

Comment for Agenda Item 4f, February 1, 2022

Board of Supervisors

I am writing in regards to the Equity Grant and the Cannabis program. Our Farm is fortunate to have met the appendix G requirements and received a full Annual State License. Our gratitude to the folks working in the Cannabis program for the help we received to achieve this treasured goal. I feel the pain of the cultivators going through the Portal and working to achieve their Annual licenses.

I have worked with and in Administration for 38 years and have some understanding how bureaucracies work. I am writing to let you know about my experience in the Equity Grant Program in the hopes that improvements can be made. I started my application in March of 2021 and now almost a year later no Direct Grant funds have been dispersed or applications finalized. Three times I have been told that I met the requirements and 3 times have been told the process has changed and more information was needed. My application has gone as far in the process as having me sign documents for the check to be released and then told things had changed. It is not the request for more documents or information that is frustrating it is the time for the updated application to be reviewed and processed again delaying funds or response 3 weeks or more. This is a process problem. To have 7 department review every single change after the initial review is in my opinion a waste of precious time and ridiculous. I would ask that you review and streamline your processing of applications. The Departments or Supervisors need to meet more frequently to process the applications and narrow the number of people that have to look at the application each time there is a change. Call in a "time study specialist" to save you and the applicant time if you can't do it yourselves. The current process is not working for anyone. It is wasting your time, equity grant folks and applicants time.

Another issue that plagues the County and its relationship with Cannabis business and farmers is the lack of trust. Many people (this is an opinion developed from the contact I have had mainly with the county building department and the departments they deal with on approval of permits and the 7-department approving the Equity grant.) in the county offices dislike or are prejudice against cannabis businesses and cultivators and because of this they delay or disregard our applications for permits. One of our very simple hoop houses languished on Mario's desk In building and planning for 3 months while other non-cannabis people I know had more complicated permits approved in just a week. If I had not gone in every few weeks and asked and after the 3<sup>rd</sup> month finally found an employee that would be helpful and actually look for the permit it would still be on Mario's desk. I later heard that another department decided not to process cannabis related permits and delaying them longer. I hope that the 7-departments that are reviewing the equity grant applications are not doing the same. Every business should be treated fairly and equally. The county CEO should make that clear to all employees and the Board of Supervisors. If I am wrong about this I hope you will let me know.

To receive a fee waiver the grant applicants have been asked to provide a formal document with the dollar amounts of county permits. The Planning and building department would not

answer my voicemail or email with request for permit amounts. After a week of calling a person finally answered and I was told that they would not do that because fees were going up and they would not give me the current fee schedule nor is it posted anywhere on county website. This make it impossible to get a fee waiver grant. I hope that is not the objective of the county.

The communication between the Equity Grant folks and the applicants after submission has been slow. I believe that is because of the BOS or whatever committee of the 7 department is not getting back to them timely so they can communicate to the applicant. It is a domino effect that is frustrating for everyone involved in this process.

I would like to suggest the Mendocino Elevate Impact website create a sign in and allow applicant to save application and go back to update or complete. I was filling out the first application and wanted to go back and put in the answers to questions only to find the application was gone and the new application was different. If the information from the original application could be transferred to an updated version it would be very helpful as well.

Thank you for your time in reading this letter, considering its content and in making any improvements in the grant process.

Sincerely

Julie Harris  
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