

Grants Administration--from application to close out

Best Practices Checklist

This grants administration best practices checklist (related to the establishment of general policies and procedures for management of grant related activities by a municipal entity) has been developed as a guide only. Formal policies and procedures may be subject to legal review regarding its applicability. Local conditions, laws, codes or regulations may impact the applicability of this guide. This checklist was prepared by consultants to the South Central (Connecticut) Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG) under the SCRCOG Municipal Grant Training Initiative in June 2022. Municipalities should also refer to their grant agreement for specific requirements.

I. Project Prioritization

Identify a Priority Project

- Department head/staff identifies a priority project
 - Project staff lead: _____
 - Project name: _____
 - \$ Amount needed: _____
- Project has been prioritized and requested by:
 - Elected official(s) _____
 - Town/City Council/Board support can be documented
 - Resident(s) _____
 - Public input gathered and documented
 - Will help meet a regulatory requirement _____
 - Other _____
- Project is technically feasible
- Project supports a community need _____
 - Funding supports an ongoing/current City/Town project
 - Project is identified in the Plan of Conservation and Development, Capital Improvement Plan, department plan, City/Town code/regulation, or other
 - Funding supports a new/emerging/future City/Town project
- Project supports a supports a National, Statewide or Regional Need _____

Match a Priority Project to a Grant Opportunity

- Department head/staff has identified a grant opportunity matched to the project need
 - Grant name: _____

II. When determining whether to apply for a grant

- Department staff has reviewed all grant requirements (Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), Request for Proposals (RFP), or other grant notification documents). Grant is for planning or implementation.**
 - Planning
 - Implementation grant
 - Technical prerequisites can or have been met
 - Engineering/design studies completed (if applicable)
 - Environmental reviews completed (if applicable)
 - National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA Review)
 - Section 106 (Historic Review)
 - Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA Review)
 - Timeline/schedule is feasible
 - City/Town is an eligible applicant
 - No preconditions or prior actions would disqualify the application
 - Funding match requirements can be met
 - Public notification or public participation requirements can or have been met
- Department head has consulted with City/Town Manager and other department heads as needed; agrees to move forward with grant application.**
- Department head (or designated lead applicant) holds meeting with staff and other department heads/staff to assign grant writing roles and responsibilities.**
 - Grant can be written/compiled by City/Town staff
 - Grant application requires outside experts, consultants, or partnerships
 - Local funds are available for grant writing or other outside services
- Grants Administrator or other authorized City employee (Finance Director, City Manager) enrolls/authorizes access to online application workspaces**
 - Online registrations completed (Grants.gov, Sam.gov, login.gov, femago)
 - Online application accessed
 - Download fillable application forms
- Department head meets with staff and other departments to compile a grant application schedule**

- Sufficient time is available to compile a grant application, working backwards from the grant application deadline
- Department head, other assigned staff, or consultants write and compile required grant application documents, typically including:**
 - Required forms (eg SF-424)
 - Narrative/Work Plan
 - Budget, including matching funds (do not include prior expenditures)
 - Budget justification, with supporting documents, including:
 - Engineer's opinion of probable cost
 - Quotes, estimates
 - Payroll/time estimates, fringe benefit rates
 - Project Timeline/Schedule
 - Project Participants
 - Letters of Support
 - Other Supporting Documentation
 - Council/Board Resolution authorizing grant application and matching funds, if required
- Grants Administrator or other authorized City employee submits grant application documents**
- Maintain a record of the application and establish a Grant File**
 - Printed and electronic copy of grant application
 - Printed and electronic Copy of Grant Submittal Confirmation
 - Printed and electronic Copy of Denial Letter (if applicable)
 - For grant applications that are denied, request a debrief, if offered by the funding agency, to document how grant can be improved and resubmitted in future funding rounds.

III. Steps to Take Immediately After a Grant is Awarded

- Notify Department Heads and Others (internal to organization) about Grant Award**
 - Circulate the notification of grant award to Mayor, Council/Board, City/Town Manager, Finance Director, Grants Administrator, and Department Head (lead applicant)

- Upon receiving a notification of an award from the funding agency, place a copy of the grant award letter in the Grant file
- Finalize Work Plan, Timeline, Schedule and other Terms to be included in Grant Agreement**
- Council/Board Authorization**
 - Grants Administrator and/or Department head prepares Council/Board Resolution authorizing acceptance of grant award/final work plan and budget
 - City/Town Council/Board adopts Resolution and authorizes acceptance of Grant and authorizes City/Town Manager to execute Grant Agreement
- Grant Agreement is signed by City/Town Manager/CEO**
 - CEO sends executed grant agreement to funding agency for full execution
 - Upon return receipt, Department Head/Lead Applicant or Grant Administrator maintains fully executed copy of grant agreement and Council/Board Resolution in Grant file.
- Public Announcement**

IV. Steps to Take After the Grant Agreement is in Place

- Set up Grant Accounts in Financial Accounting System**
 - Finance Director establishes grant related financial accounts, including:
 - Expenditure account(s) for final/approved grant funded activities, such as:
 - Personnel (if applicable)
 - Equipment
 - Contractual Services
 - Direct Costs
 - Contingency
 - Other
 - Expenditure account(s) for cost share (match) activities
 - Revenue account for grant reimbursements
- Finance Director authorizes access to grant expenditure accounts (limited to Department head, approved staff only)**

V. Project Kickoff and Assigning Roles and Responsibilities

- City Manager/Town Manager or Department head assigns responsibility for overseeing implementation of the grant funded project and for spending the grant funds on approved/eligible activities. Project team members may include:**
 - Department head_____
 - Professional Staff_____
 - Third Party Project Manager_____
- Hold a Kickoff meeting: Project team members and Financial Department meet to review all grant requirements and assign additional staff roles and responsibilities, including:**
 - Identify authorized activities to be purchased
 - Confirm Budget and matching requirements
 - Review procurement and other financial requirements
 - Review Timeline/Schedule
 - Authorized start date
 - Grant expiration date

VI. Implement the Grant Funded Activity

- Purchase approved goods and services using required procurement procedures**
 - Prepare a bidders list (e.g. vendors, contractors, subgrantees)
 - Prepare request for bids, Request for Proposals (RFPs), request quotes
 - Include required legal notifications and advertisements
 - Include specific grant related requirements and instructions, such as
 - Prevailing Wage Requirements/Davis Bacon Act requirements (if applicable)
 - Set aside requirements (SBE/MBE/WBE) (if applicable)
 - Other requirements (such as bid bonds, pre-qualification, insurance, signage, community notification, Buy American, etc.)
 - Execute Agreements with Vendors, Subcontractors, Subgrantees
 - Vendor, subcontractor agreement term aligns with grant period
- If allowed, and included in the approved budget, charge administrative costs to the expenditure accounts**

- Maintain timesheets or other records tracking authorized staff time spent on grant activities
- Administration costs typically include hourly rate plus indirect/fringe rate.

VII. Financial Reimbursement Requests (Drawdowns)

- Department Head, Grants Administrator or other assigned staff, working with Finance Department, prepares and submits grant reimbursement requests (drawdowns) as costs are incurred throughout the life of the grant. (Grants are typically reimbursable, requiring the City/Town to expend funds and then seek reimbursement from the funding agency).**
 - Timing: Submit reimbursement request as costs are incurred or at regular intervals, as required by the grant agreement
 - Format: Utilize reimbursement request forms (if provided) or online reimbursement (if provided)
- Finance Department Establishes Financial Controls for Cash Deposits**
 - Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) into approved City/Town accounts only
 - Check disbursements payable to City/Town
- Finance Department records transactions into grant related accounts**
 - Expenditures recorded in expenditure accounts
 - Reimbursements recorded in revenue accounts
 - Code entries by date, reimbursement number, project title, project agreement #
 - Expenditure and revenue accounts should balance/tie out throughout life of the grant
 - Carry over financial entries into accounts year over year throughout the grant life

VIII. Progress Reports (Programmatic)

- Department head (or other assigned staff, consultants) prepares project status reports as required by the funding agency.**
 - Utilize standard report formats or forms required by funding agency, and report on progress, such as:
 - Date of Report
 - Report period (Q1, Q2, etc.)
 - Progress completed during the report period
 - Anticipated activities in the next reporting period
 - Issues/concerns/changes
- Submit reports throughout the life of the grant (term of the grant agreement or period of performance)**
- Include a copy of each report submitted to the funding agency in the Grant file.**

IX. Progress Reports (Financial)

- Department head (or other assigned staff, consultants) compiles and submits financial progress reports (monthly, quarterly, financial) to funding agency as required.**

Information to be reported may include:

 - Date of Report
 - Report period (Q1, Q2, etc.)
 - Drawdowns/Reimbursements received during the report period
 - Anticipated drawdowns in the next reporting period
- Place a copy of each required report submitted to the funding agency in the Grant file.**

X. Amendments to the Grant Agreement

- Department head (or other assigned staff, consultants) prepares and requests amendments to the Grant Agreement, if required. Amendment requests may include:**
 - No-cost time extension
 - Scope/task revisions
 - Budget modifications
- Secure Approvals for Grant Amendment**
 - City/Town Council/Board authorization
 - Funding agency approval
 - Other requirements
- Once approved and signed, maintain fully executed copy of grant agreement amendment in Grant file.**
 - Notify Finance Department of approved changes to the budget, if required.

XI. Grant Close Out

- Term of grant agreement is expired
- Grant funding has been drawn down
- Matching funds have been expended
- Final Reports Submitted
 - Final Financial Report submitted (by Department head or other assigned staff)
 - Final Progress Report submitted (by Department head or other assigned staff)
 - Other required close out documents submitted
 - Copy of all final reports in the Grant file.
 - Grant file may be used as documentation in the event of an audit.
 - Maintain grant file through the life of the grant and throughout the post-grant period as required by the grant agreement.
- Funding Agency Closeout Letter(s) received
- Other Closeout Letters received

XII. Yearly Look Back and Future Planning

Grant Look Back

- Maintain a list of city/town-wide grant funded projects (by account #, grant #)
- At least annually, Finance Department performs a “look back” to verify that the City/Town was reimbursed for all expenditures, particularly for closed out grants.
 - Grants where the drawdowns and reimbursements do not balance should be flagged for follow up, such as:
 - Submit outstanding reimbursement requests (if applicable)
 - Amend final budget (if applicable)

Annual Project Prioritization

- At least annually, Grants Administrator and the Finance Department, or team of Department heads, compiles a list of key/priority projects (from the POCD, CIP, City/Town/Town Board actions, etc.), and identifies potential grant sources for each, i.e. match the project with a potential funding source for a future application round.
- Evaluate if a project that was denied grant funds can be resubmitted.

Five to Ten Year Planning

- Maintain a list of key/priority projects (from the POCD, CIP, City/Town/Town Board actions, etc.), and identify potential grant sources for each, i.e. match the project with a potential funding source for a future application round.

XIII. Items to Maintain in the Grant File

- Grant Application
- Grant Award Letter
- Council/Board Resolutions/Authorizations
- Fully Executed Copy of Grant Agreement
- Financial Account Numbers Associated with the Grant
- Copy of Each Drawdown Request
- Copy of Each EFT, Check Paid
- Copy of Each Progress Report (programmatic and financial) submitted to Funding Agency
- Fully Executed Copy of Grant Agreement Amendments (signed)
- Copy of Close out letter (from funding agency, if applicable)
- Other Close out letters
- Agency Contact Information
- Login and Password Information (keep in a secure location)