

Opioid Epidemic Response Advisory Council (OERAC)

Meeting Minutes for January 17, 2025

Meeting Location: Hybrid meeting using WebEx and in-person at Elmer Andersen Building, 540 Cedar St, Room 2222, Saint Paul, MN.

Members present: (Names in italics are non-voting OERAC members)

Remote: Joe Clubb, Sarah Grosshuesch, Dr. Kathy Nevins, Rep. Dave Baker, Rep. Robert Bierman, Sadie Broekemeier, Peter Carlson, Curtis Jackson, Jack Martin, Toni Napier, Brock Reed, Dr. Charles Reznikoff, Kristi Schoen, Dr. Antony Stately, *Deepa McGriff, Jolene Rebertus*

In Person: *Teresa Steinmetz*

Members not present: Dr. Heather Bell, Dr. Ashwin George, Senator Bill Lieske, Senator Zaynab Mohamed, Judge Nicole Starr

State Staff Members Present: Laura Farlow, Stacy Sjogren

Call to order

Facilitator Stacy Sjogren began the meeting at 11:00 am, reviewed the OERAC mission, the meeting ground rules and gave a guest welcome. The OERAC Vice Chair, Sarah Grosshuesch, reviewed the meeting agenda and gave welcome. A roll call followed. Quorum was secured. See voting log for details.

Business items

Minutes approval: Dave Baker moved to approve the minutes from the December 6th, 2024 council meeting. Seconded by Toni Napier. Motion passed with roll call vote. See voting log for details.

Update on OERAC Legislative Report: 2024 legislative report is moving through levels of approval. The final report will be sent to Council members.

Update on OERAC Vacant Seat: A seat is open for Public Member in Opioid Addiction Recovery. New member is planned to be seated by March meeting. Process for selection:

- A Representative for each of the non-voting council members of OERAC, representing the three state agencies, as well as at least one tribal representative will form application review panel. Applications will

be scored, and one applicant will be selected for the open seat. Panel may host interview sessions with applicants if more information is needed.

Update on OERAC Special Allocation to Tribal Nations

- Member comments: Stately, Broekemeier, Schoen, Nevins, McGriff
- Upper Sioux Community declined the funds and redirected their \$100,000 to the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community. This redirection of funding in the case of declined funds is allowed under the DHS-MDH contract.
 - Kristi Schoen, OERAC Dakota Tribal Representative, provided details that the Four Sister Dakota Tribes are collaborating to establish a Wellness Clinic together.
- The Prairie Island Indian Community has accepted the funds. All 11 Tribal Nations have indicated their funding preferences.
- Antony Stately, OERAC Urban Tribal Representative, clarified that Tribal Nations are separate from Urban Indian Organizations. Tribal Nations are Sovereign Nations that receive direct allocations. Urban Indian Organizations, such as the Native American Community Clinic, function as nonprofit agencies and apply for funding through grant application processes.
- The OERAC Special Allocation funding is separate from the available funds being discussed in this meeting.

Available Funding Discussion and Decision

Previously in the December OERAC meeting, it was reported that \$717,019.70 in available funding remained from a prior grantee that was unable to complete the terms of their contract. The Council discussed multiple uses for these funds, including:

- Awarding funding to unselected applicants from the OERAC 2024 RFP through a 2-year contract.
- Increasing award amounts for existing OERAC 2024 grantees
- Funding micro grants
- Funding mini grants
- Adding funds to the Tribal Nations Direct allocation

At this meeting, OERAC leadership proposed a funding strategy that included awarding a 2.5-year contract to the next viable applicant from OERAC 2024 RFP and using remaining funds for micro grant projects. The Native American Community Clinic (NACC) was identified as the first unselected applicant in Category D, expansion and enhancement of continuum of care for opioid-related SUDs. NACC serves a population experiencing the highest rate of opioid overdose in Minnesota.

Due to conflicts of interest in Category D, council members Bell, George, Grosshuesch, Reznikoff, Martin, and Stately did not participate in the discussions or voting related to NACC but were permitted to participate in the micro grant discussion. To minimize potential conflicts, Council considered awarding NACC a set funding amount before deliberating on micro grants.

Native American Community Clinic (NACC) Discussion

- Member comments: Rebertus, Nevins, Baker, Broekemeier
- NACC is an allowable recipient of funds because they were a recent OERAC RFP applicant. All current awardees in Category D for OERAC 2024 were funded the full amount for 3.5-year contracts.
- Project name and summary were shared with the Council.
- Proposed budget: \$517,091 for 2.5-year contract
- Council members asked if NACC had been contacted about the reduction to the funding and timeline. Staff confirmed that NACC had not been notified, as award decisions for OERAC 2024 RFP remain confidential until contracts are finalized. However, NACC's proposal suggests ability to scale down the project.
- Council members expressed support for funding NACC due to their work with the urban American Indian community.

Micro Grants Discussion

- Member comments: Stately, Rebertus, Baker, Nevins, Napier, Bierman, Martin, Broekemeier
- Micro grants are short-term contracts, traditionally 3 months, for existing grantees. Funding amounts range from \$1,000 - \$5,000.
 - Mini grants, in comparison, can be from \$5,001 - \$25,000 in funding and require public posting and official review.
- An example of a micro grant project at DHS is the Naloxone Storage Box Project, which provides funding to purchase and install naloxone storage boxes in community locations.
 - A \$5,000 contract allows organizations to install approximately 12 boxes, depending on the type of box purchased.
 - A previous \$70,000 DHS funding allowed for approximately 300 boxes to be installed statewide.
 - Grantees partner with organizations to sustainably restock the boxes. Council members expressed concerns about maintaining public trust if there is a gap in restocking.
 - Council members noted that naloxone distribution strategies differ in rural and urban areas.
- Council discussed additional micro grant opportunities, such as mentorship programs or projects that collect feedback from people who use drugs to identify needed resources and to inform OERAC's future direction.
 - Suggestion to structure the micro grant application process so that existing grantees propose opioid abatement initiatives, with a maximum request of \$5,000 and a project timeline of 3 months. One outcome report would be requested after project is completed.

Additional Considerations for Funding

- Member comments: Baker, Nevins
- Naloxone portal
 - Council members asked for updates and expressed frustration with the closed portal.
 - The Naloxone portal reopened in late December and all backorders were filled. As of the meeting date, the portal was closed but is expected to reopen shortly using Federal State Opioid Response (SOR) funding.
 - Council requested future presentation detailing funding allocation into the portal, applicant organizations, recipient organizations, and overall impact statewide.

Available Funding Decision

Toni Napier moved to fund the 2.5-year request amount (\$517,091) to the Native American Community Clinic and allocate the leftover funds (\$199,928.70) for micro grants with existing grantees. Seconded by Kristi Schoen. Motion passed with roll call vote. See voting log for details.

2025 RFP Discussion

OERAC Chair, Joe Clubb, reminded council that the 2025 RFP had been discussed in prior meetings. To align with the 2024 RFP timeline, the final decision on proposed changes should be made by the February 21st meeting. A summary of feedback from the 2024 RFP was distributed to council members prior to the meeting.

DHS staff member Laura Farlow presented recommendations for the upcoming RFP, including:

- Removal of redundant questions.
- Addition of a question on Organization Type (Small, Large, Tribal Nation and Urban Indian Organization) to inform community reviewers. Reviewers would evaluate proposals from a single organization type and resource level to minimize bias.
- Maintaining the 5 points for Targeted Organizations, with clarified expectations for applicants.
- Addition of 5 points for small organizations, Tribal Nations, and Urban Indian Organizations.
- Addition of 5 points for organizations that have not previously received an OERAC grant.

Member comments: Reznikoff, Stately, Clubb, Grosshuesch, Napier, Martin, Baker

- Council emphasized the importance of removing redundant questions and incorporating community reviewer feedback.
- Members supported the classification of organization type but suggested adding a “medium organization” category, as the current definition of large organizations covers a broad range.
 - Suggestion to look at income rather than full-time equivalent (FTE) employees to define organization size.
- Strategic allocation of resources
 - The Council discussed the intent of OERAC funding, how equity is defined, and how funds can be directed to organizations with the greatest impact.
 - Members agreed that organization size alone does not reflect an entity’s ability to serve their community effectively. A mix of organization types (small, medium, and large) was seen as the best way to address this crisis.
 - Concerns were raised about the same organizations continually receiving large grant amounts from OERAC without a clear assessment of impact. There is a need to evaluate if the OERAC funding process is perpetuating disparities.
 - Toni Napier shared insights as a Native community member on the ongoing devastation of opioid addiction within her community. She raised concerns about traditional projects being deprioritized in the RFP process and the challenges of grant writing. Toni suggested two potential ways to address these concerns, including:

- Council ensuring that Tribal Nations and Urban Indian Organizations receive equal funding compared to small and large organizations to address the crisis.
 - Allocating 50% of OERAC grant funds to BIPOC communities.
- DHS staff confirmed that OERAC can designate funding percentages for specific organization types or communities. Several council members expressed support for exploring this allocation, especially when referencing the high overdose mortality rate in Native communities.
- Discussion on the need to redefine conflicts of interest for the upcoming RFP.
- Grant scoring adjustments
 - Council discussed the additional 10 points in RFP scoring and requested that staff identify how these points would have impacted previous RFPs to make sure they are effective without going too far.
 - The council stressed the need for a stronger way to assess if an organization is genuinely serving the target population, rather than checking a box.
 - Concerns were raised about awarding additional points to small organizations and new grantees, reflecting that previous grantees were separated by half points or less.
 - Emphasis that small organizations are not always the best equipped to serve their communities.
 - Members added the importance of considering additional weighting for other communities of color in the scoring process, such as Black and African American communities.
 - There was support for a scoring system where all applicants can achieve the points but evaluating the applications separately by organization type. This strategy allows for the applications to be referenced by their organization type while still in the 5 project-based categories.
- The Council stated that it would like to discuss funding caps at the next meeting, as this may address concerns about large grant allocations.
- Decisions for the 2025 RFP will be made at the February meeting.

Public Comment

- Alicia House, Executive Director of the Steve Rummeler HOPE Network.
 - Agreed with council members about concerns on giving additional points to certain organizations. Urged Council against weighting scores based on Race, Religion, or Gender, referencing the recent Supreme Court ruling.
 - Emphasized the importance of the community reviewer feedback, specifically the highest concern about duplicate questions in the RFP.
 - Requested that OERAC examine the long contracting process at DHS.

Adjourn

OERAC Chair Joe Clubb adjourned the January 2025 meeting.

Next meeting: February 21st, 10am – 3:30pm in St Paul, MN.

Roll Call and Voting Log

January 17, 2025

P = in person R = remote participant A = absent Y = yes (approve)

Member	Attendance status	Minutes approval	Vote: Motion that NACC is funded at their 2.5 year request, \$517,019, and the remaining funds are to microgrants for existing grantees.
Joe Clubb	r	--	y
Sarah Grosshuesch	r	y	COI
Dr. Kathy Nevins	r	y	y
Rep. Dave Baker	r	y	y
Dr. Heather Bell	a	-	-
Rep. Robert Bierman	r	-	y
Sadie Broekemeier	r	y	abstain
Peter Carlson	r	x	-
Dr. Ashwin George	a	-	-
Curtis Jackson	r	y	Y
Senator Bill Lieske	a	-	-
Jack Martin	r	y	COI
Senator Zaynab Mohamed	a	-	-
Toni Napier	r	y	Y
Brock Reed	r	y	Y
Dr. Charlie Reznikoff	r	y	COI
Kristi Schoen	r	y	Y
Judge Nicole Starr	a	-	-
Dr. Antony Stately	r	y	COI
Deepa McGriff	r		
Jolene Rebertus	r		
Teresa Steinmetz	r		
Tally	voting members present= 13 absent= 5	Motion to approve: Baker Second: Napier = yes = no	Motion: Napier Second: Schoen