

## Attachment to Staff Report (Agenda Item 7B)

### Survey Responses from Past Grant Award Recipients

#### Background:

Following direction from the WCC, Staff created and distributed a brief survey (through surveymonkey.com to recent grant award recipients (21 contacts from 12 organizations). Following a two-week response period (March 24, 2026 to April 8, 2026), Staff received eight (8) to nine (9) anonymous responses. Complete responses are provided below:

**Question 1.** “What specific improvements could be made to the grant selection process to make it more efficient?”

#### Responses (9):

44% “satisfied”

33% “dissatisfied”

11% “very satisfied”

11% “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied”

**Question 2.** “What specific improvements could be made to the grant selection process to make it more efficient?”

#### Responses (8):

1. “The Committee always does a great job discussing projects and asking questions to each applicant during the selection meeting each year. Since it seems there are a large number of applicants in recent years, as well as more requests for funding than there are funds available to be awarded, I wonder if it would save time to

calculate the funding amounts that are likely available for all of the grant applicants prior to the meeting (such as: all applicants' budgets are scaled down equally by 10% if the overall amount requested is 10% over the amount of funding available for the year), or to come up with some possible scenarios for amounts to be awarded prior to the meeting, so that the math is already done ahead of time? Of course, the Committee may decide to fully fund some of the grants but not others, so I see where this might not be helpful. Is it possible for the Committee to discuss each grant prior to the selection meeting date so that they have questions ready ahead of time, and have some time to discuss prior to the meeting with the applicants? That might also make the selection process more efficient as well if that step is possible.”

2. “I would suggest a cap/limit to the amount that any one organization can be awarded to provide a more equitable distribution of funds, and prevent large requests from taking a major percentage of the available funding.”
3. “Clarifying amount of funding available to applicants in advance and providing maximum fundable amount for each proposal. For example, organizations can apply for up to \$10,000. If all qualifying applications are meant to get funded, then state that up front, and indicate the minimum amount each entity . Clear, structured, and measurable scoring rubric (with standard point system) to eliminate personal biases of commissioners. Each commissioner should score the applications based on the application’s adherence to application criteria that is clearly stated. Rubric could be based on each section of the application (Needs Assessment, Clear Statement of Benefit Relative to Goals of the Commission, Budget Detail, Attachments) Application template needs to have a maximum page or word count to give sense of level of effort expected of applicants. Reviewers could score their applications ahead of the hearing meeting and present the summary of scores beforehand.”
4. “Additional clarity/guidance about the maximum grant amounts available or likely to be funded, and about allowable expenses (whether personnel costs are fundable); also, an acknowledgement that some costs are necessary but not always "glamorous" such as insurance”
5. “It would be more comfortable if commissioners discussed the grant applications in private rather than during the meeting when applicants are present.”
6. “streamline the process with Less paperwork”
7. “Open discussion about the merits of each grant in the public is uncomfortable for the applicants and makes it seem like certain commissioners have "favorites"”

because they are personally involved with the specific group. Presentations about the projects seems like a big lift. No other grants have this requirement. Sitting in the room and waiting to hear how is being funded and how much they are being funded for is not a positive experience, especially since many of us are partners in each others programs. Perhaps have the discussion about who gets how much in private to save time.”

8. “There should be a weighting system whereas money is allocated based on which applications best meet the grant criteria. The guidelines have specific criteria, yet there does not seem to be much consideration given to them by the Commissioners.”

### **Question 3: “What improvements could be made to provide mor clarity regarding the structure of the grant or decision process?”**

#### **Responses (8):**

1. “It has all seemed pretty clear, I can't think of any helpful improvements at the moment.”
2. “I would recommend a more structured assessment system for determining the funding granted to requests based on specific criteria such as educational value to the community, habitat preservation, etc. as was suggested by the student representative on the Commission last year. It seems that sometimes grants are awarded based on the personal lobbying of individual Commission members.”
3. “The Commission needs more consistency in objective decision making. The current process allows for bias, based on personal opinion or preferred outcome, not clear criteria. There seems to be preference towards projects who seek more funding than smaller projects, and wildlife rescue. Larger project proposals historically garner larger awards – particularly when across the board budget cuts are proposed by the commission, unequally impacting smaller proposals. The greater the ask typically results in a larger award. Environmental education proposals are additionally burdened beyond other applications with the requirement of at least one (1) letter of support from a school board member, principal, teacher, whereas other proposals do not require this. Commissioners should be provided with more structure for their conversation so that it focuses on

the merits of the application as opposed to their individual experience with the organization. Commission could prepare their budget allocations in advance. Budget determinations and changes are decided in the moment during the application hearing, resulting in significant changes to projects and applications. A 30% or 50% change in budget dramatically alters the project, and the work that went in to forming the project and it's potential outcomes and adherence to commission priorities.”

4. “Stronger acknowledgement/codifying of linkages between committee criteria and program features/descriptions/application. I've seen times where despite clearly strong fit/linkage a proposal gets cut for seemingly arbitrary reasons”
5. “Application process is straightforward and easy to understand.”
6. “Giving more examples of past projects and approved grants.”
7. “A matrix for how the grants are scored would really help. Everything is very vague so we don't really understand what your real priorities are.”
8. “The application could be rated on a scale (1-5) for each of the criteria. The grant applications with the highest points should receive a higher percentage of funding than the grant applications with lower points. The Commissioners could rate them as a group or individually.”

**Question 4:** “Do you feel the time allotted for in-person presentations is adequate? Would you like more time? Or do you prefer to let the application materials speak for themselves and not provide a presentation?”

**Responses (8):**

1. “I think the allotted presentation time is adequate, especially for the number of applicants that typically participate each year. I think it could also be fine to let application materials speak for themselves, but if that was the case, it would be nice to still be able to answer questions in person.”
2. “Yes, I would definitely like more time. 3 minutes is hardly sufficient to convey the benefit of the grant for our organization.”
3. “We would prefer to let the application materials speak for themselves. If the Commission would like to see photos of the work, we encourage them to add this to

the criteria for the grant application. Developing an in-person presentation can be a very time-intensive process, even for short presentations. Additionally, applicants are encouraged to be present for the entire public hearing, and be prepared to defend and alter their project in the moment based upon feedback by the Commissioners. Applicants who have experience with the process have seen the Commission tend to provide applicants with a percent of their request are prepared to respond to the possibility of adjusting their budget. In contrast, new or less resourced applicants may not be aware of this last-minute change. Lastly, the presentation process may lead to the perception of competition among applicants.”

4. “We very much like and appreciate being able to make a short presentation (virtual and/or in-person), and be available to answer questions and provide additional context, based on Commissioner questions”
5. “Time is adequate but are repetitive to the application. Suggest having representative on site to answer questions from the board if needed but not to include presentations.”
6. “Its plenty of time.”
7. “There is not enough time, but I also don't think the applicants should do a presentation at all. The full grant request should be enough. If the commission has clarifying questions, they should be sent directly to the applicants and we can answer them accordingly.”
8. “More time would be appreciated for a presentation.”

**Question 5: “Are there any other general comments, concerns, or kudos related to the Napa County WCC grant program?”**

**Responses (8):**

1. “We really appreciate all of the support that the WCC has provided over the years, and are grateful for the opportunity to apply for funding from you all towards our ongoing stewardship projects! It is always inspiring to see the group of people who make up the WCC and the time and care they spend helping this community in this way!”

## Napa County Wildlife Conservation Commission

April 27, 2026 Special Meeting

2. “We all greatly appreciate the funding received to support our organizations' activities.”
3. “We greatly appreciate the annual funding provided by the Commission, and the fact that awards are determined by community members. The reporting requirements are appropriate and not overly time consuming or burdensome to the projects relative to the size of the award. We have enjoyed providing Commissioners with tours of our grant-funded projects. We are very grateful that you are soliciting this feedback to improve the process and outcome of this granting procedure. Alternatively, the Commission could invite applicants to share a summary of their accomplishments from the past year to showcase how the funds were utilized for wildlife benefit. Commissioners have demonstrated preference towards applications which propose the funding of equipment or materials as opposed to labor-based projects. For example, if an applicant is proposing the purchase of an aviary or an ATV, commissioners are less willing to reduce the applicant's proposed budget, because the perception is that equipment could not be purchased with partial funding. Subsequently, projects which require staff time are more readily reduced based on the discretion of the commissioners.”
4. “The virtual component/attendance is really helpful for us, and overall we think the Napa County process is a good one; as evidenced by the intention to strive to make it even better.”
5. “Thank you WCC, we are grateful for your support of these important programs!”
6. “Thank you for all your support over the years!”
7. “If the commission wants presentations, perhaps they could be part of the grant report, after the fact. That way the commission knows what the funding helped create. All of the applicants have very worthy projects and it is a bit hurtful to sit through debate about the value of each one. The commission is wonderfully generous in its funding, but the process could be tightened up.”
8. “Everyone is thanked for giving their time.”