



National Grants Committee Meeting

**Sara Parker Pauley - Chair
Tony Wasley - Vice Chair**

**August 3, 2020
3:30-4:30 PM**

Virtual Meeting

Meeting convened at 3:30PM EST by Sara Parker Pauley.

National Grants Committee (NGC) members present:

- Sara Parker Pauley (Chair)
- Tony Wasley (Vice Chair)
- Cathy Sparks (Member)
- Bryan Burhans (Member)
- Dale Garner (Member)

R3 MultiState Conservation Grant Program (MSCGP) Technical Review Team Chair

- Chuck Sykes

Staff:

- John Lord (AFWA)
- Silvana Yaroschuk (AFWA)

Agenda

- Call to Order, Agenda Review

The meeting was called to order at 3:30 PM.

Sara Parker Pauley opened the meeting with a briefing on the new process.

The new process will ensure that the highest priorities are addressed within available. We have been transitioning to a process that will lead us to couple different outcomes:

1. NGC identifies Strategic Priorities.
2. Technical Review Teams are engaged as subject matter experts for each of the strategic priorities. These review teams will score projects, interact with applicants (through staff) and will pass their recommendations to the NGC.
3. The NGC will do a high level review and then send project list to the ExComm for final approval.

We hope that we are moving in a direction which is more efficient. The experts are providing council on proposals and feedback to the applicants in areas that we think it will make the proposals better. We are making changes in real time for the 2020 R3 Grants, and will continue to fine tune and improve for 2021 and 2022.

John Lord –The primary order of business is to approve the 2020 R3 Grants Priority List so we can get those Grants funded hopefully this year.

Last year Sara and Kelly guided us to be more strategic about this process and even though it has been a bit chaotic, with the addition of another \$5M for R3 grants in2020 in addition to the \$11M funding for 2021, things have been going remarkably well. We're going to learn a lot that we can incorporate and formalize next year.

The number one piece of the feedback that we have got from NGC over the years is that the Grant Committee didn't feel that they have the time or the expertise to review all these grants, and we believe this is being addressed with the new changes.

Director Chuck Sykes, Chair of the Hunting and Shooting Sports Participation and Chair of the R3 Technical Review Team summarized the work of the R3 Technical Review reviewing 2020 and 2021 R3 grants. Considering I didn't have any experience with the old process, this was my first time to be part of this.

I was asked to put together a team of 15-20 reviewers from R3 community including some directors. We have 19 committed members in the R3 Technical Review Committee, a very diverse group. I was confused with the process before as well, but I was really pleased with the 2020 process and everyone was excited for the \$5M available to go toward R3 activities. The team put tremendous time and effort into the reviewing process. After the Initial Proposal phase the feedback from the Technical review Team went to the Applicants and the Full Grant Proposals came back improved, addressing the reviewers' feedback.

I was not as optimistic for 2021 Grants. We all were tired, with just couple weeks turn around. But the meeting for the Initial Proposals went well and I think we will be energized and ready by the time the Full Grant Proposals come back for reviewing. So, I think this process went well.

Sara – Anything at high level about what the technical team members were looking for?

Chuck - Some members needed guidance what were the highest priorities but we as team agreed to look at the proposals and rank based on the merits. And we were pleased with the final list. We had 47 Initial Proposals and we invited only 25 applicants for Full Proposals.

John Lord also mentioned that the Technical Review Team members all signed the Conflict of Interest forms to avoid conflicts and recused themselves from proposals they had conflicts with. Also because of shortage in funding, technical review Team was able to roll some of 2020 R3 proposals to 2021 cycle, so the applicants had additional feedback and time to put a stronger proposal together.

Sara – Do you think that Grants Committee and the Ex Com need to provide more specific guidance in either allocating certain percentages to priorities or do we select by scoring and ranking all the proposals?

Chuck - We liked it the way it was, it didn't put any constrains on the committee members. And at the end, it worked out that each priority was addressed and represented. We wouldn't do anything different.

Tony agreed with the rest that it's better to approve the best projects rather than just projects that address certain priority.

Bryan – As you move along you might identify areas that are more popular, for example marketing. Marketing serves only a specific portion of R3, there is so much to R3 and yet marketing is so easy to tap into and show results so it will be interesting to see on years to come how this moves along as we learn more about R3. Engaging new Audiences is very interesting, we are having difficulties on how to engage people who are interested on knowing about opportunities and buying licenses. And that's going to be the tough one, every agency is struggling with and we don't have good answers.

Dale suggested that on R3 side to spend more money on the evaluation program to see if the grants are making any difference.

John – When the PR Modernization act was approved one of the messages, we got was that there is a strong need to evaluate the R3 component to make sure that not just in MSCGP but overall, we are measuring the impact.

- **Approval of the 2020 R3 MSCGP Priority List**

The members approved the Priority List recommendations from the Technical Review Team. This will move to the ExCom for the final approval.

Before Chuck left the call, he thanked the NGC for trusting the Technical Review Team to recommend good projects and he promised to relay the message back to the reviewers in the next meeting. Sara suggested to have a Thank You letter from Kelly Hepler to thank the Technical Review Teams Members for their work.

- **How will the committee continue defining strategic priorities for MSCGP?**

John shared the document of 2021 Strategic Priorities created by the President's Task force chaired by Jim Douglas and Tony Wasley. The Task Force helped us come up with the priorities. The idea was that later we could provide more detail on these priorities so the applicants could tailor their proposals to the strategic goals of the Association.

Tony – There were two clear objectives to this process:

1. A more transparent alignment with the Association's Strategic Priorities, and
2. A more intuitive process

Sara – Did the Task Force consider how to evaluate the priorities, how often shall we do that? Is that the role of NGC or the ExCom?

Tony – The way we came up with the bins was that we looked back in last 5 years proposals to make sure that the bins would address all the proposals we had received over last 5 years. We also talked about the emerging opportunities, if we should create a unique bin for that or would it fit in any of existing bins and of course anything emerging would still have to align with the Association Strategic Priorities. And we agreed that if there is a desire to review and update those bins, it would likely be the ExComm's role to provide direction.

Sara – How has the role changed for the National Grants Committee with the new process? If the NGC will not be involved with the detailed review of projects anymore and the ExCom will identify the priorities, what would the role be for NGC?

Tony - The NGC probably still will need to get involved in fine tuning strategic priorities with the approval or knowledge of the Executive Committee.

One of the things we talked about for the process is how NAWCA council works. NAWCA staff is where the real expertise lies in terms of evaluation of grants. However, they still bring those recommendations for approval to NAWCA Council and the Council still has the authority to change.

So, it will be appropriate for the NGC to review the recommendations and how they align with the Association priorities. The NGC will no longer need to review proposals in detail. I feel much better with the expertise of the Technical Review Teams and bringing their recommendations to the NGC to discuss, look at the fund allocations, and the big picture.

A big difference with NAWCA is that the staff scores all the proposals while we have different teams. We would have to standardize the scores among the teams. And maybe that's another role for this NGC, to find a way to achieve that so we can compare.

Dale – So, what happens if all great grants are in one bucket? What happens with the rest of the priorities?

Tony –One approach could be taking the top two projects in each priority. After that, the rest are selected based on scoring and ranking. This way we make sure that all priorities have been addressed.

Silvana – Feedback I had from the reviewers and applicants was that the priorities are very broad, and it has been hard for reviewers to score and for the applicants to decide where their proposal fall in terms of addressing one or more priorities. Maybe it's still early to discuss about that but we need to start to put our heads on that as well, so we are ready for 2022. Whose role would it be to engage on refinements of these priorities.

Tony – That would be a good task for this committee. I know the applicants love to have clarity and the scoring is easier with that kind of clarity, but I think there are benefits with the vagueness.

Sara – Is there a way to provide some examples or at least some greater description of the need, detail?

Tony – I wonder if the strategic planning will help with that.

John – In September the NGC will be asked to approve 2021 MSCGP grants. Also, in September the Strategic Plan will be adopted by the membership. After that we have few months where there is no work for NGC where we might ask the committee to work on some of these high-level issues and help us formalize the changes we are making.

As staff we are very interested at soliciting feedback from all the reviewers to see what worked and what didn't work with the process. The formal work will continue through September but there is still a lot of work to get through and ready for 2022.

The Committee members were satisfied with the summary they received for 2020 R3 Grants, but they wanted more time to review the document.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30PM EST