The Council

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
SOCIAL EQUITY COUNCIL SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 8, 2026

1) Call to Order, Welcome and Attendance

Acting Chair Avery Gaddis called the special meeting to order and conducted roll call. Chairwoman Comer was unable to attend due to professional obligations.

Members Present:

Avery Gaddis (Acting Chair)
Kyle Abercrombie
Corrie Betts
Fanita Borges
Greg Davis
Andréa Hawkins
Michael Jefferson
Daniel Karpowitz
Ojala Naeem
Edwin Shirley
Shirley Skyers-Thomas
Kellie-Marie Vallieres
Charles Venator
Kevin Walton

Members Not Present:

Andréa Comer
Tina Beamon
Melvin Medina

2) Community Reinvestment Program (R2) Funding

Acting Chair Gaddis stated that the purpose of the special meeting was to approve the entities recommended to receive R2 funding. He thanked Chair Ojala Naeem and the Community Reinvestment Committee for their work and stewardship of the process.

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Chair Naeem thanked Social Equity Council staff for their work on the R2 program and reminded Council members to disclose any conflicts of interest and recuse themselves where appropriate.

Executive Director Brandon L. McGee described the vote as the final step in an extensive process to develop the R2 funding opportunity, engage communities, review applications, evaluate recommendations, and complete committee review before approving three years of community reinvestment funding.

Program Overview

Chief Program Officer Mariedy Collazo Cruz reviewed the process leading to the recommendations. The Council selected grant managers to assist with administration of the 2026 Reimagined and Revitalized Notice of Funding Opportunity, evaluate applications, recommend community-based organizations for funding, and provide program oversight and contract management.

- Grant managers used uniform criteria and a scoring rubric across all regions.
- A total of 337 applications were received.
- Remaining funds were redistributed to maximize available funding, with additional funds directed proportionally to regions with the highest populations living in poverty, primarily Bridgeport, Hartford, and New Haven.
- Funding was recommended for 174 entities totaling $10,750,000 annually for three years: approximately $3.3 million for economic development, $2.5 million for re-entry initiatives, and $4.9 million for youth initiatives.
- The Community Reinvestment and Workforce Committee previously approved the recommended entities, award amounts, and grant purposes.

Ethics and Conflicts of Interest

Chief Legal Officer Nichelle Mullins reviewed Council members' obligations regarding actual and potential conflicts of interest under Connecticut law. Members were instructed to disclose conflicts and, as applicable, recuse themselves or abstain from deliberation and voting.

3) Approval of Recommended R2 Grantees by Region

The Council considered the recommended grantee rosters, award amounts, and purposes by region. Douglas Clemons conducted roll call votes.

Bridgeport

Motion: Approve the roster of recommended grantees, award amounts, and purposes for the Bridgeport region.
Motion: Michael Jefferson

Second: Ojala Naeem
Discussion: None
Vote: 11 yes; 3 abstentions
Yes: Avery Gaddis, Kyle Abercrombie, Fanita Borges, Greg Davis, Andréa Hawkins, Michael Jefferson, Daniel Karpowitz, Ojala Naeem, Edwin Shirley, Charles Venator, Kevin Walton
Abstentions/Recusals: Shirley Corey Betts, Skyers-Thomas and Kellie-Marie Vallieres
Motion passed.

Danbury

Motion: Approve the roster of recommended grantees, award amounts, and purposes for the Danbury region.
Motion: Michael Jefferson
Second: Andréa Hawkins
Discussion: None
Vote: 12 yes; 2 abstentions
Yes: Avery Gaddis, Kyle Abercrombie, Fanita Borges, Greg Davis, Andréa Hawkins, Michael Jefferson, Daniel Karpowitz, Ojala Naeem, Edwin Shirley, Shirley Skyers-Thomas, Charles Venator, Kevin Walton
Abstentions/Recusals: Corey Betts and Kellie-Marie Vallieres
Motion passed.

Hartford/East Hartford

Motion: Approve the roster of recommended grantees, award amounts, and purposes for the Hartford/East Hartford region.
Motion: Greg Davis
Second: Michael Jefferson
Discussion: None
Vote: 6 yes; 8 abstentions
Yes: Kyle Abercrombie, Greg Davis, Michael Jefferson, Daniel Karpowitz, Shirley Skyers-Thomas, and Kevin Walton
Abstentions/Recusals: Corey Betts, Fanita Borges, Andrea Hawkins, Avery Gaddis, Ojala Naeem, Edwin Shirley, Kellie-Marie Vallieres, and Charles Venator
Motion passed.

Meriden

Motion: Approve the roster of recommended grantees, award amounts, and purposes for the Meriden region.
Motion: Andréa Hawkins

Second: Michael Jefferson
Discussion: None
Vote: 12 yes; 2 abstentions
Yes: Avery Gaddis, Kyle Abercrombie, Fanita Borges, Greg Davis, Andréa Hawkins, Michael Jefferson, Daniel Karpowitz, Ojala Naeem, Edwin Shirley, Shirley Skyers-Thomas, Charles Venator, Kevin Walton
Abstentions/Recusals: Corey Betts and Kellie-Marie Vallieres
Motion passed.

<u>New Britain</u>

Motion: Approve the roster of recommended grantees, award amounts, and purposes for the New Britain region.
Motion: Michael Jefferson
Second: Greg Davis
Discussion: None
Vote: 10 yes; 4 abstentions
Yes: Avery Gaddis, Kyle Abercrombie, Greg Davis, Michael Jefferson, Daniel Karpowitz, Ojala Naeem, Edwin Shirley, Shirley Skyers-Thomas, Charles Venator, and Kevin Walton
Abstentions/Recusals: Corey Betts, Fanita Borges, Andréa Hawkins, and Kellie-Marie Vallieres
Motion passed.

<u>New Haven/East Haven/West Haven</u>

Motion: Approve the roster of recommended grantees, award amounts, and purposes for the New Haven/East Haven/West Haven region.
Motion: Andréa Hawkins
Second: Greg Davis
Discussion: None
Vote: 9 yes; 5 abstentions
Yes: Avery Gaddis, Kyle Abercrombie, Greg Davis, Andréa Hawkins, Daniel Karpowitz, Ojala Naeem, Edwin Shirley, Shirley Skyers-Thomas, and Charles Venator
Abstentions/Recusals: Corey Betts, Fanita Borges, Michael Jefferson, Kellie-Marie Vallieres, and Kevin Walton
Motion passed.

<u>New London/Norwich/Wyndham</u>

Motion: Approve the roster of recommended grantees, award amounts, and purposes for the New London/Norwich/Wyndham region.
Motion: Andréa Hawkins
Second: Michael Jefferson
Discussion: None
Vote: 12 yes; 2 abstentions
Yes: Avery Gaddis, Kyle Abercrombie, Fanita Borges, Greg Davis, Andréa Hawkins, Michael Jefferson, Daniel Karpowitz, Ojala Naeem, Edwin Shirley, Shirley Skyers-Thomas, Charles Venator, and Kevin Walton
Abstentions/Recusals: Corey Betts, Kellie-Marie Vallieres
Motion passed.

Norwalk

Motion: Approve the roster of recommended grantees, award amounts, and purposes for the Norwalk region.
Motion: Michael Jefferson
Second: Andréa Hawkins
Discussion: None
Vote: 12 yes; 2 abstentions
Yes: Avery Gaddis, Kyle Abercrombie, Fanita Borges, Greg Davis, Andréa Hawkins, Michael Jefferson, Daniel Karpowitz, Ojala Naeem, Edwin Shirley, Shirley Skyers-Thomas, Charles Venator, and Kevin Walton
Abstentions/Recusals: Corey Betts and Kellie-Marie Vallieres
Motion passed.

Stamford

Motion: Approve the roster of recommended grantees, award amounts, and purposes for the Stamford region.
Motion: Michael Jefferson
Second: Ojala Naeem
Discussion: None
Vote: 11 yes; 3 abstentions
Yes: Avery Gaddis, Kyle Abercrombie, Fanita Borges, Greg Davis, Michael Jefferson, Daniel Karpowitz, Ojala Naeem, Edwin Shirley, Shirley Skyers-Thomas, Charles Venator, and Kevin Walton
Abstentions/Recusals: Corey Betts, Andréa Hawkins and Kellie-Marie Vallieres
Motion passed.

Waterbury

Motion: Approve the roster of recommended grantees, award amounts, and purposes for the Waterbury region.
Motion: Michael Jefferson
Second: Kevin Walton
Discussion: None
Vote: 9 yes; 5 abstentions
Yes: Kyle Abercrombie, Greg Davis, Michael Jefferson, Daniel Karpowitz, Ojala Naeem, Edwin Shirley, Shirley Skyers-Thomas, Charles Venator, and Kevin Walton
Abstentions/Recusals: Corey Betts, Avery Gaddis, Fanita Borges, Andréa Hawkins, and Kellie-Marie Vallieres
Motion passed.

At the conclusion of the regional votes, Acting Chair Gaddis confirmed for the record that his vote was yes for both the Bridgeport and Danbury regions.

4) Next Steps

Chief Program Officer Collazo Cruz stated that grant managers would receive the approved rosters that day and would be asked to coordinate notification of the selected entities, with notifications anticipated the following week. Grant managers would then issue award letters and contracts, with work expected to begin around October 1, 2026.

Executive Director McGee added that recipients would be onboarded and that Council members would receive information regarding opportunities to attend training and meet the funded organizations and their leadership.

5) Adjournment

There being no further business, Acting Chair Gaddis adjourned the meeting at 11:38am.

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