

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)

Bureau of Recreation and Conservation (BRC)

SUBJECT: Mini-Grant Program Policy

EFFECTIVE DATE: 01/01/12

REVISED DATE: 04/12/12, 4/14/14

Background:

Statewide and regional partners may request mini-grant funding to develop grant programs to implement small-scale projects through local partners. Mini-grants projects are intended to advance Agency priorities, strategic initiatives, or serve to build community engagement and help build momentum for special work.

Mini-grant programs can be constructed to 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 projects funded with mini-grants.

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:

1. Application Process

- a. A competitive application process is required.
- b. The grantee must submit the mini-grant application and guidelines for approval prior to publicizing an announcement of available funding.
- c. A general announcement of available mini-grant funds shall be publicized and include the following:
 - i. Call for applications.
 - ii. Identification of any grantee priorities for potential projects/applications.
 - iii. Identification of the DCNR funding source.
 - iv. A clear statement indicating the makeup of eligible applicants (i.e. non-profit, municipal entity, etc.).
 - v. A clear statement indicating mini-grants may not be used to fulfill match requirements for other DCNR funded grant projects.
 - vi. Explanation of the application process.
 - vii. Identify the maximum grant award is \$25,000. Any amount greater than this requires a written request to and approval by DCNR.

- d. Mini-grant applicants must complete a mini-grant application form that shall include:
 - i. A brief project description.
 - ii. General Questions for Applicant – Name, Address, Contact Information, Confirming Non-Profit Status (501 C3 w/IRS and registered with the PA Department of State Bureau of Charitable Organization), etc.
 - iii. Criteria questions established by grantee.
 - iv. Scope of Work
 - v. Budget
 - vi. Time Line
 - vii. List of Deliverables
- e. Consult the Community Conservation General Program Requirements and Guidelines for more information on activities and organizations that are eligible to receive funding:
http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/cs/groups/public/documents/document/D_001230.pdf

2. Mini-Grant Selection Committee and Process

- a. Grantees should work with DCNR staff to perform a cursory review of all received mini-grant applications to ensure that both the applicant and project activities are eligible to receive funding.
- b. The establishment of a selection committee to review and rank the mini-grant applications is required. Selection committee members and/or their respective organizations cannot submit for mini-grant requests to be considered for funding by the committee.
- c. Conflict of Interest:
 - i. 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:
 - 1. The DCNR conflict of interest protocol (Appendix A).
 - 2. Office of General Council Ethics Guidelines (update 2009) (Appendix B).
 - 3. Ethics Act Guidance (2007) (Appendix C).
 - ii. 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 particular round.
 - iii. The grantee is responsible for ensuring that no conflicts of interest exist 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.
- d. The selection committee shall include a representative of the grantee administering the mini-grant program, members at large and should also include the appropriate DCNR staff.
- e. Ranking Criteria and the process shall be established by the grantee.
- f. Selection Committee members shall use a ranking sheet to be submitted to the grantee.
- g. At the conclusion of the selection process, as required in the grant agreement section entitled "Sub-Contracts," the DCNR Bureau of Recreation and Conservation project manager must approve the final list of mini-grantees before any mini-grant awards are announced.

- h. The final list of selected mini-grant recipients must be submitted to DCNR for approval and shall include:
 - i. Legal name of the mini-grantee.
 - ii. Federal 501 © 3 registration number (non-profits only).
 - iii. Pennsylvania Bureau of Charitable Organizations registration number (non-profits only).
 - iv. Identification of organization's eligible applicant status, i.e. non-profit, municipality, etc.
 - v. Contact information for project lead.
 - vi. Brief project scope of work.
 - vii. Project match amount.
 - viii. Mini-grant award amount.
 - ix. Total project cost.
- i. 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.

3. Grant Administration

- a. The grantee is responsible for managing all mini-grant funded projects.
- b. Under special circumstances the grantee may request the use of mini-grant funds to cover administrative costs to manage the mini-grant program. Further information is available at:
http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr_017036.pdf
- c. 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.
 - i. The sub agreement will:
 - 1. Clearly identify the DCNR funding source.
 - 2. Acknowledge that all DCNR Grant Terms and Conditions apply to the mini-grant project.
 - 3. *Include a copy of the Nondiscrimination/Sexual Harassment Clause* found in the original grant agreement. A copy of the clause can be found at a link on the following webpage:
<http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/elibrary/forms/partnershipforms/index.htm>
- d. Copies of these sub agreements must be submitted to the Bureau project manager once executed.
- e. DCNR grantees are responsible for following the competitive bidding requirements that apply to their organizations. These 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. Further information is available at
http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/ucmprd1/groups/public/documents/document/d_001270.pdf
- f. 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.
- g. 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.

- h. 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.
- i. DCNR project files should include the following:
 - i. A list of all mini-grant applications including:
 - 1. Applicant name
 - 2. Funding status (selected, not selected, HVP)
 - 3. Funding amount
 - 4. Match amount
 - 5. Brief project scope
 - ii. Copies of all executed mini-grant sub-agreements.
 - iii. Indication of concurrence with conflict of interest policies.
- j. 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:
 - i. Mini-grant applications.
 - ii. Mini-grant score sheet.
 - iii. Final list of ranked scores for all projects.
 - iv. Approved list of mini-grants.
 - v. Detailed financial records.
 - vi. Final site inspection photos and form for any development projects.
 - vii. Indication of concurrence with conflict of interest policies.
- k. For close out and final payment requirements the grantee will provide DCNR the following:
 - i. Copies of any final products.
 - ii. A mini-grant summary document summarizing all mini-grant activity.
 - iii. An account of each funded mini-grant project. DCNR strongly encourages the use of the "success story" template, which can be downloaded from this page:
<http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/elibrary/forms/partnershipforms/index.htm>

4. Miscellaneous

- a. The intent of the mini-grant program is to make funding available to grassroots organizations.
 - i. DCNR allows grantees to accept both cash and non-cash match.
 - ii. DCNR discourages regular Partnerships Program grant recipients from applying for or receiving mini-grants.
 - iii. DCNR discourages entities from repeatedly applying for mini-grant funding to support the same program activities.
 - iv. DCNR discourages grantees from collecting administration fees from sub-grantees.
- b. 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.
- c. 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.

This policy remains in effect until revised or rescinded.