

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

***Bureau of Recreation and Conservation (BRC)
Administrative Policy/Grants Guidelines***

SUBJECT: Peer Grant Program Policy

EFFECTIVE DATE: 7/10/2015

REVISED DATE: 10/19/2015, 9/16/2016

BACKGROUND: This document explains DCNR's Peer Grant Program. The information provided herein is intended to help determine if your organization has a realistic and viable Peer Grant application or if your planning needs would be better met under another Community Conservation Partnerships Program project type. After reviewing this information and before completing a grant application, please discuss your project with your BRC regional advisor. Contact information for all regional advisors can be found at: <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/aboutus/index.htm>.

POLICY:

1. Peer Grant Project Objectives

A Peer Grant project is a consulting service coordinated by BRC staff. Peer consultants are typically park and recreation practitioners or conservation professionals that help grantees study a specific issue or improve services in a specific area.

This service provides the grantee with the management-related technical services of an experienced professional who has extensive training, knowledge and experience in the issues related to the project. When the consultation is completed, the grantee will be provided with a course of action, a set of recommendations to help address the problem studied, and encouraged to consider and implement these recommendations. The final products will include a written report that must be approved by BRC and the grantee.

2. Eligible Applicants and Projects

Eligible Applicants: A municipality (county, city, borough, township, or home rule municipality) or a municipal agency (authority, council of government, or intergovernmental commission) is an eligible applicant. Non-profit entities will be considered for Peer funding on a case by case basis. However, there is very limited funding available for non-profit Peer requests. Therefore, BRC encourages non-profit organizations to partner with a municipal entity.

Eligible Projects: BRC has not specifically defined all eligible Peer project types. Examples of eligible projects are provided below. If you have a pressing issue in your agency or municipality that does

not fit into one of the noted categories, you are encouraged to contact your BRC regional advisor to discuss your needs. Examples of potential projects include:

- a) Exploring the possibility of developing a regional recreation and park department.
- b) Evaluating a recreation and park board's efforts and providing board training.
- c) Evaluating the management of a major facility like a community center, a sports complex, an ice rink, or a swimming pool.
- d) Undertaking conservation activities like establishing a conservancy or land trust.
- e) Developing a revenue source management plan.
- f) Developing a regional trail maintenance and management plan.
- g) Advancing initiatives such as river town, trail town, green/sustainable practices, nature based place and/or bike-able/walkable communities through activities like conducting community audits.
- h) Small scale design work like developing conceptual or preliminary plans.
- i) Exploring the possibility of developing a new facility to accommodate an emerging park and recreation trend.

3. Project Cultivation and Selection

BRC accepts and considers Peer grant applications at any time. The cultivation and selection process is outlined below:

- a) Potential applicants should contact the appropriate BRC Regional Advisor to discuss the proposed Peer project. The regional services map can be found by clicking here: <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/aboutus/index.htm>.
- b) Typically, the Regional Advisor meets with the interested parties to discuss project goals, identify potential partners and offer overall technical assistance. Subsequently, the Regional Advisor will interface with the appropriate BRC Central Office personnel to discuss the potential project. If BRC determines that a Peer project is appropriate, the local party will be asked to submit a Peer grant application through DCNR's electronic grants portal at www.grants.dcnr.state.pa.us/Dashboard/Grants#Peer
- c) The grant application must include a basic scope of work and summary cost estimate. The exception to this is for projects that seek to develop preliminary studies or designs, in which case a detailed scope and cost estimate are required at the time of application.
- d) BRC reserves grant funds for peer requests and typically these funds are available when requested but there is always a possibility that funds will not be available. If funds are available following receipt of an acceptable application, the Bureau will notify the applicant that Peer funding has been approved. BRC will then process a grant agreement. It can

take up to eight weeks to receive a fully executed grant agreement. No Peer work should commence until the grantee receives the fully executed grant agreement.

4. Role of BRC Staff

BRC staff will provide technical assistance and support throughout a Peer project. Typical roles are outlined below:

- a) Once a Peer project is approved for funding, the BRC central office project manager contacts potential peer consultants to find an individual(s) who is both qualified and available to provide consulting services. BRC will work with the grantee to select an appropriate peer consultant.
- b) The BRC project manager arranges and facilitates a meeting between the grantee and the proposed consultant or consulting team. The purpose of this meeting is to reach consensus on the best course of action to address the grantee's issues and concerns. The group will confirm roles, responsibilities, the scope of work, expected final products, and a project timetable.
- c) Following the grantee's approval of the proposed peer consultant, the grantee must enter into a sub-contract with the consultant. This can happen either before or after the joint meeting described in item *b)* above.
- d) BRC will review and approve the sub-contract between the grantee and consultant before it is executed. When BRC approves the sub-contract, it will also issue the grantee an official approval to proceed with Peer project activities.
- e) BRC requests that the consultant submit quarterly progress reports to aid in ensuring project success.

5. Eligible Costs

- a) A grant amount up to \$10,000 is available for Peer projects. The grantee must provide at least a 10% cash match. The total project costs are not to exceed \$11,000. Applicants are encouraged to request the maximum amount and, if selected, funds will be used as needed or returned if there is an underrun. In the rare event of an overrun BRC may consider an amendment to the grant agreement.
- b) Eligible costs include BRC-approved consultant time, travel expenses, subsistence costs, clerical support and printing.
- c) Solicitor fees to review draft intergovernmental agreements are an eligible expense.
- d) BRC expects the planning process to include: substantial public participation using a variety of techniques; an examination and analysis of the issues under study; and a series of recommended actions to address studied issues.

6. **Grant Payments**

Upon full execution of the grant agreement, the grantee can use the Advance Payment Request form to draw down an initial payment of 50% of the grant amount. After gaining DCNR's approval to proceed, the grantee can use the Partial Payment Request form to draw down up to an additional 40% of the grant amount. The final 10% is held until all closeout documents are received and approved by the Bureau. Payment forms can be downloaded from: www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/elibrary/forms/partnershipforms/index.htm

7. **Project Closeout Requirements**

The BRC project manager must review and approve the final report before final payment is made to the peer consultant.

The BRC project manager will provide closeout instructions once the final peer study has been approved. Closeout requirements and final products typically include:

- a) An acceptable implementation plan written by the Peer Consultant that outlines study findings; identifies next steps and responsible parties; and contains any other agreed upon project deliverables such as intergovernmental agreements, job descriptions, financial projections, programming guides, etc.
- b) A statement from the Peer Consultant certifying that payment in full has been received.
- c) A signed resolution stating that the grantee accepts the Peer Consultant's final report.
- d) A completed peer evaluation form.
- e) A final payment request form, properly completed by the grantee.
- f) Three bound hard copies and one electronic copy of the final report suitable for posting on the internet.

This policy remains in effect until revised or rescinded.