



## CONNECTICUT SOCIAL EQUITY COUNCIL

### Reinvestment/Workforce Committee Special Meeting – **Minutes DRAFT**

Wednesday, November 26, 2025

12:30 p.m.

Virtual on Teams

**Committee Membership:** Ojala Naeem (Chair), Andrea Hawkins, Michael Jefferson, Melvin Medina, Gregory Davis, Avery Gaddis, Charles Venator Santiago, and Kelli Vallieres.

**SEC Staff:** Brandon McGee, Mariedy Collazo Cruz, Kristina Diamond, Douglas Clemons, Tiffany Araujo, Jennifer Edwards, Vera Lembrick, and Caesar Valentin.

*The SEC Mission is to **promote equitable economic prosperity** by **supporting Social Equity Entrepreneurs** and reinvesting in communities **most impacted** by the war on drugs.*

### Meeting Minutes

#### **A. Call to order, welcome, and attendance**

Chair: Ojala Naeem called the meeting to order at 12:37 PM.

Members Present: Kyle Abercrombie, Gregory Davis, Michael Jefferson, Melvin Medina, Ojala Naeem (Chair), Charles Venator-Santiago

Absent: Andrea Hawkins, Kelli-Marie Vallieres

Quorum: Achieved (6 of 8 members present)

**B. Approval of August 8, 2025, meeting minutes:** Chair Ojala presented motion to approve August 8, 2025 meeting minutes.

Motion to approve: Melvin Medina

Second: Charles Venator-Santiago

Vote: Unanimous approval

#### **C. Share Recommended Grant Managers for the R2 Program**

Presented by Brandon L. McGee, Jr., Mari Collazo Cruz, and Caesar Valentin

Key highlights:

- Reaffirmation of SEC’s mission and strategic plan.
- R2 Program is referenced as a core pillar of SEC’s strategic plan.
- Grant Manager RFP:
  - The council issued the R2 Grant Manager request for proposals (RFP) June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2025, beginning the process to identify qualified partners across the state’s 10 targeted regions.
  - It will be a \$36 million investment over three different priority areas: Economic Development, Re-Entry Initiatives, and Youth Initiatives.
  - The process was designed to promote fairness, reduce bias, and hold applicants to a consistent standard. The RFP was widely publicized across council communication channels.
  - The selected grant managers, in addition to doing grant and contract management work right, will assist the Council in administering a notice of funding opportunity for community-based organizations.
  - Members of the evaluation committee used a standardized, highly structured rubric to score each grant manager proposal before recommending final selections to Brandon L. McGee, Jr., Chief Executive Officer.
  - The grant managers are expected to manage around 18 contracts with community-based organizations, which will range from \$25,000 to \$100,000 to provide services in the priority areas. They will act in conjunction with the guidance and goals of the R2 Program and the Council.
  - The evaluation committee reviewed 23 eligible proposals across 10 regions. The 10 selected grant managers were shared with the committee:

Region	Selected Grant Manager
Bridgeport	Community Foundation for Greater New Haven
Danbury	United Way of Coastal and Western CT
Hartford/East Hartford	United Way Inc - Hartford
Meriden	Community Foundation for Greater New Haven
New Britain	Community Foundation of Greater New Britain
New Haven, East Haven, West Haven	United Way of New Haven
New London, Norwich, Windham	United Way of Southeastern CT
Norwalk	United Way of Coastal and Western CT
Stamford	United Way of Coastal and Western Ct
Waterbury	United Way of Greater Waterbury

- Brandon L. McGee, Jr., concluded the presentation with calendar updates:
  - Today's meeting replaced the meeting scheduled for December 17<sup>th</sup>.
  - Regular council meeting will be held on December 2<sup>nd</sup> where these recommendations will be presented to the larger board.
  - The 2025 Council Market Outlook Wrap Up Event will be held on December 17<sup>th</sup> at the Legislative Office Building.

#### Questions/Discussions:

- Chair Ojala Naeem opened the discussion for questions.
- Charles Venator-Santiago inquired about capacity building for organizations that lack the capacity to manage grants. Chair Ojala Naeem responded by stating given the size and scope of the grants being distributed the committee wanted candidates that had both experience and capacity. Brandon L. McGee, Jr., agreed with Madam Chair's assessment. He also acknowledged Charles Venator-Santiago's inquiry. Chair Ojala Naeem suggested the aforementioned inquiry be moved to a future meeting to provide space and time to discuss the matter at hand.
- Councilman Jefferson expressed concerns around the amounts of subawards, selection of CBOs and the process to be used by grant managers to make such selection. Chair Ojala expressed that the model to be used was previously approved by the Council. Legal Director, Mari Collazo Cruz, clarified that grant managers would be provided with the criteria to be used for selection to ensure a uniform process was used by all grant managers.
- Melvin Medina applauded the kind of approach based on the decisions that have been made about a distribution system and suggested to keep an eye on administrative costs. Chair Ojala clarified administrative costs are capped at 10%.
- Gregory Davis inquired about the approval process for grants to be issued by grant managers. Brandon L. McGee, Jr., explained that the Council has a thorough review system allowing for the measurement of success and impact.

#### **Chair Ojala entertained motion to approve and move the recommended slate of grant managers to the full Council for approval during the December 2nd meeting:**

- Motion: Charles Venator-Santiago
- Second: Melvin Medina
- Approved, with one abstention by Michael Jefferson.

#### **D. Reinvestment Updates**

- Brandon L. McGee Jr. indicated there were no further Reinvestment updates.

**F. Adjournment.** Chair Ojala entertained motion to adjourn:

- Motion: Melvin Medina
- Second: Gregory Davis and Charles Venator-Santiago simultaneously
  - All in favor
- Meeting adjourned at 1:25 PM.