Grants:

Purpose of this guide is to give supervisors a basic understanding of how important grant writing, management and reporting is to the success of a project and outlook for obtaining future grants. Most CD's mill levies don't cover the cost of operations. Grants play a vital role in providing additional funding for not only projects, but can also provide additional dollars for administration.

Defintions:

Grant - Any monetary / financial assistance which does not generally have to be repaid.
Grantor - The one giving the money
Grantee - You, the one getting the money

Project Development:

As a result of your Local Work Group meeting, you should have a list of natural resource concerns that could be addressed through potential projects. You as supervisors should continually discuss and come up with project ideas that you would like to prioritize and implement. When an idea comes up, put together a simple plan of work or scope of work, identify potential partners and develop an estimated budget. **If you have a good project the funding will come**. There are numerous grant opportunities out there, you just have to seek them out!

Upfront Homework:

Before you begin to write your application, there are several steps you should take to prepare. Many funding sources are highly competitive, and a top-quality application, one that gets funded, delivers a logical and consistent message that matches the evaluation criteria laid out in the call for proposals.

An initial project concept is crucial. A well thought out project is crucial to success. You don't want to just pull something out of the air, and on the other hand, you don't need an engineered project either. The concept should be well defined so you know what it is you want to accomplish with that project.

An estimated budget: The budget is a critical piece of any grant application. In preparing your budget, be careful to satisfy all criteria laid out in the grant application. Make sure that your budget requests are reasonable and calculated/estimated (as opposed to guessed). Reviewers can sense when numbers are made up. Keep in mind that the reviewers of your application understand that it costs money to make things happen, so you don't need to apologize when you include costs that are fair.

Carefully read application guidelines. You want to determine if this is a viable source of funding for your project. Also, you want to understand what is requested or expected from your application.

Don't hesitate to call the grantor. Calling the grantor to discuss possible application or to get a history of what has been funded in the past can be a great benefit up front.

Grant Submittal:

By now, you know that there will be several components to your grant proposal. For some components, you will have to simply fill in the blanks on different forms. For others, you will have to write a narrative to explain your ideas. Pay careful attention to the components that you are responsible for but have no control over, such as letters of support and partnership commitments. These are critical to your success, but you are dependant on others for them. Be aware of deadlines, and notify others of deadlines when you ask for outside assistance.

1. **Documents.** The grant application guidelines usually gives detailed instructions about the packet you need to put together as your submission. It is important to get this packet correct.

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Grant Submittal Cont'd…

2. **Matching Funds.** Some grants require matching funds, and those grants usually require verification of funds available.

3. **Letters of Support.** Letters of support and partnership commitments are critical to your success, but you are dependent on others for them. Note that it is your job to solicit and submit any letters of support.

4. **Meet the Deadline.** "I was busy" is no excuse! Generating your own checklist helps you understand all of the components necessary for a complete grant proposal package. Regardless of the tasks you need to complete, start by developing a plan of work, and begin to execute it.

> **"late applications are filed in the round file, and receive a 'Dear John' letter.."**
> ***Anonymous!***

Did you Know?

- That conservation districts in Montana receive over a million dollars every year in grant money for conservation projects or operation?
- That when you receive a grant, a contract will be signed between you and the grantor, and that no matter who you pass the money to, your district is still responsible for he project and every penny spent?
- That every CD received at least one grant last year?
- The Conservation Districts Bureau has money provided by the legislature, specifically set aside for conservation district projects?

Helpful Suggestions:

- Don't assume that grantors know about your effort. They are not privy to the discussions leading up to your project. Write it clearly, so that someone outside of districts get a clear picture of what you are trying to do.
- Project budget needs to include both grant funds requested as well as other sources of funding and in-kind contributions.
- CDB Staff is willing to help you develop clear project objectives and a scope of work that clearly describes the project with a detailed budget!
- Meet the deadlines outlined in the guidelines!

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