

Title: Partnerships Program Grant Process and Administrative Instructions		
Issued by: The Bureau of Recreation and Conservation (BRC)	Effective Date: 1/13/14 Scheduled Review: Annual	Document Number: 2300-022
Reviewed: 01/05/23	Revised: 9/23/14, 4/18/16, 11/27/17, 9/18/19, 10/07/20, 6/01/22	
Approved By: Tom Ford, Bureau Director	Program Area: All	

AUTHORITY

Act 18 of 1995, Section 306, Community Recreation and Heritage Conservation. The Department shall have the power to administer Federal and State programs for grants and loans to local governments, municipal authorities and nonprofit organizations for community and regional projects involving the planning, acquisition, rehabilitation and development of public park, recreation and conservation areas, facilities and programs.

SCOPE

Provides directive for administration of the Community Conservation Partnerships Grant Program.

PURPOSE

This document contains an overview of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) process for implementing Partnerships Program projects.

A. Grant Administration Roles and Responsibilities

1. Local Project Coordinator (LPC) is designated by the Grantee, is the official contact person on all matters related to the administration of the grant project. All official correspondence will be sent to the LPC. If the LPC changes during the project, the Grantee must provide the assigned Bureau Project Manager with written notification on Grantee’s letterhead of the change, including the name, title, address, email, and daytime telephone number of the new LPC. If the new LPC does not have a Grants Portal Account, they will need to register as a new user. Click [here](#) for instructions.
2. Bureau Project Manager is assigned DCNR staff member serving as the Project Manager to work with the Grantee to successfully complete the grant project. It is the Bureau Project Manager’s responsibility to provide information and assistance to the LPC to ensure that the project is completed, that grant program requirements are met, and that the project is successfully closed out. All correspondence and communications regarding the grant project should be directed to the Bureau Project Manager.

B. Grant Administration Process

It is the Bureau’s intent to provide each Grantee with as much assistance as needed, on a step-by-step basis, to ensure a successful project. The project will be managed in the [DCNR Grants Customer Service Portal](#) (Grants Portal). The grant management process is outlined in the Grants Portal Project Checklist and Project Resources and consists of a series of Grantee submissions and Bureau approvals. The standard process for implementing a partnership grant is as follows:

C. Notice of Selection – DCNR Correspondence #1

1. DCNR sends a “notice-of-selection” correspondence to the grantee notifying them that a grant has been awarded and stating the funding amount.
2. The Bureau Project Manager, in consultation with the grantee, finalizes the official scope of work and other pertinent information needed to complete the Appendix A of the grant agreement. The Bureau Project Manager then submits this information to the Bureau’s Fiscal Unit.
3. The Fiscal Unit prepares and routes the grant agreement to obtain the needed signatures. Once all signatures are secured, the Fiscal Unit e-mails the fully executed grant agreement to the LPC
Note: If the grantee incurs any project costs prior to receiving a fully executed grant agreement, they do so at their own risk.

D. Grant Instructions and Request for Updated Work Plan – DCNR Correspondence #2

(Note: Can be concurrent with the preparation of the grant agreement.)

1. The Bureau Project Manager sends a correspondence providing applicable special instructions, which houses hyperlinks to pertinent forms and documents that may be helpful in administering a Partnerships project.
2. This correspondence contains several terms and conditions that must be adhered to. These include the requirement to include the proper funding citation on all deliverables (see below), and the need to submit an updated work plan as well as billable rates (where applicable) to gain approval of costs and approval to proceed with project activities.

E. Approval of Costs and Approval to Proceed

A significant amount of time will pass between the submission of the grant application and the generation of a grant agreement. Also, grantees can be awarded a lesser grant amount than requested. Therefore, Partnerships grantees must provide DCNR with an updated work plan to gain approval to proceed with project activities.

1. The grantee downloads, completes, signs, scans and uploads the “Work Plan and Approval to Proceed Form” to the Grants Portal. Submitted material will provide the final estimated project budget, work tasks, outputs, outcomes, and associated timelines. Billable rates must also be uploaded to the Grants Portal where they will be approved by the Bureau Project Manager.
 - Note: Information in the work plan must be based upon the official scope of work found in Appendix A of the grant agreement.
2. Once deemed acceptable, the Bureau Project Manager will sign and upload the form back to the LPC through the Grants Portal. Thereby accepting all estimated costs and issuing DCNR’s official approval to proceed with project activities.
 - All sub-contracts necessary to complete the project scope, such as with mini-grants, consultants, capital improvement projects, etc. must gain additional approval. This condition is set forth in the grant agreement.

F. Final Closeout – DCNR Correspondence #3

Once the required final closeout documents have been uploaded into the Grants Portal, and reviewed and approved by the Bureau Project Manager, a final closeout correspondence is issued. The final closeout correspondence gives a financial summary of project activities and stands as DCNR’s official record that the project is complete.

The grantee shall upload into the Grants Portal the final payment request and final report, along with the

required project closeout documentation, within 60 days of either completion of project activities or the end date of the grant agreement, whichever occurs first.

- a. A complete final submission includes:
 - Evidence of completion of all deliverables noted in the official scope of work.
- b. A closeout report of project activities (as applicable).
 - For activity that is not expected to have a physical final product (such as technical assistance or ongoing work), the grantee must provide a close out report that details grant activities, benefits, and achieved results including outputs and outcomes. If there are several categories of work without physical products, these can be included in the same final close out report.
- c. Copies of all executed sub-contracts and requested documents (certificates of title, bid tabulations, etc.).
- d. Properly completed Final Payment request through the Grants Portal.

G. Billable Rate (excluding Mini-Grants)

All Partnerships Program applicants seeking to perform all or part of scope of work using in-house professional staff are required to establish an hourly billable rate. The hourly billable rate can include an employee's hourly wage, fringe benefits, and operational overhead costs. Fringe benefits and overhead costs include but are not limited to employee insurance, retirement benefits, and paid time off. Staff performing work must possess the proper qualifications, training and experience. The billable rate should be officially established by the grantee's governing body. Should the billable rate for a particular staff person change during the course of a project, the change should be documented by making a separate entry when the final payment request is submitted in the Grants Portal.

H. Mini-Grants

Mini-grant programs must be administered in accordance with the [Mini-Grants Program Policy](#).

I. Contractor/Consultant Selection Process

The Bureau requires that contractors be selected on a competitive basis. For construction projects, this may require grantees to follow DCNR's Competitive Bid Policy depending on the cost of the project. For consultants, grantees will be expected to use DCNR's selection process. Municipal entities must follow applicable bidding laws. Non-profit organizations should officially establish and follow a competitive purchasing policy. Non-profit organizations that do not adopt a purchasing policy must follow municipal bidding laws.

J. Contractor/Consultant Selection Process Waiver Requests

Upon written request from the grantee, the Bureau may, at its sole discretion, waive its competitive contractor selection process policy.

K. Sub-agreements

1. In keeping with the DCNR grant agreement, DCNR must approve all sub-agreements to insure funding source and activity eligibility. We require sub-agreements be submitted to DCNR for approval PRIOR to execution through the Grants Portal.
2. *Non-discrimination Clause* -- All sub-agreements/subcontracts must include Appendix D of the grant agreement - *Nondiscrimination/Sexual Harassment Clause*.
3. Copies of all fully signed sub-agreements must be submitted to DCNR through the Grants Portal.

L. Grant Payments and Payment Request

1. The Bureau encourages all grantees to draw down as much grant funding as possible, as soon as possible, throughout the life of the project.
 - All payment requests are to be uploaded through the Grants Portal.
2. **Advance Payment Request:**
 - a. A 50% advance payment request is strongly encouraged to be submitted within two weeks of receiving the *Grant Instructions and Request for Updated Work Plan* letter.
 - b. This advance payment will provide “start-up” funds for the project. Once the advance payment request is received by the Bureau, it will be held for processing once the Grant Agreement is fully executed.
3. **Partial Payment Request:**
 - a. Non-profit organizations: Non-profit organizations can submit a partial payment request up to an additional 40% (beyond the 50% Advance Payment) of the grant amount through the Grants Portal. The Project Manager will approve this payment request once all required documents are submitted, the grantee has received approval to proceed, and is close to depleting the advance payment.
 - b. Municipal organizations: Upon receipt of the Bureau’s approval to proceed, municipal organizations can submit a partial payment request up to 90% of the grant amount through the Grants Portal.
4. **Final Payment Request:**
 - a. DCNR will not disperse the final 10% of the grant amount until all invoices are paid in full and the project is 100% complete. To draw down the final 10%, the grantee must submit a final payment request along with all required final close out documents through the Grants Portal.
 - b. Copies of all fully signed sub-agreements must be submitted before DCNR will approve final payment and release the remaining 10% in eligible grant funds.
 - c. The Final Payment Request Form organizes project expenses based on the categories identified in the official Approval-to-Proceed letter. Grantees are encouraged to fill and submit the final payment form electronically as it automatically calculates entered figures and prevents common addition mistakes. Submitting a final payment form that is completed correctly will help ensure prompt payment.
 - d. Final Payment by ACH will be processed within 6-8 weeks of Bureau Project Manager approval.

M. Progress Reports

Bi-annual progress reports on all project activities are due to the Bureau Project Manager on April 1 and October 1. Progress reports are to be uploaded through the Grants Portal.

N. DCNR Funding Acknowledgement

Any reports and/or outreach materials produced with funding from this grant shall include the statement: *“This {study/project/report/brochure} was financed in part by a grant from the Community Conservation Partnerships Program, the {Environmental Stewardship Fund, Heritage Areas Program, and/or Keystone Fund} under the administration of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Recreation and Conservation.”*

O. Amendments/Project Changes

Requests for changes to the approved scope of work, timeline, deliverables, grant agreement period, or grant amounts should first be discussed with the Bureau Project Manager. If the Bureau Project Manager agrees that an amendment is needed, an official request should be submitted in accordance with the grant agreement. In rare cases, it may be possible to request additional funding for cost overruns, but this is rare and is subject to the availability of funding.

P. Interest Income and Refund Grant Funds

All grant funds must be managed in accordance with the terms and conditions set forth in the grant agreement. Please consult your grant agreement and the [Payment Request Processing Policy](#) for specific instructions on depositing and managing grant funds.

Q. Project Records

1. **All original records related to the project shall be maintained for a period of three (3) years from the date of the final payment and made available for a possible program audit. Any costs presented in the closeout information, not verifiable by an audit, may be disallowed as an eligible project cost.**
2. It is important that you maintain records of all types of approved cash and non-cash costs throughout the grant administration process. For in-house professional staff and donated professional and volunteer services, it is recommended that you institute a tracking mechanism that includes the following information: name of person performing work, day and date of work, description of work performed, hours worked, hourly rate, and total value of work performed.
3. Complete records include all project-related invoices and records of payment.
4. Additional documentation may include:
 - a. Original payroll and accounting records relative to non-cash services.
 - b. Activity logs and time sheets relative to non-cash services.
 - c. Signed letters from firms, groups, or persons providing donated and volunteer services describing the type and amount (i.e. hours and rates) of services provided.

DISCLAIMER

The policies and procedures outlined in this guidance document are intended to supplement existing requirements. The policies and procedures herein are not an adjudication or a regulation. There is no intent on the part of DCNR to give the rules in these policies that weight or deference. This document establishes the framework within which DCNR will exercise its administrative discretion in the future.

PAGE LENGTH

5 pages

EFFECTIVE DATE

Immediately. This policy is to be reviewed and updated every year.

EXPIRATION

This policy remains in effect until revised or rescinded.

Tom Ford, Bureau Director

01/05/23

Name/Title of Bureau or Office Director

Date