



## 2020 Small Grants Fund: Results and Process Feedback

### Introduction

This report summarizes data from the Small Grants Fund funding process. It includes results of the funding process along with findings from applicant /community surveys and reviewer surveys done after each step of the funding cycle. PCL staff prepared this analysis for the PCL Allocation Committee and PCL stakeholders. **This report seeks to understand how the pilot round of the Small Grants Fund increased equity of access to PCL funds for small organizations and what lessons learned may help improve this process in the future.**

### Background on Small Grants Fund

**Parameters and Purpose of PCL's Small Grants Fund:** PCL's Allocation Committee created the Small Grants Fund with the following parameters to comply with PCL's authorizing act: granting funds in PCL's 6 programs areas, assuring PCL funds comprise no more than 30% of an organization's revenues, making grants through a competitive process, and using PCL performance measures for programs funded. Additionally, the Committee set a minimum and maximum annual grant size of \$10k- \$60k and defined organizations eligible as having \$30,000-\$1 million in annual revenue and not having received PCL funds in the past.

The purpose of PCL's Small Grants Fund is to increase equity of access to PCL funds by investing in programs of small organizations that have not had access PCL funds before, and arise from marginalized communities including people who identify as Black, Indigenous, People of Color, immigrant and refugee, LGBTQ2SIA+, and people with disabilities. Funding these small organizations will increase their capacity to reach children unserved or underserved in the past or improve the quality of services currently offered.

**Participatory Grantmaking Process Developed:** From December 2019- November 2020, the participatory grantmaking process for the Small Grants Fund included these features (see appendix, page 16, for more details on the process):

- **Design Team:** Ad-hoc committee with program, policy, and lived experience in communities of focus for PCL small grants. Design Team met 6 times (in-person and virtual), Jan- July 2020 to create small grants materials and process.
- **Community Conversations:** 8 events (in-person and virtual) between Feb-Mar 2020, attended by people from over 30 small organizations, providing input for how to shape an equity-driven, strengths-based grantmaking process. Findings used by Design Team.
- **Two-Step Application Process:** Design Team and PCL staff crafted a two-step application process, occurred June – Oct 2020. *Step 1:* short, written application minimizing time/resource burden on applicants and helped narrow the applicant pool; *Step 2:* a smaller applicant pool completed a written application and oral interview to balance against PCL's mainstream, typical written-only application processes.

- **Role of Reviewers in Grant Recommendations:** Design Team’s 6 members and 6 volunteer community reviewers (totaling a team of 12) read and scored applications and interviews. Rather than PCL staff creating funding recommendations as it has in past processes, reviewers determined which applicants moved from Step 1 to Step 2, and in Step 2 they provided funding recommendations to PCL’s Allocation Committee.

## Small Grants Funding Results and Process Feedback

During June- October 2020, PCL conducted a two-step application process for its small grants. In Step 1 PCL received 31 applications requesting \$4.4 million over 3 years for the \$1 million available. The 12 community reviewers narrowed the applicant pool from 31 to 12 applicants to move to Step 2 of the process. Step 2 resulted in 8 grantees. All 8 focus on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color populations, and one has an additional focus on youth with disabilities.

**Table 1. Number of Applicants, grouped by Descriptive Data provided in Applications**

Application Type	Applications Step 1	Moved to Step 2	Recommended for Funding
Total Applications	31	12	8
Total Funding Requested (3-years)	\$4,414,500	\$1,789,500 <sup>1</sup>	\$1,000,000
<b>Program Area</b>			
After School	13	3	3
Mentoring	11	6	4
Hunger Relief	3	2	1
Child Abuse Prevention/Interv.	1	1	0
Foster Care	1	0	0
Early Childhood	2	0	0
<b>Focus of Application</b>			
Disability-focused Application	3	1	1
BIPOC-focused Application	28	11	7
<b>Type of Organization<sup>2</sup></b>			
Culturally-Specific	11	5	3
Culturally Responsive	15	4	2
Intersectional	4	4	3
Disability-led	1	0	0
<b>Based on Data in Application</b>			
Has majority BIPOC Staff	17	9	7
Has majority white staff	11	2	1
Insufficient staff demog. data	3	1	0

<sup>1</sup> One of the 12 applicants decided to withdraw bringing the total applicants completing Step 2 to 11. The total funding requested by those 11, after review of their organization revenues and eligible funding amounts is \$1,564,235.

<sup>2</sup> Definitions provided to Applicants in Step 1 Instructions; applicants self-identified using descriptions provided by PCL.

## **Applicant Feedback**

PCL staff solicited applicant feedback via Survey Monkey after each step of the funding process. Although all survey responses were anonymous, respondents received an Amazon e-gift card upon completion of the survey. PCL staff emailed the Step 1 survey to all applicants and participants of community conversations and/or applicant information sessions (n=60), and 53% (n=32) responded. Among respondents, 21 of 32 (66%) said that they had submitted a Step 1 application and answered survey questions about the Step 1 experience. PCL staff emailed an additional survey to applicants who made it to the second step of the application process (n=12), of those 50% (n=6) responded to the Step 2 survey. Because the sample size for the Step 2 survey is small, data are limited and should be interpreted with caution.

The Step 1 applicant survey asked over 20 questions, Likert and open-ended, about PCL's communication with applicants, the application materials, the review process, and other features of the Small Grants process in the first step. The Step 2 applicant survey focused on the interview process and the overall Small Grants process. Most of the results below focus on responses to the Step 1 survey because the sample size was much larger. Step 2 results are called out where the few respondents all agreed.

## **Strengths**

Respondents were generally satisfied with the participatory planning process, and they indicated that the process was easy for small organizations, had good communication from PCL, and used appropriate materials.

### ***Participatory process and Communications***

- **Equity Commitment:** 86% (n=18/21) agreed/strongly agreed that PCL's Small Grants process reflects a commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- **Community Conversations:** 94% of respondents who attended community conversations (n=16/17) agreed/strongly agreed that the feedback they gave during the community conversations was integrated into the funding process.
- **PCL's Communication:** Over 85% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed that PCL staff communicated clearly about the small grants application process and timeline; and that when they had a question, PCL staff answered their questions in a culturally responsive manner. Though few applicants responded to the Step 2 survey (n=5), 100% of them mentioned PCL staff's communication as a strength of the Small Grants process.

One respondent summarized the feedback about communications in the following quote. *"The excellent communication and explanation of expectations. Between the community workshops, the directions with the grant application, and emails from Arika, I felt supported the entire time and clear about the expectations."*

### ***Application materials***

- **Access to Materials & Instructions:** 95% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed that application materials were easily accessible on the PCL website, and that the Application Instructions helped them to understand their program's eligibility.

- **Inclusivity planning:** 86% (n=18/21) agreed/strongly agreed that the Step 1 application helped their organization think through how they could be more inclusive of BIPOC participants with disabilities.

Among the 19 respondents who wrote their own comments, 9 mentioned the types of questions in the Step 1 materials; all the comments were positive, especially regarding inclusion, and the fairness of the questions. One respondent commented *“The questions were reflective of the grant expectation. It helped organizations to reflect about inclusion and better community engagement.”*

Echoing these strengths in application materials, the 5 respondents to the Step 2 survey all indicated they understood the scoring rubric for the Step 2 interviews.

## Areas for Improvement

Although survey respondents generally showed high satisfaction with the Small Grants Funding process, they weren't satisfied with all components of the review process. In addition, respondents suggested improvements to different logistical considerations in the process, and 2 respondents raised concerns and suggested changes to the disability-focus of the process.

### Reviewer Process

- **Volunteer recruitment:** Only 52% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the process to recruit volunteer reviewers. 33% of respondents weren't sure if they were satisfied with the process.
- **Scoring Criteria:** Only 62% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the scoring criteria, while 24% were dissatisfied or strongly dissatisfied and 14% were not sure.
- **Reviewer Feedback:** Only 67% agreed/strongly agreed that the feedback that reviewers provided on the application score forms was helpful, while 19% strongly disagreed/disagreed and 14% were unsure.
- **Reviewer Diversity:** Only 48% agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied the Small Grants Design Team reflected the communities that the Small Grants Fund was meant to serve. 48% weren't sure if the diversity reflected the communities that the Small Grants Fund was intended to serve, and .05% strongly disagreed that the Design Team reflected the communities.

### Logistical Considerations

Respondents' open-ended comments focused on these 3 areas of process logistics:

- **Application process** (mentioned by 4 respondents): consider other forms of providing input that are visual and incorporate storytelling elements, add more time between Step 1 and 2, clarify budget instructions, and consider funding cycles in fewer program areas at a time.
- **Transparency with Reviewers** (mentioned by 3 respondents): Provide more feedback on why an organization was not approved, clarify reviewer priorities earlier in the process, and have reviewers meet all applicants.

- **Applicant Eligibility considerations** (mentioned by 2 respondents): reconsider the committed funds requirement for smaller organizations, and a prescreening tool to determine eligibility prior to applying.

### ***Disability-focus***

Since the Small Grants Fund tried soliciting applications from organizations serving children and youth with disabilities, feedback on this issue is of particular interest. The few comments from respondents suggests PCL still needs to improve how to support this population.

- *“...We appreciate the focus on race and intersectionality but believe that disability gets lost often in this conversation - especially for people with intellectual disability and very complex support needs.”*
- *“Disability is complex, and we did not feel there was a good understanding of family priorities as well as a need for other orgs to be better supported ...”*

### **Reviewer Feedback**

Similar to applicants, reviewers were surveyed after each step of the process. After Step 1, Reviewers were asked about the reviewer training, application materials, review process, and staff support. After Step 2, they were asked about the interview process, their collective decision-making, and marginalized communities that were missed, or for which we received no applications. They were also asked about possible communities or populations of focus for subsequent small grants rounds. While 100% of Design Team and community reviewers responded to the first survey only 7 of 12 answered the second survey. Since the sample size for the second survey is small, data should be interpreted with caution.

### **Strengths**

- **PCL’s Communication and Support:** Similar to the applicants, 100% of reviewer respondents felt that PCL staff communicated clearly about the review timeline, responded to questions in a culturally responsive manner, and supported their needs such as breaks, food, and accessibility. All (100%) respondents also agreed that this attention to their needs helped them fully engage in the review process. 5 of 12 comments in the Step 1 survey also mentioned staff support.
- **Commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion:** 92% of respondents also said that the Small Grant process reflects a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- **Reviewer Training:** 10 of 12 comments described the Reviewer Training as strength. These comments highlighted the diversity of the reviewers, relationship-building, the respect for each other’s lived experience, a strong participatory process, the reading of different applications and discussing them as a large group, the timing and pacing of the training, and the sufficient and insufficient answer portion of the scoring sheet. However, additional feedback points to areas of needed improvement in the Reviewer Training. Those have been highlighted below.

## Areas for Improvement

While most of the 12 reviewers were generally satisfied with the process, reviewers did suggest areas for improvements including components of the reviewer training, application scoring sheets/criteria, the final decision-making process, and the interviews.

### **Reviewer Training**

Reviewers highlighted many positive aspects of the Reviewer Training as mentioned above, however, 25% (n=3) of respondents to the Step 1 survey disagreed that the Reviewer Training built trust among reviewers, and 2 respondents weren't sure if trust among the reviewers helped the discussion about who moved from Step 1 to Step 2. Additionally, 16% of respondents (n=2) disagreed or strongly disagreed that the reviewer training helped them fill out the scoring sheet for the Step 1 applications.

### **Application Scoring Sheet & Criteria**

Both Likert and qualitative responses indicate that reviewers had some confusion about score sheet instructions and scoring of applications in Step 1. One respondent also explained their concern about the way that the criteria disadvantaged culturally specific organizations, *"The misunderstanding around how to score and the way the questions were structured actually caused the culturally specific groups PCL was trying to reach to be scored lower overall. This absolutely needs to be addressed before your next grant cycle."* However, another respondent mentioned that they appreciated the discussions that the Review Team had when the scoring sheet was not capturing intended metrics.

### **Final Decision-making process**

Reviewers in this process had the unique role of making funding recommendations to the Allocation Committee (rather than staff making those recommendations). Reviewers' reflections on that experience offer ways to keep and improve this feature in the process. One respondent commented that the process *"will be improved just by having already run it in the pilot and learning about timing, coordination and process needs."* Another respondent explained, *"If the review committee, design team, and/or PCL staff could clarify our funding priorities more in advance, it could have potentially helped the group narrow down orgs in Step 2, instead of discussing some orgs longer that were eventually not recommended for funding."*

### **Applicant Interviews**

Respondents were asked specifically about the interviews in the Step 2 survey and feedback was mixed. Respondents mentioned that the scoring criteria for the interviews was more clear than in the first step, and that the interviews were enjoyable and informative, however only 71% (n=5) of respondents to the Step 2 survey agreed or strongly agreed that the interview process allowed organizations to showcase their strengths while 28% (n=2) disagreed.

### **Priority Communities and Populations**

Finally, reviewers were also asked about additional information they wanted to provide to PCL, and which additional communities may require more outreach in subsequent funding rounds. Respondents mentioned LGBTQ2SIA+ communities twice in the qualitative Step 1 data, and

once in the Step 2 qualitative data. One reviewer commented, *“If it's possible and appropriate, I'd love to see some messaging from PCL to the general community and other granting orgs about what we learned in this process re: oral communication vs written communication and how that can create inherent disparity in a grant review process, and also how it highlighted that even among orgs representing marginalized communities, that LGBTQIA2+ and disabled youth are in need of well informed and focused attention and programming.”* Another reviewer commented, *“LGBTQ communities were not represented. It would be great for PCL to meet with LGBT community leaders to assess how to build capacity in smaller agencies serving LGBTQ youth.”* In addition, 5 of 7 reviewers who answered the question in the Step 2 survey regarding which communities or populations should be prioritized in the future, indicated that BIPOC children & youth and immigrant & refugee populations should continue to be prioritized.

### Limitations

There are a few areas where the data are limited. First, because of the small sample size in the Step 2 surveys, there is not conclusive data about the effectiveness of interviews or how they could be improved. Second, it was not clear from the Step 1 survey results which applicants decided not to apply and why. The survey did not ask those questions, so we have limited insight from organizations that signed up for Small Grants Fund outreach and information but then opted not to apply at all. One final limitation was that onset of the COVID-19 pandemic deeply impacted the ways in which community engagement could happen. It limited interactions in Step 2 to virtual interviews rather than other interactive options that Design Team and applicants may have wanted to pilot.

### Conclusion and Implications

Together, these findings suggest that both the Applicants and Reviewers experienced a high level of satisfaction with the support that they received from PCL staff, and felt that the process reflected a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. However, there are still improvements that need to be made to the review process and to tools used in the process such as how PCL communicates about reviewer recruitment, qualifications, and training, and the scoring criteria used by reviewers.

PCL staff presented these data to the Small Grants Design team in January 2021 and facilitated their reflections on the findings and next steps. The Small Grants Design Team recommends the formation of an Ad Hoc Committee to guide next steps in the Small Grants process. This approach aligns with the participatory process strengths indicated by applicants and reviewers in this pilot. The Ad Hoc committee could consider and recommend more specific improvement options that speak to the findings in this report, such as reviewer recruitment and training, communications with potential applicants about the review process overall (recruitment, qualifications, training), reviewers' role in funding recommendations, interactive application options (to improve upon the interview experience), scoring criteria for applications, and if there are further underserved populations that require a special focus in the next funding round.

## APPENDIX: SURVEY DATA

### Applicant/Community Survey Responses: Small Grants Fund Feedback (n respondents= 21)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure	Not Applicable
In general, PCL has communicated clearly with me about the small grants application process and timeline.	11	8	2	0	0	
I was easily able to get all Step 1 Application materials from PCL's website.	11	9	0	0	0	
When I had questions during the Step 1 Application process, PCL staff answered my questions in a culturally responsive manner.	11	5	1	0	1	3
The Step 1 Application instructions helped me prepare my application.	9	11	1	0	0	
The Step 1 Application Instructions helped me understand if my organization was eligible to apply for a PCL small grant.	9	11	0	1	0	
The Step 1 Applicant Information Sessions helped me prepare my application.	8	9	1	1	0	2
The weekly question/answer email updates helped me prepare my Step 1 Application.	9	6	1	0	1	4
The Step 1 Application helped our organization think through how we could be more inclusive of BIPOC participants with disabilities.	6	12	1	1	1	
PCL gave applicants enough time to prepare a Step 1 Application.	9	9	2	0	1	
I am satisfied with the process PCL used to recruit volunteer reviewers to score Step 1 Applications.	4	7	2	1	7	
I am satisfied with the scoring criteria used by volunteer reviewers to score Step 1 applications.	4	9	3	2	3	
The feedback reviewers gave me on the score form for my Step 1 Application was helpful to me.	5	9	2	2	3	
I understood the process that reviewers used to determine which applications would move from Step 1 to Step 2.	6	11	2	0	2	
The Small Grants Design Team and application reviewers reflect the diversity of the communities that the Small Grants are intended to serve.	3	7	0	1	10	
PCL staff understands the unique challenges of small organizations.	6	8	1	1	5	
PCL made the small grants application process easy for small organizations.	5	14	2	0	0	
Overall, PCL's Small Grants process reflects a commitment to racial equity, diversity, and inclusion	7	11	1	1	1	
<b>Questions asked on Step 2 Survey (n respondents= 6)</b>						
The Step 2 interview allowed me to showcase the strengths of our organization.	3	1	1	0	1	
I understood the scoring rubric for the interview.	3	3	0	0	0	
The Step 2 process helped me understand PCL's expectations as a funder.	3	1	2	0	0	

## Applicant/Community Survey, Step 1: Qualitative Results

There were three qualitative questions in the community survey. They were 1) In general, what did you think about the questions asked on the Step 1 Application? 2) What I liked or found most useful about the Small Grants process was.. and 3) some ways the process could better serve small organizations like mine are... The themes are organized according to **Application Questions, Strengths of the Process, and Process Improvement Recommendations**. The Process Improvement Recommendations section is broken down into a list and analysis of the themes that emerged from the survey.

### Themes from Community Survey

#### Application Questions

**Thoroughness**- 4 of 19 responses to this question address the thoroughness of the application questions. Of those specifically mentioning the thoroughness of the application, 100% were positive. Key words here thought-provoking, all diversity needs, thorough.

**Types of Questions**-9 of 19 responses to this question addressed the types of questions. All of these expressed some degree of satisfaction with the questions, although 6 respondents also critiqued the questions, described inconsistencies, misunderstandings, and/or dissatisfaction with the questions or process.

**Length of application**- Only one respondent commented on the number of questions or length of the application. This comment indicated that the respondent was satisfied with the length of the application.

**Inconsistencies and areas of improvement** 6 of 19 responses to this question contained descriptions of inconsistencies or areas for improvement. 2 of the 6 comments referred to limitations of the demographic table. 1 respondent expressed having misunderstood a question and losing points in the scoring process. 1 respondent expressed confusion about the lack of focus on disability in the Step 2 application versus the Step 1 application. 1 applicant felt the process was misleading, unprofessional, and didn't trust the Design Team.

**Information Session and process** 1 of 19 respondents to this question referred specifically to the information session and emails, and described them as helpful. They also mentioned that PCL staff was quick to answer questions.

#### Strengths of the SGF Process

**Staff and volunteers**- 5/6 comments about staff & volunteers are positive. Respondents appreciated the staff responsive time, that asking questions was encouraged, the inclusive environment, and learning more about what PCL was looking for in the applications(transparency).

**Inclusiveness of the process**- 3/x respondents mentioned the inclusiveness of the process. Respondents mentioned the attention to community needs, inclusive access and process, and the ability to read reviewer notes.

**SGF communications**- Not a strong theme with only three comments total, but expressed appreciation of the weekly emails and ability to ask questions

### **Process Improvement Recommendations**

There were four large categories of program improvements in the community survey data. They were: 1) need for a deeper understanding of disability 2) organizations too small to apply even for the SGF 3) reviewer scoring 4) logistical challenges of the process.

**Need for a deeper understanding of disability-** 2/17 respondents specifically named disability in their suggestions for improvement. Issues cited were 1) that they didn't feel there was a good understanding of family priorities 2) they didn't feel that there were enough supports for other orgs (nondisability-focused) to provide support for children with disabilities. They wanted to ensure that most significant disabilities were being addressed by organizations (cognitive not just trauma or physical disability). They were concerned that the "conversation on disability gets lost in race/ethnicity."

**Organizations too small to apply-** 2 respondents mentioned being too small to apply and not knowing where to get the funding that would allow them to grow to the point where they would qualify for PCL SGF funds.

**Logistical challenges and suggested improvements-** 12/17 respondents replied with a variety of suggestions for improving the logistics of the process. 2 believed that their organization wasn't eligible because they were culturally specific or because of a fiscal sponsor (both could be misinformation). A variety of other suggestions were offered:

- Clarify communication about fiscal sponsorship in all venues
- Have all organizations submit organization budget before applying so they can be screened for eligibility, and we can let them know how much they can apply for upfront and build their applications around that.
- Increase the amount of time that organizations have to prepare Step 2 materials and program budget, and provide more detailed instruction about the budgets.
- Create midnight deadline times
- Offer some venue for storytelling and visual interaction in Step 1
- Examine the 30% revenue rule as it pertains to small organizations (this would require a change to ballot language if changed).
- Make materials easier to access on the website.

**Reviewer Scoring-- 4/17** respondents mentioned reviewers and scoring in this question about process improvements. Comments included wanting more complete and legible reviewer score sheet notes, more consistent scoring and interrater reliability, and possibly moving interviews to before scoring applications so they get to know the organizations first.

## Reviewer Survey Responses: Small Grants Fund Feedback (n respondents=12)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	not sure
1. The Reviewer Training helped me to understand how to fill out the scoring sheet for Step 1 Applications.	5	5	1	1	
2. The Reviewer Training helped build trust among reviewers.	3	6	3		
3. PCL staff responded to all my questions during the Step 1 Application review process in a culturally responsive manner.	8	4			
4. PCL staff communicated clearly with me about expectations of the Step 1 Application review process.	8	3	1		
5. PCL staff communicated clearly about timelines of the Step 1 Application review process.	8	4			
6. Overall, the Step 1 Application questions asked applicants what I wanted to know about their work.	4	6	2		
7. The Step 1 Application questions helped me understand which marginalized communities the applicants serve.	4	8			
8. The Step 1 Application questions helped me understand the applicants' staff demographics.	4	6			2
9. I am satisfied with the scoring criteria that we as reviewers used to score Step 1 Applications.	3	8	1		
10. I found the organization categories and definitions ("culturally specific", "culturally responsive", "intersectional", "disability led") useful in understanding the applicant.	5	6			1
11. The additional factors we used (such staff demographics, program area, type of organization) in the reviewer meeting for Step 1 helped us decide which applications to move to Step 2.	4	8			
12. Step 1 Application questions helped us as reviewers identify which programs would best serve BIPOC participants with disabilities.	3	5	3		1
13. I am satisfied with the process that we as reviewers used to determine which applicants would move from Step 1 to Step 2.	3	7	2		
14. Trust among reviewers helped us in our discussion of which Step 1 Applicants would move to Step 2.	5	5			2
15. PCL staff supported my needs (such as accessibility, language, food, breaks) as a reviewer.	8	4			
16. This support helped me engage fully in the Step 1 review process.	8	4			
17. Overall, PCL's Small Grants process reflects a commitment to racial equity, diversity, and inclusion.	8	3	1		
<b>Questions asked on Step 2 Survey (n respondents= 7)</b>					
The interview process allowed organizations to showcase their strengths.	0	5	2		0
I feel confident in the funding recommendations we made as reviewers.	2	4	0	1	

## APPENDIX: Details on Small Grants Fund grantmaking process

**Design Team:** In response to public input, PCL formed a Small Grants Design Team. They shaped the funding process design. Collectively, they bring the following expertise:

- Grantmaking experience from 3 different organizations and 2 public agencies
- Lived experience as individuals who identify as African refugee, Latinx, Vietnamese refugee, disability, LGBTQ+, Native American, and African-American; all members of the design team have intersecting identities with these lived experiences.
- Professional expertise in programming and policy focused on: domestic violence, foster care & child welfare; early childhood; mentoring and youth development; grantmaking for large & small organizations; diversity, equity, & inclusion; disability; and immigrant & refugee issues. In addition, half of them identify as parents.

**Community Conversations:** These events solicited feedback from small organizations about how to shape an equity and strengths-based grantmaking process. Individuals from 31 organizations participated, representing the following areas of focus: African immigrants, Arabic-speaking immigrants, African-American community, teen parents, multicultural children, youth and family programs, Pacific Islander community, Native American community, Zomi refugee community, disability communities, and youth-led organizations. Findings included:

- Need for an application process adjusted to fit the size of the organizations and the grants for which they are applying
- Support for a two-step process, don't want to spend extensive staff time and resources applying for grants for which they were unlikely to receive
- Desire for an interactive part to the Step 2 application, flexible to the needs of different cultural groups and abilities, but evaluated on the same criteria
- Need for technical assistance including on the expectations for PCL grants, and around culturally-centered ways to include children with disabilities in their programs
- Impact by the COVID-19 crisis and need to get funds to underserved communities
- Importance of ongoing technical assistance and support

**Two-Step Application Process and Role of Reviewers in Grant Recommendations:** Design Team and PCL staff used findings from community conversations to shape a two-step application process. The Allocation Committee approved it and all application materials, including scoring criteria and review process. Below is a summary of each step leading to the Allocation Committee adopting reviewers' funding recommendations.

**Step 1:** PCL published Step 1 application materials in May. Staff conducted 2 virtual Information Sessions reaching 44 participants interested in applying. PCL live-streamed, recorded and posted one session on its website. Staff sent applicants a weekly digest featuring questions applicants submitted and staff's answers. *Step 1 consisted of 5 short essay questions to understand the mission of the organization, program activities to fund, and their approach to equity particularly with BIPOC children, youth, and families with disabilities. PCL received 31 Step 1 applications, requesting \$4,414,500 over 3 years, with only \$1 million available.*

*Application Reviewers:* PCL staff recruited and trained 12 reviewers to read and score applications. They included the Design Team plus 6 additional community members, who met qualifications identified in community conversations:

- Experience in one or more of the PCL program areas; working or volunteering in small nonprofit organizations; or participation in a program of a small nonprofit.
- Growth mindset (understanding that small organizations are still growing their capacity)
- Knowledge and understanding of disability (including cognitive disabilities)
- Lived experience and knowledge of one or more marginalized populations
- Commitment to 5-months of reviewer responsibilities: read/score applications and interviews, decide which applicants move from Step 1 to Step 2, and make funding recommendations from Step 2 applicants for Allocation Committee.
- Reviewers working on reading/score outside of work were offered a \$250 stipend.

*Selection Process for applicants moving from Step 1 to Step 2:* PCL staff created 3 groups of 4 reviewers who independently scored the same set of 10-11 applications. PCL staff averaged 4 reviewers' scores per application. Reviewers met virtually in August to select applicants to move to Step 2. Reviewers primarily relied on application scores and used additional criteria based on data gathered in the applications: Organization type (intersectional, culturally specific, culturally responsive, disability-led); Staff & volunteer demographics; Grant size; Program area. Reviewers selected **12 applicants requesting \$1,759,500 over 3 years** to move to Step 2.

**Step 2:** PCL staff presented a summary of Step 1 results to the Allocation Committee in September. Staff provided applicants moving forward with Step 2 application/scoring criteria and interview questions/scoring criteria. In addition, applicants provided organization-wide budgets for its recent closed fiscal year and current fiscal year, with actual/committed revenues (not projected) as of Oct 1, 2020. Staff reviewed budgets to assure funds requested did not exceed 30% of committed/actual revenue in the applicant's current fiscal year and that applicants met minimum- maximum grant limits. One applicant withdrew because they didn't qualify for the minimum grant. Two applicants requested more than eligible and PCL staff adjusted their requests. After budget review the **total requested was \$1,564,235**. Applicant interviews occurred virtually at the end of October. Applicants could have up to 3 participants, at least one staff. All applicants chose staff to participate (no clients).

*Process for Reviewers' Step 2 Funding Recommendations:* PCL staff assigned pairs of reviewers to score each Step 2 application and interview. PCL averaged the 2 interview scores, averaged the 2 application scores, and added each average together for total score. Reviewers met virtually in November, facilitated by PCL staff, and recommended grants to **8 applicants, totaling \$1 million over 3 years**. Reviewers used the purpose of the small grants fund and scores to guide recommendations. Reviewers selected the 4 applicants with highest total score. Among the others, they prioritized applicants with higher interview scores. Interviews were added to the application process, as an equity tool for smaller organizations with less grant writing experience or that arise from communities with deep oral traditions, or where English is a second language. Considering the effects of the pandemic, reviewers wanted to

recommend at least one hunger relief application for funding. They used score and food security needs to prioritize between the 2 applicants.

*Funding Amounts for Balancing the Portfolio:* Reviewers discussed the tension between funding fewer applicants at their full request and more applicants at amounts less than requested. They opted to recommend more applicants, at slightly less than requested. They calibrated funding amounts to assure sufficient program activities. They recommended approximately 87% of funding for applicants with higher scores and 80% of funding requested for applicants with lower total scores. Two exceptions to this approach included the smallest funding request recommended, and the one hunger relief applicant recommended. Reviewers did not want to reduce the smallest request in the portfolio recommended. For the hunger relief applicant, reviewers wanted to give a 3-year funding amount that prioritized food supply during the pandemic. The table below compares the applicant pool: Step 1, Step 2 and applicants recommended for funding.

### **Allocation Committee Adopted Reviewer Recommendations**

In early November PCL staff provided the Allocation Committee with all applications, videos of interviews, brief summaries of applications, summary data on each applicant including score, and reviewer score sheets. After reviewers met, PCL staff provided the committee and applicants with reviewer recommendations and rationale. Applicants were invited to submit recorded testimony to the Committee after receiving reviewer recommendations and prior to Allocation Committee funding decisions. PCL staff provided those videos to the Allocation Committee on Nov. 20<sup>th</sup>. The Allocation Committee met on November 30<sup>th</sup> to consider reviewers' funding recommendations. In advance of the meeting, Allocation Committee members submitted individual funding preferences to staff, and staff aggregated the individual preferences to determine the level of agreement on funding individual applications. Funding decisions were made starting with applications all Allocation Committee members wanted to fund and proceeding to applications with lower levels of Allocation Committee support. The Committee voted unanimously to accept reviewers' funding recommendations.

### **Follow Up with Applicants not selected for PCL Funding**

PCL offered all applicants who did not move from Step 1 to Step the opportunity to participate in a 15-minute Zoom call to learn about how their application could be improved for the future. The same applicants were also referred to a program that matches pro bono professionals to small nonprofit organizations for capacity-building services such as building fundraising capacity, grant-writing skills, strategic planning, and marketing plans. 6 organizations followed-up on this opportunity and engaged in projects. Since the projects are still on-going, therefore outcomes are not yet available.