

The AACCS Grant Management Process

All new and renewal grants begin with a agency staff person submitting a detailed narrative proposal of what will be done with the requested funding. This process includes the agency's plan as to how the money will be budgeted and spent — oftentimes supplemented with a “budget narrative.”

- Get the executive director's approval — and subsequently the Board's approval — to submit a funding proposal, although proposal deadlines, especially for newly announced funding opportunities, sometimes require submissions prior to *Board* approval.
- Perform a cost-benefit analysis, which may involve HR and IT, to affirm positive agency impact and/or give thoughtful consideration as to whether the grant or contract appropriately fits the agency's existing mix of programs and services.
- Exercise all due diligence to comply with grantors' specifications and requirements, whether programmatic, fiscal or style/presentation/arrangement of the proposal.
- Go the extra mile to maintain sound professional relationships and agency-enhancing interactions with grantor/contractor staff and senior management
- Internally to the agency CEO and Board, divulge potential conflicts of interest, if any.

Funded proposals must be submitted to the agency's Finance Department, which then enters the grant's approved budget into the agency's accounting system.

- The initial vital step in the grant/contract management process is for the project manager and/or department executive to read and become fully informed with the grant/contract document and then establish all necessary means to properly comply with the grantor's relevant terms and to implement and manage the project's budget and services accordingly.
- Scan the signed original of all grant awards and funding contracts into an Adobe Acrobat (PDF) file — along with all related appendices, e-mail it to the executive director, copy (or retain PDF scan) for own use, and provide the signed original of all grant awards and funding contracts to Finance for permanent filing.
- Engage the agency's Finance, Human Resources and Information Technology systems departments as appropriate to implement and integrate new programs/contracts and their staff into the agency matrix.
- Typically with agency grants/contracts, expenditures are reimbursed incrementally by the funding agency as the funded grant work and associated requirements proceed — not with one big check upfront.
- Each grantor allocation of funding/reimbursement is justified by expenditure and/or service activity progress reports.

As the project moves forward, all invoices for direct operational expenses are analyzed, verified, documented, coded and submitted by the program/department to the Finance Department, which may further process and scrutinize them.

- Program directors and/or assigned grant/contract managers will receive regular and continuing feedback from the Finance Department on money in (including invoices to grantors) and money out (credit card billings, vendor invoices and expenditure reports).
- Internal fiscal review(s) will be performed and internal reports generated and circulated by the agency's internal auditor.
- Periodic financial reports, usually monthly or quarterly, are prepared and submitted to the respective grantor's designated official or office and the respective program directors and/or assigned grant/contract managers; corollary programmatic reports prepared by program directors and/or assigned grant/contract managers are typically submitted along with periodic financial reports.
- Other financial and programmatic summary reports are submitted periodically to the Board and/or Board Committees; current regulations also require that specific credit card summary reports be submitted to the Board of Directors.
- Applicable Indirect charges based on salaries paid are processed and charged in the Finance Department.

At the respective agency departments, a manager or assigned grants specialist processes fiscal and programmatic activity reports (and sometimes financial reports) relating to grant expenditures.

- The department director and his/her designee (who is responsible for most of the day-to-day management) will ensure that the funded contract or grant work is actually performed and properly done and reported.

Any spending changes beyond allowable contract scope/authority — such as moving money from one budget category to another — must be approved by the Finance Department and executive director — and sometimes by the Board and/or in conjunction with the funding source as well. In addition:

- Grant/contract funds are, insofar as appropriate, to be expended in such an incremental manner as anticipated in the grant's budget plan and narrative
- If leftover money does remain, grantors may want to know why — and most particularly whether some of the funded work was not done
- If unexpended grant/contract fund balances may become apparent, program directors and/or assigned grant/contract managers, with the involvement of the CFO and executive director, should devise a timely plan to appropriately utilize the available funding.
- Unless specifically approved in advance by the grantor, “last-minute” equipment requests for equipment from unspent year-end funds are customarily denied.
- When the project is over, the department director must usually submit a final programmatic report and a final financial report is issued by the Finance Department.

During the funded grant period, granting agencies typically review their funded projects periodically, and sometimes conduct project audits of their own. The agency's top management and its internal auditor(s) may do the same. Although the amount of reporting and monitoring may at times seem burdensome it generally works to provide the most effective means to assure the “deliverables” to the grantor.