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## **2010 Social Innovation Fund Grant Reviewing and Scoring Process**

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The Corporation implemented a rigorous application review process over a three-month period. Over 60 experts with extensive experience as social innovators, nonprofit directors and evaluators provided critical input across three stages of review, assessing applications against the full set of criteria published in the [SIF Notice of Federal Funds Availability](#) (NOFA).

The applications were evaluated based on their program design, organizational capacity and budget. In the final stage of the review, senior members of the Corporation's staff were joined by external reviewers to assess the qualities of the top applications against the portfolio criteria in the NOFA. The finalists were asked to submit clarifications regarding their applications to help the Corporation further assess the merits of their applications.

In accordance with the [authorization and waiver](#) issued to SIF Director Paul Carttar by the agency's ethics official the Corporation put into place procedures to isolate Mr. Carttar from consideration of any application that included his former clients or employers of the last two years. Additionally, the Corporation removed Mr. Carttar entirely from the selection of the final SIF grantees. Corporation CEO Patrick Corvington did not participate in the selection process at all. He was completely recused from the selection process as soon as the agency received a notice of intent to apply from an organization with which he had a previous business relationship. The Corporation implemented a process to ensure that the CEO did not participate in the decision-making process and to enable the CEO to receive informational one-way briefings on the selection process without mention of any applicants by name, so that he could fulfill his responsibility to oversee agency operations. A bipartisan ad hoc committee of the agency's Board of Directors, comprised of Board members who did not have any potential conflict of interest with any applicant, received high-level briefings and provided feedback at critical junctures throughout the entire review process.

The selected 11 SIF grantees demonstrated their strength throughout the multi-phase review process. The competition for SIF awards was rigorous. Of the 54 compliant applications (out of 69 submitted on April 8th), only 16 made it to the Phase III Late-Stage Portfolio Review and 11 were ultimately selected to receive SIF grants.

### **Phase I Blended Review**

In the initial review phase, 48 outside experts (3 per panel) worked on 16 unique panels to assess applications against the full set of criteria in the NOFA. The 16 panels were divided into two groups of eight and organized by two dimensions: issue area and size distribution, allowing each of the 54 applications to be considered twice. Sixteen internal skilled facilitators from the Corporation were assigned to the panels. The review was completed on May 14th, and resulted in 31 applications going on to the Phase II Evaluation Review. Those eliminated were programs where each of the two review panels independently concluded the applications were not strong. All applications that received an "Excellent" rating from at least one panel advanced to the next round, including three applications rated "Excellent" by one panel and "Weak/Non-responsive" by the other. Reviewers' comments from the first phase carried forward through the review and informed clarification questions in the final stage of the process.

- [Click here to see the Phase I Blended Review Chart](#) (PDF)

### **Phase II Evaluation Review**

Focused squarely on evaluation, the Phase II Evaluation Review was a defining feature of the SIF competition, resulting in the largest percentage cut in the applicant pool (a roughly 50% cut). Six panels were organized by issue area, with two external reviewers (experts with deep social innovation, issue-specific, and evaluation knowledge) assigned to each panel. The focus was on the use of evidence, data and evaluation (a sub-set of the NOFA criteria). This review was completed on June 3rd and resulted in 16 applications going on to the Late Stage review. Applications that advanced from this phase of the review were the programs that demonstrated the strongest use of evidence-based decision-making across the priorities and preferences established by the statute and the NOFA.

- [Click here to see the Phase II Evaluation Review Chart](#) (PDF)

### **Phase III Late-Stage Portfolio Review**

The Phase III Late-Stage Portfolio Review involved three external experts and senior staff. In a day-long meeting on June 9th, the reviewers examined and provided input on each applicant based on the portfolio criteria in the NOFA, with a particular emphasis on four dimensions: strength of relationships and collaborations, opportunity for scale, potential to impact public discussion, and the rigor of sophistication of evidence and evaluation. At the conclusion of the meeting, external experts were excused and the Corporation's senior staff deliberated and identified a portfolio of 11 applications.

#### **Phase IV Clarification**

Between June 21st and July 9th, the Corporation staff held a series of clarifying discussions with the 11 remaining applicants to address questions regarding their program plans and budgets. On July 13th, after concluding these discussions, the Corporation announced the 11 applicants as the inaugural SIF grantees.