

BUREAU OF RECREATION AND CONSERVATION

Title: Planning Grant Administrative Instructions and Process		
Issued by: Bureau of Recreation and Conservation	Effective Date: 10/7/2015 Scheduled Review: Annual	Document Number: 2300-026
Reviewed: 12/14/23	Revised: 11/30/17; 10/22/20; 6/2/21, 6/01/22, 12/14/23	
Approved By: Tom Ford, Bureau Director	Program Area: Parks, Recreation and Rivers	

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

The following is an overview of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), Bureau of Recreation and Conservation (Bureau) grant process for implementing planning grant projects. The term “Grantee” refers to a grant applicant that has been awarded a grant.

POLICY

A. Grant Administration Roles and Responsibilities

1. Local Project Coordinator

A LPC is designated by the Grantee and serves as 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 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

A Bureau Project Manager is the 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 Grantee to ensure that the project is completed, that grant program requirements are met, and that the project can be successfully closed out. All correspondence and communications regarding the 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 Planning grant is as follows:

1. DCNR Award and Pre-Contracting

- a) DCNR sends a Notice of Selection correspondence to the LPC and Chief Elected Official listed in the grant application.
- b) Bureau Project Manager conducts a pre-contracting call with the Grantee to confirm the designated LPC, match, project scope, grant agreement dates, and next steps in the grant process.
- c) DCNR emails a copy of the fully executed Grant Agreement to the Grantee signifying the beginning of the project management process. The Grant Agreement will also be available on the Grants Portal under "Project Resources – Agreements, Amendments and Payments".

2. Introduction & Grant Administration

Note: May be concurrent with the DCNR Contracting.

- a) Bureau Project Manager sends project start-up correspondence to the Grantee outlining the initial phase of the grant management process and project requirements. The correspondence will also be available on the Grants Portal under "Project Resources – Correspondence".
- b) Grantee is instructed to review the Grant Agreement, correspondence, and access the Grants Portal prior to scheduling an initial conference call with the Bureau Project Manager.
- c) Grantee is strongly encouraged to request a Partial Payment of 50% of the Grant Award through the Grants Portal Payments link upon receipt of the fully executed Grant Agreement.

3. Initial Conference Call or In-Person Meeting

- a) Bureau Project Manager conducts a conference call or in-person meeting with the Grantee Local Project Coordinator to review the Grant Agreement, Project Start-up correspondence, and Grants Portal.
- b) Bureau Project Manager reviews Project Start-up and Approval to Proceed submission requirements and guidance documents outlined in the Project Checklist.
- c) Throughout the life of the project, the Grantee will receive an email on a regular basis requesting a Progress Report. Progress reports will all be submitted through the Grants Portal.
- d) For Comprehensive Recreation, Park, Open Space and Greenway Plans (CRPP), Rivers Plan, Trail Plan ONLY: Bureau Project Manager discusses opportunity for early implementation project (details provided under additional information).

4. Approval to Proceed Submission Review

- a) Grantee uploads the preliminary submission documents to the Project Checklist in the Grants Portal for Bureau review and approval.
- b) The preliminary submission may include a DCNR Certification of Title form, timeline, budget, draft study committee list, draft Scope of Work (SOW), and draft Request for Proposal (RFP).

- c) After consultation with the Bureau Project Manager, Grantee may request an RFP Waiver for In-House Professional Services or other circumstances outlined in the [DCNR Competitive Bidding/Purchasing Policy](#).

5. Approval to Proceed with RFP (as applicable)

- a) Bureau Project Manager reviews and approves the Approval to Proceed submission and sends the Grantee an Approval to Proceed with RFP correspondence with instructions for consultant selection. The correspondence will also be available on the Grants Portal under “Project Resources – Correspondence”.
- b) The RFP must be sent to at least five prospective consulting firms.

6. Post-Bid Submission Review and Approval to Proceed

- a) Grantee uploads the list of consulting firms that responded to RFP, a copy of the selected consultant proposal, a letter outlining the rationale for consultant selection, and a draft Professional Services Agreement to the Project Checklist in the Grants Portal for Bureau review and approval.
- b) Bureau Project Manager reviews and approves the consultant selection and sends the Grantee an Approval to Proceed with Planning Process correspondence with instructions for draft Plan/Deliverables review. The correspondence will also be available on the Grants Portal under Project Resources – Correspondence.
- c) Grantee uploads a copy of the fully executed Professional Services Agreement to the Project Checklist in the Grants Portal.
- d) Grantee is strongly encouraged to request a Partial Payment of 90% of the Grant Award through the Grants Portal Payments link.
- e) For CRPP, Rivers Plan, Trail Plan ONLY: Bureau Project Manager reminds Grantee of opportunity for early implementation project and discusses requirements (details provided under additional information).

7. Project Management

- a) Grantee uploads a copy of the draft Narrative Plan Report/Deliverables to the Project Checklist in the Grants Portal.
- b) Bureau Project Manager reviews the draft Narrative Plan Report/Deliverables for compliance with the approved SOW, completeness, and practicality.
- c) Bureau Project Manager may provide written review comments for incorporation into the final Narrative Plan Report/Deliverables. The written review comments will also be available on the Grants Portal under “Project Resources – Correspondence”
- d) Bureau Project Manager approves the final Narrative Plan Report/Deliverables and sends correspondence with instructions for the Final Payment Request and project closeout. The correspondence will also be available on the Grants Portal under “Project Resources – Correspondence”
- e) For CRPP, Rivers Plan, Trail Plan ONLY: After discussion with Bureau Project Manager, Grantee may submit amendment for early implementation project (details provided under additional information).

8. Project Close-out Review

- a) Per Article XII of the Grant Agreement, Grantee must submit the DCNR Final Payment Request and associated closeout documentation within 60 days of either completion of the project activities or the end date of the Grant Agreement, whichever occurs first.
- b) Grantee requests a Final Payment through the Grants Portal Payments link and uploads required close-out documents as outlined on the Grants Portal Project Checklist. Close-

out documents may include the Final Deliverables, DCNR Final Costs Spreadsheet, Invoices, Proof of Payment (canceled checks, bank statements, and/or paid-in-full letters), and Non-Cash Match Documentation (if applicable). Additional documentation may be requested on a case-by-case basis.

9. Final Payment Approval and Project Closeout

- a) Bureau Project Manager reviews and approves the Final Payment Request and associated closeout documentation and sends the Grantee a Final Payment and Project Closeout correspondence outlining the final eligible project costs, approved final payment, and post-completion requirements of the Grant Agreement. The correspondence will also be available on the Grants Portal under “Project Resources – Correspondence”.
- b) Final Payment by ACH will be processed within 6-8 weeks of Bureau Project Manager approval.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A. Study Committee

Public participation requirements include the appointment of a Study Committee. Names and affiliations of the Study Committee members must be provided to the Bureau Project Manager for review and approval. Refer to the Bureau’s Public Participation Guide for guidance on Study Committee composition and techniques. Typically, the Study Committee should be appointed and functioning before the project begins.

B. Ownership/Control of Property

For Master Site Development Plans and facility rehabilitation Feasibility Studies the applicant must own or control the property that will be planned for and eventually developed or rehabilitated. Grantees will be required to provide a DCNR Certification of Title form signed by an Attorney/Solicitor. Property that is not owned in fee simple must be controlled through a permanent easement or a long-term lease agreement (minimum of 25 years) to protect facilities for their useful lifetime. Depending on the type of Feasibility Study, applicants may be required to have control of the site either through ownership or a long-term lease agreement and provide evidence of this control.

C. Implementation Project (Amendment)

For Comprehensive Recreation, Park, Open Space and Greenway Plans (CRPP), Rivers Plans and Trail Plans ONLY:

After discussion with the Bureau Project Manager, a Grantee may propose an early implementation project as an amendment to an open Grant Agreement for a CRPP, Rivers Plan, or Trail Plan. The proposed implementation project must be identified through the planning process, listed as a top priority in the plan, and produce a deliverable requiring professional services consistent with the Bureau [*Planning Eligible and Ineligible Grant Project Activities/Costs/Match policy*](#). The total project cost of the proposed implementation project should not exceed \$20,000. Final design/engineering, preparation of bid documents, and installation and construction activities are not eligible. Proposals for final design/engineering and preparation of bid documents should follow the Bureau *Design Only Grants (Trail and Rivers projects only)* SOP.

To fund an eligible early implementation project, a Grantee must submit a funding amendment request through the Grants Portal. A Grantee may request a maximum of \$10,000, requiring a \$1 for \$1 match,

by following the steps outlined in the Grants Portal and the Bureau *Amendment Process for Fund Increase, Time Extension, Scope Changes, and Project Title Changes* SOP. The requested amount must be based on a quote for professional services.

Implementation projects may include the following:

- Master Site Development Plan
- Feasibility Study/Conceptual Design with Preliminary Engineering
- Environmental or Cultural Resource Study
- Special Purpose Study (e.g. communications, climate resiliency, diversity and inclusion, coalition development, interpretation plan, signage design)
- Acquisition/Site Control Due Diligence (e.g. surveys, appraisals, title search)
- Easement/Lease/Official Landowner Agreement
- Ordinance
- Additional Promotional Materials for Plan (e.g. public engagement summary, website/social media content)

D. Grant Payments

[See the Payment Request Processing Policy.](#)

E. Billable Rate

For planning projects that include In-House Professional Costs or Donated Professional Services, personnel costs should be recorded as a billable rate which is equal to the employee's established hourly wage rate or the employee's hourly rate plus 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. The billable rate must be preapproved by the Bureau Project Manager and occurs when approval to proceed is provided. Contact the Bureau Project Manager for specific questions on eligible costs.

F. 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.

G. Request for Proposal (RFP) Waiver Requests

For planning projects, consultants must be selected using a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) process. Upon written request from the Grantee, the Bureau may waive the required RFP process. Waivers will be considered for requests that meet the conditions outlined in the Bureau's [Competitive Bidding/Purchasing Policy](#).

H. Project Changes/Grant Agreement Amendments

If there is a need to modify the scope of work, contract timeframe, budget, etc., during the grant project, the Bureau Project Manager will advise the Grantee of the process for requesting an amendment.

I. DCNR Funding Acknowledgement

The Narrative Plan Report/Deliverables must acknowledge funding from the Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund or the Environmental Stewardship Fund by including the following citation on the Plan acknowledgment page:

This project was financed in part by a grant from the Community Conservation Partnerships Program, {Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund and/or Environmental Stewardship Fund}, under

J. Record Keeping

It is the responsibility of the Grantee to maintain all original records related to the project 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 summary information, not verifiable by an audit, may be considered an ineligible project cost.

It is important that the Grantee maintain records of all types of approved cash and non-cash costs throughout the planning process. The following information should be documented for In-House Staff, Donated Professional Services, and Volunteer Services: Name of Person Performing Work, Day and Date of Work, Description of Work Performed, Hours Worked, Hourly Rate, and Total Value of Work Performed.

For all projects, this will include:

- All project-related invoices and records of payment.

Additional documentation may include:

- Original payroll and accounting records relative to In-House Professional Services.
- Activity logs and time sheets relative to Donated Professional and Volunteer Services.
- Signed letters from firms, groups, or persons providing donated professional and/or 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

6 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