INDIVIDUAL REVIEWER WORKSHEET-PROGRAM
2015 SOCIAL INNOVATION FUND GRANT COMPETITION
PROGRAM REVIEW

Legal Applicant: Applicant X **Application ID:** 15SI161234
Reviewer Name: John Doe

Assess the extent to which the applicant addresses each of the elements of the application. Select a Rating for each element; provide comments for each Rating. All comments should address the significant strengths and weaknesses identified in your assessment that justify your Rating.

PROGRAM DESIGN

1. **Rationale and Approach (10%)**

In determining the quality of an application, please assess the following criteria:

- The applicant's approach as either a geographically- or issue-based Social Innovation Fund (as described in *Section A.1: Purpose of Social Innovation Fund Funding*), including the target community or geographies that they will serve and the Social Innovation Fund issue area(s) on which your programming will focus.
- Whether the applicant makes a persuasive case, using statistical information, that they have identified a critical social problem in the target geographical area(s).
- Whether the applicant demonstrates that solutions currently being implemented to address the selected social problem in the target geographical area(s) have not been proven to be effective, are not achieving outcomes at scale, or are too slow to respond.
- Whether the applicant presents a clear, logical theory of change that outlines their investment approach and the specific measurable outcomes that will be achieved through their proposed program. They should convey an intentional approach to solving community problems through their subrecipient investments and clearly explain:
  1. the types of organizations they will invest in and why; and
  2. the value-added activities, including technical assistance or other services, they will provide to their subrecipients in order to align them with the theory of change and achieve the desired outcomes.
- The applicant's description of the programming strategy (A or B above) they plan to utilize and why it's the most appropriate for them to achieve their goals

  Strategy A: The case they make that appropriate, evidence-based solutions exist to address the identified social problem in the target geography (ies).

  Strategy B: The case they make that the solution(s) they propose to implement is: innovative (as defined in *Section A.1: Purpose of Social Innovation Fund Funding*), appropriate for the social problem identified, aligned with their theory of change, and is likely to produce the desired outcomes.
- If the applicant is applying for renewed funding of a currently funded SIF project: whether the proposed activities will further increase knowledge about intervention.
- If the applicant is a current recipient of, or are under consideration for, other federal funding: how the proposed SIF project is distinct from, or will supplement rather than duplicate, other federally funded projects. They should specify the other federal funding sources.

Strengths:

The applicant identifies and convincingly describes extensive neglect and consequent need for civic, social and philanthropic investment in one of City X's most disadvantaged neighborhoods. By targeting their SIF on a 2.25 square mile area of the city, the applicant will concentrate resources, and raise the level of impact.

The applicant persuasively documents the community need with data on educational underachievement, social dysfunction, family breakdown, compromised health and educational underachievement.

Weaknesses:

Although the applicant provides 5 specific outcomes that have measures attached to them, it is unclear from the proposed theory of change how the design would support attaining these outcomes. Little to no detail was provided. For example, Outcome #4 states that "100% of families of enrolled youth will receive intensive support" yet there are no details provided to determine if this is a realistic measure for the objective, what types of intensive support would

be received, or how receipt of intensive support would directly contribute to their overall goal of improving youth educational success within the identified geographic area.

The applicant includes a theory of change and identified 5 specific outcomes they will work towards. However, the outcomes don't logically flow from their theory of change. For example, they propose investing specifically in adolescent youth subrecipient programs but their outcome measures seem to focus a great deal on families. Because some of the youth they claim to want to target are already emancipated, it is not clear how their interventions will connect or have effect on families.

The support for subrecipients that will be offered to ensure fiscal and programmatic compliance is comprehensive. However, the application doesn't explain the specific capacity building technical assistance that will be offered to build capacity to carry out the program and achieve the identified outcomes.

The applicant did not demonstrate that it had reviewed the landscape to determine whether there were adequate innovative program models with at least preliminary levels of evidence addressing the five outcomes on which it plans to focus.

_ Excellent (10)	_ Good (8)	**X Fair (6)**	_ Inadequate(4)

PROGRAM DESIGN

2. **Proposal for Subrecipient Selection (15%)**

In determining the quality of an application, please assess the following criteria:

- The applicant's profile of the type of subrecipient organization they hope to fund and how it aligns with the rationale and approach described above.
- Whether the applicant provides a clear and comprehensive plan for carrying out a competitive subrecipient selection process, that includes:
  - the estimated number of subawards that will be made;
  - the estimated range of subaward amounts;
  - the criteria that will be used to determine prospective subrecipients' fit with their theory of change or successfully contribute to its outcome measures;
  - a general timeline or timeframe outlining when stages of the selection process would be completed. Note: Depending on the strategy being utilized, the subrecipient selection and award process must be completed within **six to eight** months of the grant award.
- Whether the applicant presents a selection process that has a high likelihood of identifying high-performing subrecipients (as defined in *Section A.1: Purpose of Social Innovation Fund Funding*), with the capacity and ability to implement all aspects of a Social Innovation Fund grant.
- The applicant's capacity to successfully implement their proposed subaward selection process, including demonstrated experience selecting and awarding competitive grants to nonprofits.

  Strategy A: How they will attract and select solutions that are innovative as defined in (as defined in *Section A.1: Purpose of Social Innovation Fund Funding*).

  Strategy B: How they will select subrecipients who are well-suited to implement the pre-defined intervention.
- How the applicant will assess subrecipient applicants for readiness and capacity to implement program growth as a part of their participation in the Social Innovation Fund.
- How the applicant will allocate grant awards so that larger sums are given to those subrecipients with higher levels of evidence to support the growth of their program impact.

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Strengths:
Besides planning to conduct a well-publicized, comprehensive RFP process, the applicant strengthens the proposed subrecipient selection process by providing evidence of extensive knowledge about local, capable providers and cites several felt to be exemplary in the region. This demonstrates they have developed a profile of the subrecipient program they hope to fund. It also suggests the applicant will look broadly for subrecipients while utilizing its knowledge of proven strong agencies in the region.

The applicant lists a strong slate of staff, advisors, and board members with evaluation expertise that will assist in determining if subrecipients meet the evidence requirements. This engagement should ensure success in selecting subrecipients with the evaluation capacity to design and implement a moderate-level design.

The applicant describes a proprietary rubric they will use to measure 7 characteristics they have found to be essential for successful scaling. Their description of this rubric and how it will be applied provides a clear articulation of how they will assess applicants' readiness for growth.

Weaknesses:
The applicant makes no mention of how it will ensure that larger grants are award to subrecipients with higher levels of evidence.

_ Excellent (15)	**X Good** (12)	_ Fair (9)	_ Inadequate(6)

PROGRAM DESIGN
3. **Proposal for Growing Subrecipient Impact (15%)**
In determining the quality of the application, please assess the following criteria:
- The applicant's capacity to support subrecipient growth including relevant examples of successful past efforts to support growth through replication or expansion and a description of adequate resources to support successful subrecipient growth as proposed.
- The applicant's theory or approach to growing effective subrecipient program models in alignment with their overall theory of change.
- The characteristics the applicant will use to assess subrecipient capacity for growth and their description of how evidence of effectiveness will be used to determine when or how a program is well-situated for growth.
- How the applicant will support subrecipient growth through technical assistance, data systems or other resources and help subrecipients plan for strategic and effective growth that results in long-term sustainability for the expanded program beyond the three to five year SIF grant period.

Strengths:
Also mentioned in their selection process, the applicant has a tested rubric of 7 measures that they believe leads to effective program scaling. This is in alignment with their theory of building local capacity within their targeted geography and their end goal of achieving stronger adolescent youth academic success through increased subrecipient capacity.

The applicant describes a series of trainings and resources that they have developed in coordination with their 7 measure rubric that will support subrecipients in achieving growth goals. These range from leadership training to fiscal capacity building and seem adequate depending on the type of subrecipient that they select.

Weaknesses:
The rubric cited does not take evidence of effectiveness or evaluation results into account and this is not addressed

elsewhere in this section. Therefore it seems the applicant is nonresponsive on this particular criterion.

_ Excellent (15)	_ Good (12)	**X Fair (9)**	_ Inadequate(6)

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITY **(15%)**
In determining the quality of an application, please assess the following criteria:

4. **Organizational Background and Staff Capacity**
   - Whether the applicant makes a compelling case for their ability to successfully support the approach and outcomes that they propose, including a description of their track record and resources.
   - The applicant's experience, accomplishments and outcomes operating and overseeing programs in the selected issue area(s) of activity.
   - The applicant's experience and capacity to collect and analyze data required for evaluation, continuous improvement, compliance and other purposes.
   - The applicant's current organizational budget, the percentage of the budget this grant would represent, and the implications for their organization.
   - The experience, qualifications and capacity of staff and contractors to effectively implement the proposed program. Discuss the involvement of management, board members, etc.
   - The applicant's ability to develop the necessary systems to maintain a grant program compliant with federal grant requirements, including a description of how they will ensure compliance with CNCS National Service Criminal History Check requirements. For reference, please see Section F.2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements.
   - The applicant's commitment to long-term relationships with subrecipients, including how short- and long-term goals will be established.

Strengths:
The applicant has ten years history of making grants in the region and has piloted the proposed program during their last funding cycle. The staffing and advisory structure and grant management software system is more than adequate to support the process they propose.

The technical assistance they propose to implement to support subrecipient growth is supported by both internal staff and contracted experts. The examples they provide from their previous portfolios suggests their approach works, though outcomes from their last round of grants are still not available.

Weaknesses:
While a learning community is mentioned and the applicant emphasizes building community within its small geographic footprint, they do not explicitly identify how they will capture and share best practices among their portfolio.

The applicant describes a track record of providing grants supporting the types of programs they intend to fund with the SIF. However, their investment history is weak as they have only piloted this type of investment in the past year and a half and, as such, they do not yet have data nor are able to provide specific examples of positive outcomes from their current portfolio to support the efficacy of their approach.

_ Excellent (5)	_ Good (4)	**X Fair (3)**	_ Inadequate(2)

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ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITY

5. **Subrecipient Support, Monitoring and Oversight**
   - The applicant's prior experience setting and implementing goals with recipients.
   - The applicant's experience evaluating the performance of grant recipients for outcome-focused initiatives.
   - The technical assistance and other services that the applicant will provide to subrecipients to support their success in achieving their proposed outcomes.
   - The applicant's plan for building subrecipient capacity to develop compliant federal grants management systems.
   - The applicant's plan for building subrecipient capacity to achieve scaling, evaluation and other key program goals.
   - The applicant's plan for developing subrecipient performance measurement systems and their description of how they will use these to monitor and improve subrecipient performance.
   - How the applicant will monitor subrecipients for compliance and for progress towards goals.

Strengths:
The staffing structure for this program is robust including management, program implementation, fiscal and evaluation staff. The descriptions of the staff suggest that all are well-qualified to successfully complete the tasks assigned. Further, the advisors and board members who will be "volunteering" through the review process and through ongoing monitoring should be excellent sources of expertise.

The applicant also distinguishes itself by concentrating on a defined geographic area avoiding a "go-it-alone" strategy by enlisting the Mayor, public agencies, civic and business leaders and other elected officials to pay attention to the identified neighborhood's challenges.

With experience managing other grants and good financial and administrative staff capacity, the applicant demonstrates the capacity to manage a federal grant of this size.

Weaknesses:
None noteworthy.

_ Excellent (10)	**X Good (8)**	_ Fair (6)	_ Inadequate(4)

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITY

6. **Strategy for Sustainability**
   - Has the applicant demonstrated commitment to continue the investment priorities articulated in this application beyond the life of the grant?
   - Does the applicant have a strategy for ensuring that subrecipients are positioned to continue evaluation and sustain program growth beyond the grant lifecycle?

Strengths:
Based on their past grantmaking record and history of successful investment in this geographic location, the applicant provides a compelling statement of commitment to ensuring the success of their subrecipients during and after the program. It is not clear if this extends to a commitment to evaluation but there is evident concern and care regarding investment in the organizational capacity of their subrecipients.

Weaknesses:
None noteworthy.

_ Excellent (5)	**X Good (4)**	_ Fair (3)	_ Inadequate(2)

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COST-EFFECTIVENESS AND BUDGET ADEQUACY (15%)
In determining the quality of an application, please assess the following criteria:

7. **Budget Justification**
   - Whether the budget the applicant proposes is reasonable and sufficient to successfully support program activities, including subrecipient selection, evaluation, program growth, and subrecipient support and oversight.
   - Whether the budget is aligned with the application narrative and provides an adequate explanation for expenses.
   - (If applicable) Whether the applicant makes a compelling case for higher program costs due to an intention to make subawards in areas that are significantly philanthropically underserved.

   Capacity to Raise Match
   - The applicant's prior experience achieving significant non-federal fundraising goals.
   - The applicant's description of match already raised or committed.
   - The applicant's plan for securing the total one-to-one non-federal cash match requirement.
   - The applicant's capacity and plan for assisting subrecipients to secure their required match.

Strengths:
This applicant makes a compelling case for efficient investment in a smaller geographic location and lists several examples of efficiencies and/or cost savings that can be achieved through their investment approach. Certainly they should expect to achieve the proposed cost savings from running a locally-focused and based subrecipient selection process.

The applicant has a demonstrated track record of raising funds from other foundations.

Weaknesses:
The budget proposed outlines key programmatic elements including staffing, contractors, training, investments in IT infrastructure, and the subrecipients themselves. The evaluation costs seem relatively sparse and it isn't clear if subrecipients will be expected to shoulder some of these costs or not.

So far, the match funding obligated does not represent a diversity of funding with only one other funder committed at the $10,000 level besides the applicant itself.

The applicant does not make mention of efforts it will employ to assist with subrecipient fundraising other than the technical assistance for fiscal capacity it refers to and "building community with other civic leaders and investors." This does not seem like a strong plan.

_ Excellent (15)	_ Good (12)	**X Fair (9)**	_ Inadequate(6)

Total Score: 51 **of 70**

8. APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY COMMENTS
After the panel discussion and finalizing your assessment: provide a summary of your review that captures the strengths and weaknesses of the application that had the greatest impact on your assessment. This summary, which will be provided to the applicant in the Feedback Summary Report and may be posted on CNCS' website, must be supported by your ratings and comments in the previous sections.

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STRENGTHS:
The proposed program benefits from a strong staffing structure, strong grantmaking history, a well-articulated subrecipient selection plan, deeply-focused investment strategy, and proprietary capacity building techniques.

The applicant has ten years history of making grants in the region and has piloted the proposed program during their last funding cycle. The staffing and advisory structure and grant management software system is more than adequate to support the process they propose.

WEAKNESSES:
Weaknesses include a lack of clarity around the theory of change and identified outcomes, and omission of several requested details. Also, they do not provide sufficient information regarding their ability or efforts to raise either their own match or assist subrecipients in raising match once selected.