



**2009 PLANNING CHALLENGE GRANTS
 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

How is the Planning Challenge Grant program funded?

Planning Challenge Grants are administered by the Statewide Planning Program and funded with Federal Highway Administration Metropolitan Planning funds received by the State of Rhode Island and allocated to the Statewide Planning Program in its role as staff to State Planning Council, the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for Rhode Island.

Are costs incurred prior to grant awards eligible for reimbursement?

No. Only costs included in an executed Cooperative Agreement are eligible for reimbursement. All costs associated with developing or submitting a proposal in response to this request, or to provide oral or written clarification of its content shall be borne by the applicant. The State assumes no responsibility for these costs.

How is the required match computed?

The required match is based on the total project cost.

For projects with a 20% match:

Total project cost - \$60,000
 Grant request - \$48,000
 Required match - \$12,000

For projects with a 50% match:

Total project cost - \$60,000
 Grant Request - \$30,000
 Required Match - \$30,000

What are acceptable means for satisfying the match requirement?

Generally, the match requirement can be satisfied by allowable costs incurred by the grantee under the Cooperative Agreement. This includes cash donations and in-kind contributions by the grantee, allowable costs borne by non-federal grants, cash donations from non-federal third parties or the value of third party in-kind contributions applicable during the grant period. Third party in-kind contributions count towards satisfying a match requirement only where, if the party receiving the contributions were to pay for them, the payments would be allowable expenses.

Allowable costs must be necessary and reasonable for the proper and efficient performance and administration of the Planning Challenge Grant. The cost cannot be included in the Planning Challenge Grant if it is included as a cost or used to meet matching requirements of any other federal grant. Examples of allowable costs include advertising, compensation of grantee personnel, professional services necessary to achieve the objectives outlined in the scope of work, and printing. Please note, only allowable costs specifically included in the Cooperative Agreement are eligible for reimbursement.

Applicable administrative guidance governing the use of Federal Highway Administration funds is found in the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 49, Transportation, Part 18, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments (49 CFR Part 18). Also, OMB Circular A-87, Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments provides detailed information for determining allowable costs. Both documents can be found on the Statewide Planning Program website, <http://www.planning.state.ri.us/misc/pcgrants.htm>.

How is the in-kind match calculated?

Employees of the grantee's agency – Grantee personnel time commitment may be valued at the employee's regular salary inclusive of a reasonable valuation of fringe benefits.

Valuation of donated services - Unpaid volunteer services provided to a grantee by individuals will be valued at rates consistent with those ordinarily paid for similar work in the grantee's organization. If the grantee does not have employees performing similar work, the rates will be consistent with those ordinarily paid by other employers for similar work in the same labor market. In either case, a reasonable amount of fringe benefits may be included in the valuation.

Employees of other organizations – When an employer other than the grantee furnishes free of charge the services of an employee in the employee's normal line of work, the services will be valued at the employee's regular rate of pay exclusive of the employee's fringe benefits and overhead costs.

Valuation of third party donated supplies, loaned equipment or space – If a third party donated supplies, the contribution will be valued at the fair market value of the supplies at the time of donation. If a third party donates the use of equipment or space in a building but retains title, the contribution will be valued at the fair rental rate of the equipment or space.

Can a municipality acting as a fiscal agent for a non-profit agency charge a grant administration fee?

Yes. Any proposed grant administration fee must include an analysis of the actual costs of administering the grant. In order to receive reimbursement for grant administration, fees must specifically be included in the Cooperative Agreement.

What is the required process for hiring planning consultants?

Grant recipients are permitted to engage planning consultants and other contractual support to implement Planning Challenge Grant projects. In addition to applicable municipal ordinances, all grant recipients are subject to the Rhode Island General Law, Chapter 37-2, State Purchases, which is available on-line at <http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE37/37-2/INDEX.HTM>.

A grantee contracting for consultant services must use a public competitive bid process. The grantee will release a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the scope of services requested. A public notice period of at least 28 days of the invitation to bid must be provided. The notice can appear in a newspaper of general circulation or on the Rhode Island Division of Purchases website. Sealed bids must be opened publicly at the time and place designated in the RFP. All bids received must be evaluated according to the criteria outlined in the RFP. The evaluation of all offers including the reasons for a selection recommendation shall be fully documented. Any grantee proposing a procurement process different than that outlined above should consult the Rhode Island General Law, Chapter 37-2, State Purchases.

In addition, pursuant to Rhode Island General Law, Chapter 37-14.1, a minimum of 10% of the dollar value of all procurements for goods and services shall be awarded to Minority Business Enterprises (MBE) where it has been determined that subcontract opportunities exist, and where a certified MBE is available. Any RFP or services must contain the language: "This project is subject to Chapter 37-14.1 of the Rhode Island General Laws, and regulations promulgated thereunder, which require that ten percent of the dollar value of work performed on the project be performed by minority business enterprises." Participation must be demonstrated at the time of bidding. Refer to Regulations Governing Participation by Minority Business Enterprises in State Funded and Directed Procurement Contracts, available at <http://www.mbe.ri.gov/pdf/Regulations%20Gov%20MBEs.pdf> for more information. A listing of MBE firms is available at www.mbe.ri.gov.

At the request of the grantee, the Statewide Planning Program will review any RFP prior to its issuance in order to ensure that services requested are consistent with the Cooperative Agreement. The Statewide Planning Program **must** review and approve all contractual services documents between the grantee and the consultant **prior to their execution** in order to ensure that services contracted for are consistent with

the Cooperative Agreement and that the State procurement process has been followed. In order to gain approval for a contract award, a grantee must submit a completed Procurement Summary to the Statewide Planning Program. The Procurement Summary form will be provided by the Statewide Planning Program and will require the grantee to detail the procurement process including the advertising place, date and duration, the public bid opening place, date and time, a summary of all vendors, MBE participation and the process and rationale for consultant selection. If the RFP does not match the scope of services outlined in the Cooperative Agreement or if the procurement process does not conform to the State's Rhode Island General Law, Chapter 37-2, State Purchases and Chapter 37-14.1, Minority Business Enterprise, the Statewide Planning Program reserves the right to require the initiation of a new RFP process.

What type of reporting is required during the grant duration?

Quarterly progress reports, which include financial status, are required and should be submitted to the Statewide Planning Program within 30 days following the close of each quarter of the grant period, unless otherwise stated in the Cooperative Agreement. Quarterly reports will be e-mailed to all grant project managers at the end of each quarter.

How will grant funds be distributed to grantees?

All grant funds will be issued as reimbursements to qualified requests. Unlike previous grant cycles, no advances on funding will be offered. Reimbursement requests will be processed no more frequently than quarterly. Once requests for reimbursement have been reviewed and approved by the Statewide Planning Program, notice will be sent to the grantee of the amount and date of the approved reimbursement. The reimbursements are made using the State of Rhode Island's vendor payment system through the Office of Accounts and Controls and the State Treasurer's Office. All grants are subject to funding availability and the timing of reimbursement is not within the control of the Statewide Planning Program.

The State commonly makes payments to municipal governments via wire transfers. The payment of Planning Challenge Grant funds may be combined with other funds being transferred to the municipality on a given date, and typically will be made to a municipality's general fund account, not a planning department account. Such transfers will include a reference number but may not include an explicit notation indicating that the payment is from the Statewide Planning Program or being made for a Planning Challenge Grant. It is the responsibility of the grantee to determine if the municipality has received payment, and to arrange for any internal accounting or transfers needed for the funds received to be properly credited to the project. Grantees that have not identified receipt of payment within 45 days of notification that payment approval has been issued by the Statewide Planning Program should contact Karen Scott at (401) 222-4411.

No project expenses outside the scope of work outlined in the Cooperative Agreement will be reimbursed by the State. Any violation of the applicable accounting and procurement procedures or failure to comply with grant award conditions may result in forfeiture of grant funding reimbursement.

What paperwork must be submitted to the Statewide Planning Program for reimbursement?

There are several key pieces of documentation that are mandatory for processing a reimbursement request:

1. A completed Project Reimbursement Request or Final Reimbursement Request form. This form will state the funding requested, certify that all funds expended were utilized solely for allowable project costs as defined in the Cooperative Agreement, and certify that all funds were expended in accordance with applicable laws and regulations affecting the expenditure of federal funds. This form, which will be provided by the Statewide Planning Program, must be signed by an authorized representative of the grantee's organization.
2. An invoice from the grantee for the reimbursement time period. All project related expenditures should be itemized and identified as reimbursable or match. All requests for reimbursement must also include documentation of the required match expended in during the reporting period. If identified as meeting the required match, specify cash payment, third party donation or in-kind labor. Also, include any income generated by the grant program and document usage of program income

for project-related purposes to defray costs. For example:

Payment to Consultant	\$12,500 (reimbursable)
Printing of report	\$2,200 (match –cash payment)
Room Rental for Public Meeting	\$500 (match - donation by third party)
Staff time	\$900 (match - in-kind labor)
Total Project Expenses	\$16,100
Total Request for Reimbursement	\$12,500

3. Source documentation for expenses shown on the invoice. Source documentation shall include the executed contract between the grantee and any consultant, itemized invoices from consultants or suppliers and cancelled checks or other proof of payment. In-kind match from a third party donation should include documentation from the third party of the date, value, and duration of the donation. In-kind labor utilized for the project should include dates, name and title of worker, project activity, number of hours, and hourly rate claimed and should be accompanied by timesheet records and payroll information sufficient to show actual expenses. Final reimbursement requests, which must be made no later than 60 days following the end date of the Cooperative Agreement, must also include the deliverables outlined in the Cooperative Agreement. Final reimbursements will not be approved until entire project match amount has been documented and approved.

What constitutes a final deliverable for a grant project?

Final project deliverables will vary by Planning Challenge Grant recipient and will be outlined in the Cooperative Agreement. Drafts of work products should be made available to the Statewide Planning Program at least 10 business days prior to public release for staff review. Products such as reports and studies must be furnished in both hard copy and electronic format. Two printed and bound copies of all final report type products must be submitted. Electronic copies must include editable files of reports and studies. All GIS products must be submitted as topologically correct ArcGIS geodatabases or shapefiles with metadata meeting all Federal Geographic Data Committee metadata standards.

In addition, all products must include the following credit notation: “This project was supported by the Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program with funding provided by the United States Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration.”

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Are revisions to an executed Cooperative Agreement permitted?

Grantees are encouraged to submit projects with achievable scopes of work, accurate budgets and realistic timelines. Changes to the scope of work, project timeline, budgeted line items, project deliverables, or key personnel in a Cooperative Agreement must be approved by the Statewide Planning Program in writing prior to the expenditure of funds contrary to an executed Cooperative Agreement. Expenditure of funds prior to a required amendment to the Cooperative Agreement may result in failure of the State to reimburse unauthorized expenditures.

How long must project related records be retained?

All project related records must be retained by the grantee for a minimum of three (3) years from the project completion date. All records are subject to audit and review.

Who should I contact with questions?

Please direct all questions to Karen Scott, Principal Planner with the Statewide Planning Program at 401-222-4411 or kscott@doa.ri.gov.