

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

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

SUBJECT: Partnerships Program Grant Process and Administrative Instructions

EFFECTIVE DATE: 1/13/2014

REVISED DATE: 9/23/2014, 4/18/2016

Background: Following is an overview of the Bureau's process for implementing Partnerships projects. All of the documents referenced herein can be found by visiting www.dcnr.state.pa.us and searching "Partnerships Forms."

1. Grant Administration Roles and Responsibilities

Local Project Coordinator - The grantee designates a Local Project Coordinator (LPC). The Bureau considers the LPC to be the official contact on all matters related to grant administration. All official correspondence will be sent to the LPC. If the LPC changes during the course of the project the grantee must provide the assigned Bureau Project Manager with written notification (email is fine) of the change. This notification should include the new LPC's name, title, address, email, and daytime telephone.

Bureau Project Manager - DCNR assigns a staff member to serve as the Bureau Project Manager. 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.

2. Grant Administration Process

All correspondence must include the grantee's name, project number and topic in the subject line (*i.e. Susquehanna Heartland Association, BRC-SR-22-206 – updated work plan attached*). Providing this information allows DCNR to quickly identify and access your project records, which dramatically speeds our response time and accuracy.

It is DCNR's intent to provide each grantee with the assistance needed to ensure the successful realization of project goals. To that end, there are administrative "steps" that require grantee's to submit materials and wait for DCNR's approval before proceeding.

What follows is a description of the typical Partnerships grant administration process. Items A

through D represent the four major milestones common to every Partnerships project. DCNR generates official correspondence designating the achievement of each milestone.

All correspondence, other than the three letters outlined below, can be accomplished via email.

A. Notice of Selection – DCNR Letter #1

- DCNR sends a “notice-of-selection” letter to the grantee notifying them that a grant has been awarded and stating the funding amount.
- 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.
- The Fiscal Unit prepares and routes the grant agreement to obtain the needed signatures. Once all signatures are secured, the Fiscal Unit mails the fully executed grant agreement to the grantee.
 - Note: If the grantee incurs any project costs prior to receiving a fully executed grant agreement, they do so at their own risk.

B. Grant Instructions and Request for Updated Work Plan – DCNR Letter #2

(Note: This stage can be concurrent with the preparation of the grant agreement.)

- The Bureau Project Manager sends a letter providing applicable special instructions and an electronic link to the Partnerships Forms and Guidance Documents, which houses all forms and other documents that may be helpful in administering a Partnerships project.
- This letter 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 in order to gain approval of costs and approval to proceed with project activities.

C. 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 are most often awarded a lesser amount than what they applied for. Therefore, Partnerships grantees must provide DCNR with an updated work plan in order to gain approval to proceed with project activities.

- The grantee downloads, completes, signs, scans and emails the “Work Plan and Approval to Proceed Form” to the Bureau Project Manager. Thereby presenting the final estimated project budget, work tasks, outputs, outcomes, and associated timelines.
 - Note: Information in the work plan must be based upon the official scope of work found in Appendix A of the grant agreement.

- Once deemed acceptable, the Bureau Project Manager will sign, scan and email the form back to the LPC. Thereby accepting all estimated costs and issuing DCNR's official approval to proceed with project activities.
 - Note that all sub-contracts that are 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.

D. Final Closeout – DCNR Letter #3

Once all final closeout documentation is reviewed and approved, the Bureau Project Manager will issue the final closeout letter. The final closeout letter gives a financial summary of project activities and stands as DCNR's official record that the project is complete.

The grantee shall submit an application for final payment or a 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 complete final submission includes:
 - Evidence of completion of all deliverables noted in the official scope of work.
 - 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. If there are several categories of work without physical products, these can be included in the same final close out report.
 - Copies of all executed sub-contracts and requested documents (certificates of title, bid tabulations, etc.).
 - A properly completed Final Payment Request Form.

3. Billable Rate

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 on the final payment request form.

4. Mini-grants

Mini-grant programs must be administered in accordance with the Mini-Grant Management and Process Standard Operating Procedures.

5. Contractor Selection Process

The Bureau requires that contractors be selected on a competitive basis. 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.

6. Contractor Selection Process Waiver Requests

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

7. Sub-agreements

- 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.
- *Non-discrimination Clause* -- All sub-agreements/subcontracts must include Appendix D of the grant agreement - *Nondiscrimination/Sexual Harassment Clause*.
- Copies of all fully signed sub-agreements must be submitted to DCNR.

8. Grant Payments and Payment Request Forms

All payment requests are to be emailed to: RA-NR_BRCPAYMENTS@pa.gov
Payment forms are amended regularly. Therefore, a new one should be downloaded from DCNR's website each time.

<http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/elibrary/forms/paymentforms/index.htm>.

• Advance Payment Request Form:

The Bureau can process advance payment requests once the grant agreement is fully executed.

- Non-profit organizations can use this form to request a 50% advance payment.
- Municipal organizations can use this form to request a 25% advance payment.

• Partial Payment Request Form:

○ Non- profits organizations: Non-Profits can use this form to request up to an additional 40% (beyond the 50% Advance Payment) of the grant amount. 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. Once the Bureau Project Manager has provided notice to proceed, the PM may approve a 90% partial payment.

○ Municipal organizations: Municipal organizations can use this form to request up to 90% of the grant amount. Once the Bureau Project Manager has provided notice to proceed, the PM may approve a 90% partial payment.

• Final Payment Request Form:

○ DCNR will not disperse the final 10% of the grant amount until all invoices are paid in full and the project is 100% complete. In order to draw down the final 10% the grantee must submit a final payment request form along with all required final close out documents.

○ 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.

○ 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, thereby preventing common addition mistakes. Submitting a final payment form that is completed correctly will help insure prompt payment.

9. Progress Reports

Bi-annual progress reports on all project activities are due to the Bureau Project Manager on January 1 and July 1.

10. DCNR 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.”*

11. Amendments/Project Changes

Requests for changes to the approved scope of work, time line, 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 then 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.

12. Interest Income

All grant funds must be managed in accordance with the terms and conditions set forth in the grant agreement. Please consult your grant agreement for specific instructions on depositing and managing grant funds.

13. Project Records

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.

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.

Complete records include all project-related invoices and records of payment.

Additional documentation may include:

- Original payroll and accounting records relative to non-cash services.
- Activity logs and time sheets relative to non-cash services.
- 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.

