Adjustment as recommended.

(2) The Commission can reject and amend the plan and provide additional direction to staff.

5. **Ratify previous staff recommendation to adopt 70% funding minimum for GTOPs funding allocations.**

This will assist staff in bringing the program in line with other City grants, and the grant management program TARA implemented. The 70% baseline also fulfills Commission direction to not fund organizations at a partial level, and to fulfill a majority of the proposed program at a level of 70%.

Recommendation Options and Alternatives:

(1) Staff recommends the Commission approve the GTOPs 70% Funding Minimum as recommended.

(2) The Commission can reject and amend the plan and provide additional direction to staff.

6. **GTOPs Reviewer Questions**

In FY 2012, the Commission approved the recommendation to implement definitions to scoring system.

The scoring recommendation hereinafter was communicated to staff via Grant Review Committee Member, Elizabeth Gibson;

"The Scoring System Definitions section was a really good improvement. The last time I saw you I told you that I had an idea to possibly simplify what seemed like a cumbersome scoring system.

Here's my idea. Instead of having 10 partially or completely overlapping scoring criteria that take time to think about their delineation, cluster them into 5 main categories. I did not do any correlation analyses but I think if you did you'll observe the similar themes among questions. I might also consider adjusting the total points for each category cluster so that they are more evenly distributed, i.e. each cluster is 20 points or 20-25 points. But if it's important to prioritize the importance so that Budget has 30 points but GTOPS mission has 20 points, I think its fine to leave the distribution of scores as is.

I.---- (Community impact 25 - pts total)

1. The program and its objectives are well defined and serve a community need. (10 pts)

3. This project has demonstrated that if implemented it will have an ongoing/lasting positive impact on the community. (5 pts)

4. This project has demonstrated that it has community support and participation. (10 pts)

II.---- (GTOPS mission 20 - pts total)

2. This project is a clear fit with the mission and goals of the GTOPS program. (20 pts)

III.---- (Evaluation of success -15 pts total)

5. This project has a clear plan for success. Its goals and objectives are achievable and its work plan is feasible. (10 pts)

6. This project has demonstrated its ability to evaluate its own success and that its proposed measures for evaluation are viable and appropriate. (5 pts)

IV.---- (Budget and fiscal responsibility – 30 pts total)

7. This project has shown that it is a fiscally responsible organization that will utilize City funds appropriately if awarded this grant. (10 pts)

8. This project has clearly shown that it will be able to meet the requirement of 1:1 matching funds and that their planned use is appropriate to the program. (10 pts)

9 This project has provided all required documentation, which clearly shows its annual revenue and matching dollars (in-kind and/or cash). (10 pts)

V.---- (Overall recommendation – 10 pts total)

10. Applicant has convinced me that they have the capacity to complete this project successfully and I would recommend that this project be awarded its requested dollar amount for GTOPS. (10 pts)

Current Reviewer Question Matrix

1. The program and its objectives are well defined and serves a community need. (10%)
2. This project is a clear fit with the mission and goals of the GTOPs Program. (20%)
3. This project has demonstrated that if implemented it will have an ongoing/lasting positive impact on the community. (5%)
4. This project has demonstrated that it has community support and participation. (10%)
5. This project has a clear plan for success. Its goals and objectives are achievable and its work plan is feasible. (10%)
6. This project has demonstrated its ability to evaluate its own success and that its proposed measures for evaluation are viable and appropriate. (5%)

7. This project has shown that it is a fiscally responsible organization that will utilize City funds appropriately if awarded this grant. (10%)
8. This project has clearly shown that it will be able to meet the requirement of 1:1 matching funds and that their planned use is appropriate to the program. (10%)
9. This project has provided all required documentation, which clearly shows its annual revenue and matching dollars (in-kind and/or cash). (10%)
10. Applicant has convinced me that they have the capacity to complete this project successfully and I would recommend that this project be awarded its requested dollar amount for GTOPs. (10%)

Recommendation Options and Alternatives:

(1) Staff recommends the Commission approve the <u>GTOPs Reviewer Questions</u> as recommended.

(2) The Commission can reject and amend the plan and provide additional direction to staff.

7. **Recusal of participants in Grant Review Committee**

The Grants Review Working Group provided direction to Staff to add the following statement to the Grant Review Committee Code of Conduct & Conflict of Interest Agreement:

"Management and capacity (leadership) of an organization can not participate in grant review committee."

Recommendation Options and Alternatives:

(1) Staff recommends the Commission approve the revision to the <u>GTOPs Ethics Statement</u> as recommended.

(2) The Commission can reject and amend the plan and provide additional direction to staff.

8. **2013 GTOPs Grant Cycle Timeline**

September 12, 2012 – Pending Commission approval and subsequent Budget Adoption; GTOPs Applications & Grant Review Committee Applications Released

October 2012 – Orientations scheduled throughout the month.

November 30, 2012 – Grant Review Committee Applications Due (Applications sent to Commission December 3, 2012)

December 10, 2012 – GTOPs Applications Due

December 12, 2012 – Commission Meeting- Review Committee Selected

December 17, 2012 – *Tentative* Review Committee Orientation

January 7, 2013 – Written Questions Due (Reviewers)

January 21, 2013 – Written Responses Due (Applicants)

February 1, 2013 – First Round of Scores Due

February 15, 2013 – *Tentative* Oral Presentations

February 2013 – Final Deliberation

March 13, 2013 – Commission Meeting – Awards Recommendations Presented

Recommendation Options and Alternatives:

(1) Staff recommends the Commission approve the GTOPs Timeline as recommended.

(2) The Commission can reject and amend the plan and provide additional direction to staff.

9. **Commission and Staff Roles**

The Grants Review Working Group worked with Staff to formally set into written policy the roles and responsibilities of the Commission and City staff;

Staff	Commission
Grant Monitoring	Funding Recommendations
Program Administration	Application Review Criteria
	Approving Grant Review Committee

GTOPs

Mission/Goals

Review Working Group (through Working Group Chair)

Grant Review Committee (through liaison)

Recommendation Options and Alternatives:

(1) Staff recommends the Commission approve the GTOPs Roles and Responsibilities Flowchart as recommended.

(2) The Commission can reject and amend the plan and provide additional direction to staff.