

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT + GRANTS

NATURAL RESOURCE ISSUES

CD's have statutory authority to take appropriate actions that will address the conservation of soil, water, and related natural resources, 76 – 15 - 101, MCA through 76-15 - 102, MCA. <https://archive.legmt.gov/bills/mca/index.html>

Exercise 1: *Print off a copy of the above statutes for each CD supervisor. Take 10 minutes to read and circle key words that specifically apply to your CD. Keep this to use in the next exercise (either at the same meeting or the next meeting).*

Identifying natural resource issues is a continual process, and not always an easy process. However, when a natural resource issue arises, it should be discussed at your board meeting, included or added in your strategic plan, and addressed in your annual work plan (see other 10-min training).

Exercise 2: *Take 10 minutes to list all the natural resource issues identified by your CDs constituency. This can be based on Local Work Group (LWG) meetings, knowledge by supervisors and staff, or public input. Now, prioritize these issues.*

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Project development starts with brainstorming. Don't let funding or other challenges stand in the way of brainstorming. Instead, develop your project idea, then determine if funding and capacity are available or if there are challenges that need to be addressed and overcome.

Exercise 3: *Take 10 minutes to work through the CD Project Development Form on the next page. Choose a priority natural resource issue and brainstorm a potential project to address the issue. Be as specific as possible in defining measurable goals (e.g. acres impacted, workshop attendees, etc.).*

Think about partners when completing the project management section, since funders often evaluate local support for a project. Contact them sooner than later to meet application deadlines if applying for funding.

Discuss project management and who will be the project lead. Choose one willing supervisor to record the discussion on the form to ensure more engagement and to refer to later.



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PROJECT TO GRANT

Once a potential project is identified and the scope of work has been fleshed out, securing funding is the next step to implementation. In regard to developing a project budget, estimating actual expenses can be challenging. However, it is an important part of a grant application, and funders are looking for a realistic budget that is tied to the project scope and accomplished the project goals.

***Exercise 4:** Take 10 minutes to complete a budget for your potential project. The Conservation Districts Bureau (CDB) has a template available that can also be submitted with a grant application.*

The next step to getting a potential project funded is to identify funding sources, eligibility, review criteria, and deadlines. Be sure to review grant guidelines and don't assume that all grants and applications are the same. Each program has a specific purpose. Be aware of deadlines for commonly used grant programs (such as CD grants) to plan for upcoming cycles.

GRANT AGREEMENT AND MANAGEMENT

If you have been awarded a grant, you may think it is time to get to work on implementing your project. Not yet. The first step is to work with your grant manager on the agreement and address any conditions of the award. Conditions may include executed agreements with partners, procurement documentation, and MEPA documents for example.

Next, it's time to review the grant agreement and become familiar with the terms and conditions. If your grant manager does not schedule a project kick-off meeting, the CD can request one.

Each grant program has different requirements, including reporting. Reporting typically includes project status, description of project activity, upcoming activity, deliverables, and requests for any changes to the agreement. For DNRC-CD grants, refer to Attachment C for reporting requirements. In your grant reports, write a narrative that addresses the tasks you set out to achieve in that performance period.

For reimbursement of expenditures, back-up documentation to substantiate expenses is required. Documentation can include invoices, receipts, time sheets, and procurement documentation for example. A budget tracker to accurately manage the financial part of the grant is generally required for reimbursement. While a specific template is not



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required, DNRC prefers that grantees use the tracker commonly referred to as the “Uniform Status of Funds” tracker.

EFFECTIVE GRANT MANAGEMENT TIPS

Set up structure on day one

- Read the full grant agreement and participate in a kick-off meeting with your grant manager.
- Create a grant calendar that includes important dates.

Track money and time carefully

- Set up separate accounting codes or cost centers so expenses and match for each grant are clearly tracked and easily reported.
- Document staff time (timesheets) and keep invoices, receipts, and contracts organized by grant and by reporting period for quick backup during reporting or audits.

Communicate and document

- Assign clear roles (e.g., program lead, fiscal lead, reporting lead) and hold brief check-ins to catch issues early.
- Keep a central digital folder with the application, agreement, amendments, reports, correspondence, and performance data so anyone stepping in can understand the grant quickly.

Disclaimer: This information is provided for general information purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. The information provided should not be used as a substitute for a legal opinion from your county attorney or otherwise retained and qualified legal counsel. If you need advice regarding a specific legal situation, contact your legal counsel.



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Project Name

Project Purpose and Need

Overall summary of everything below

Goals + Objectives

Intended outcomes that are specific and measurable

Public Resource & Conservation Benefits

Describe all the natural resource benefits that will result from this project.

Tasks

Specific actions that accomplish goals and objectives



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Deliverables

Tangible items that mean it was successful

Project Management

Who does what? And when?

Assumptions + Challenges

What are the risks? What are the potential obstacles?

