

BUREAU OF RECREATION AND CONSERVATION

Title: Mini-Grant Program Policy		
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Approved By: Tom Ford, 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

Statewide and regional partners may request mini-grant funding to develop grant programs to implement small-scale projects through local partners. Mini-grants are intended to advance the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), Bureau of Recreation and Conservation (Bureau) and grantee priorities, strategic initiatives, or serve help to build community engagement and momentum for special work.

Mini-grant programs can fund a variety of project types including but not limited to planning, development, programming and special events. A 50/50 match requirement applies to all mini-grant funded projects.

For the purposes of this document the term “grantee” refers to the lead organization that has been awarded DCNR funding to develop and administer a mini-grant program. The term “mini-grantee” refers to an organization that receives mini-grant funding.

POLICY

The application, review, and selection process for the grantee is as follows:

A. Grantee Eligibility and Selection

1. Grantees apply through the annual DCNR grant application process. The proposed mini-grant program can be a standalone application or part of a larger Partnerships Program application. The application is reviewed, scored and Bureau recommendations for funding are developed. If awarded, and once a grant agreement is fully executed, the grantee works with their DCNR project manager to develop and advance the mini-grant program.

B. Mini-Grantee Eligibility

1. Both the mini-grantee and the proposed activity must meet standard program requirements to receive funding.
 - a. Mini-grant funded activities must be in accordance with the Partnerships Eligible and Ineligible Cost Policy.
 - b. Mini-grant programs are typically funded with either Keystone or Environmental Stewardship Funding (ESF).

- Keystone funding is only open to municipal entities.
 - ESF is open to municipalities, non-profits and some educational entities.
- c. All non-profit mini-grantees must be:
- Incorporated as a 501(c)(3).
 - Registered with the [Pennsylvania Bureau of Charitable Organizations](#) (regardless of any financial or other condition).

C. Application Process

1. A competitive application process is required.
2. The grantee must submit a draft mini-grant application form and guidelines to their DCNR Project Manager for approval prior to publicizing an announcement of available funding.
3. A general announcement of available mini-grant funds shall be publicized and include the following:
 - a. Call for applications.
 - b. Identification of any grantee priorities for potential projects/applications.
 - c. Identification of the DCNR funding source.
 - d. A clear statement indicating the makeup of eligible applicants (i.e. non-profit, municipal entity, etc.)
 - e. A clear statement indicating mini-grants may not be used to fulfill match requirements for other DCNR funded grant projects.
 - f. Explanation of the application process.
 - g. Identify the maximum grant award is \$25,000. Any amount greater than \$25,000 requires approval by DCNR.
4. Mini-grant applicants must complete a mini-grant application form that should include:
 - a. A brief project description.
 - b. General questions for applicant – name, address, contact information, confirmation of Non-Profit Status (501(c)(3) w/IRS and registered with the PA Department of State Bureau of Charitable Organization), etc.
 - c. Criteria questions established by grantee.
 - d. Scope of Work
 - e. Budget
 - f. Timeline
 - g. List of Deliverables

D. Mini Grant Application Review, Selection, and Award

1. The Grantee is responsible for screening received applications to ensure that all mini-grantees and project expenses are eligible to receive DCNR grant funding.
2. The grantee is required to establish a selection committee to review and rank the mini-grant applications, review process, and scoring criteria. Selection committee members and/or their respective organizations cannot submit for mini-grant requests to be considered for funding by the committee.
3. The grantee is responsible for implementing DCNR Conflict of Interest requirements:
 - a. The grantee must ensure that no conflict of interest exists with selection committee members. A finalized list of committee members and a testament that no member's

- participation constitutes a conflict of interest must be submitted to DCNR for each round of mini-grants.
- b. Committee members must attest that their participation in mini-grant review and selection does not constitute a conflict of interest in accordance with the following documents:
 - The DCNR conflict of interest protocol (Appendix A).
 - Office of General Council Ethics Guidelines (update 2009) (Appendix B).
 - Ethics Act Guidance (2007) (Appendix C).
 - c. If a conflict of interest is thought to exist, the study committee member must be immediately and completely removed from the selection committee and the entire mini-grant process for that round.
4. The selection committee shall include a representative of the grantee, members at large and a DCNR Regional Advisor. Regional Advisors may serve as a voting member of a mini-grant selection committee.
 5. The grantee should develop a ranking sheet with scores and retain in the project file.
 6. After the selection process, as required in the grant agreement section entitled “Sub-Contracts,” the Bureau Project Manager must approve the final list of mini-grantees before any mini-grant awards are announced.
 7. The final list of selected mini-grant recipients must be submitted to the Bureau Project Manager for approval and shall include:
 - a. Legal name of the mini-grantee.
 - b. Federal 501(c)(3) registration number (non-profits only).
 - c. Pennsylvania Bureau of Charitable Organizations registration number (non-profits only).
 - d. Identification of organization’s eligible applicant status, i.e. non-profit, municipality, etc.
 - e. Contact information for project lead.
 - f. Brief project scope of work.
 - g. Project match amount.
 - h. Mini-grant award amount.
 - i. Total project cost.
 8. The grantee is responsible for sending notification to all applicants informing them that their application has been selected for funding, not selected for funding, or is being held as a “High Value Project” and will be considered for funding if resources become available. High value projects previously submitted as part of a competitive mini-grant round can be allocated funding without holding a new application round.

E. Grant Administration

1. The grantee is responsible for managing all mini-grant funded projects.
2. Under special circumstances the grantee may request the use of mini-grant funds to cover administrative costs to manage the mini-grant program. Eligible cost information is available in the [Partnerships Eligible and Ineligible Grant Project Activities, Costs, and Match Policy](#).
3. The grantee develops a mini-grant sub agreement to be signed by grantee and the mini-grantee. A template of this agreement must be submitted to DCNR for review and approval prior to being executed by mini-grantee.
 - a. The sub agreement will:

- Clearly identify the DCNR funding source.
 - Acknowledge that all DCNR Grant Terms and Conditions apply to the mini-grantee regarding the funded mini-grant project.
 - *Include a copy of the Nondiscrimination/Sexual Harassment Clause found in the original grant agreement.*
4. Copies of these sub agreements must be submitted to the Bureau Project Manager once executed.
 5. DCNR grantees are responsible for following the competitive bidding requirements that apply to their organizations and for ensuring that mini-grantees apply with all applicable regulations. These requirements vary based on whether the organization is a municipality or a non-profit. Grantees not familiar with the applicable bidding requirements are strongly advised to consult with their solicitor/attorney.
 6. The grantee should develop a payment plan for disbursement of grant funds to mini-grantees. Ten Percent (10%) of the mini-grant amount must not be released until the project is completed and final payment is received.
 7. For mini-grant development projects a final site inspection should be conducted by the grantee. This process may include providing photographs and the completion of DCNR's final site inspection form to the Bureau Project Manager.
 8. Mini-grant projects should adhere to DCNR's Sign/Acknowledgment requirements by including the DCNR funding citation on any printed materials or products and the DCNR sign for any development project.
 9. DCNR project files should include the following:
 - a. A list(s) of all awarded mini-grant applications including:
 - Applicant name
 - Funding amount
 - Match amount
 - Brief project scope
 - b. Copies of all executed mini-grant sub-agreements.
 - c. Indication of concurrence with conflict of interest policies for each round of mini-grants.
 10. For auditing purposes, the grantee should retain all project records for a minimum of 3 years from the date of the final payment. At a minimum these records should include the following:
 - a. Mini-grant applications.
 - b. Mini-grant score sheets.
 - c. Final list of ranked scores for all projects.
 - d. Approved list of mini-grants.
 - e. Detailed financial records.
 - f. Final site inspection photos for any development type projects.
 - g. Indication of concurrence with conflict of interest policies.
 11. For close out and final payment requirements the grantee will provide DCNR the following:
 - a. Copies/evidence of any final products.
 - b. An account of each funded mini-grant project.
 - DCNR strongly encourages the use of the "*success story*" template.

F. Miscellaneous

1. The intent of the mini-grant program is to make funding available to grassroots organizations.
 - a. DCNR allows grantees to accept both cash and non-cash match.
 - b. DCNR discourages regular Partnerships Program grant recipients from applying for or receiving mini-grants.

- c. DCNR discourages entities from repeatedly applying for mini-grant funding to support the same program activities. \
 - d. DCNR discourages grantees from collecting administrative fees from sub-grantees.
- 2. Mini-grants cannot be used to fund property easement or acquisition activities. Consult your DCNR Regional Advisor regarding land acquisition opportunities as there may be other existing programs available to meet acquisition needs.
- 3. Grantees may not reprogram unspent mini-grant project funding without DCNR approval. Any reallocation or other use of the funding must be discussed with and approved by the Bureau Project Manager.

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

12/14/23

Name/Title of Bureau or Office Director

Date