

HAGERSTOWN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

GUIDELINES FOR ADMINISTERING GRANT PROJECTS

2014

Congratulations on the award of your grant! As a grant project director, you will have the opportunity to provide significant leadership to achieve the goals of the grant. As you work to accomplish the goals and objectives of the grant, there will be challenges to resolve along the way. These guidelines are designed to help increase your success and minimize any difficulties you encounter as you carry out what is now a legally binding contract. Throughout your project experience, you should feel free to contact the grants office at any time with questions or concerns:

Anne Shepard, Director of Grants Development
Extension 2557

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Grants Authority and Responsibilities

The President of the College is the sole authority for signing off on grant proposals before they are submitted. In addition, other signatures must be obtained before submitting any grant proposal, as indicated on HCC's Grant Approval Form. The President is the sole authority who may accept grant funds on behalf of Hagerstown Community College. The President has been given this authority by the Board of Trustees.

The Vice President of Administration and Finance and Assistant Director of Finance are responsible for setting up an account for the purpose of receiving and expending grant funds.

The grants office is responsible for working with project directors to answer questions, facilitating contact with funders, assisting in project reporting if needed, and providing updates to the President and Board of Trustees.

A grant's project director has primary responsibility for attaining and reporting all agreed upon goals and objectives and for ensuring overall project success. A full range of institutional resources is available to support these efforts, and you are expected to work within the College's administrative structure.

The following chart lists the principal grant activities required for successful grant implementation as well as those who are responsible for carrying them out. Please note

that responsibilities may be assigned on a case-by-case basis depending on the complexity of each grant project, as well as other factors.

Grant Management Tasks

Project Activity	Responsibility
Initial Implementation of Project	
Award notification and acceptance	Funder, President, Director of Grants Development
Arrange and lead grant “kick-off” meeting, to include President, Executive Officers, and all pertinent personnel (those who will supervise and/or work with grant-funded staff, whose positions will be leveraged, etc.)	Director of Grants Development, Administrative Office Associate
Arrange regularly scheduled grant progress meetings (quarterly, monthly, or less frequently than quarterly depending upon grant complexity)	Director of Grants Development, Administrative Office Associate
Review budget/track budget at least quarterly (most often at grant progress meetings, but other meetings scheduled as needed)	Assistant Director of Finance, Director of Grants Development
Develop detailed project implementation plan, to include data collection, etc.	Dean/VP, Director of Grants Development, Project Director, Assistant Director of Finance
Create reporting schedule and prepare to send reminder notes/set up meetings prior to all reporting dates	Administrative Office Associate
Establish relationship with funding agency and program officer	Director of Grants Development, Assistant Director of Finance, Project Director
Set up restricted account and review budget process with project director, including process for budget changes	Assistant Director of Finance
Secure project personnel, including consultants	Area Dean/VP, Project Director, Human Resources
Provide orientation to project personnel	Project Director, Human Resources
Ongoing Project Tasks (Through Close-Out)	
Supervise project personnel	Project Director and Area Administrator
Purchase equipment and supplies	Project Director, Director of Business and Procurement Services, Assistant Director of Finance, Finance Director
Monitor, manage, and document grant activities (outcomes met, etc.---narrative sections of reporting)	Project Director, Director of Grants Development, Assistant Director of Finance
Monitor and manage grant budgets and	Project Director, Assistant Director of Finance

spending in relationship to activities	
Implement evaluation plan	Project Director, Director of Research & Assessment, Director of Grants Development, Assistant Director of Finance
Publicize/disseminate project outcomes	Project Director, Public Information & Government Relations, Director of Grants Development
Prepare and submit interim and final program and fiscal reports as required by funder	Project Director, Area Dean/VP—with support from Director of Grants Development (program mainly) & Assistant Director of Finance (fiscal mainly)
Prepare for project sustainability, if applicable	Project Director, Area Dean/VP, Executive Officers, Director of Grants Development
Complete project on time/on budget	Project Director, Assistant Director of Finance, Director of Grants Development
Maintain grant records	Project Director, Administrative Office Associate, Assistant Director of Finance
Close out grant	Project Director, Assistant Director of Finance

Grant Administration Guidelines

1. Award Notification and Acceptance

When a funding source has made the decision to award a grant to the College, a letter of approval is generally sent to the President, who will notify appropriate staff members. If an approval letter is sent directly to a project director, the President should be informed and sent a copy of the letter. In accepting the grant, the College is entering into a legally binding contract. The plan detailed in the grant proposal forms the core of this contract, but additional grant requirements are also provided by the funding agency. These requirements may include reporting procedures and procedures for requesting funds. In addition, the College may have signed assurances that it would abide by a number of federal or other governmental policies. Project directors should carefully review and become familiar with all the guidelines and requirements of the grant.

2. Conduct Initial Grant Management Meeting

Once the College has received official notice of a grant award, the grants office will contact the project director to arrange a project start-up meeting. For grants that operate on a continuing basis, or those for which the College is not the lead agency, an initial grant management meeting may not be necessary. At the initial grant management meeting, the grants office and project director will:

- Specify next steps and timelines for project implementation
- Review funding agency grant requirements
- Review the fiscal management process

- Examine issues, policies, and procedures pertaining to equipment and supply purchases and consultant subcontracting, as appropriate
- Review staff hiring, effort reporting, and compensation procedures
- Specify record keeping and reporting requirements and timelines
- Review grant amendment procedures
- Address other issues and concerns as needed.
- Discuss the potential need for and use of project management software

3. Develop Detailed Project Implementation Plan

While a grant proposal may outline a management plan, this may not be sufficiently detailed to serve as a day-to-day grant implementation plan. The grant's project director should consult her or his executive officer and the grants office to assess the need for and level of detail required in an implementation plan. The project director and the grants office should also discuss the need for and availability of project management software.

Recognizing that unforeseen circumstances can alter a project's direction and/or budget, most funding agencies will allow grant recipients to amend their projects. Requirements for amending grants vary among funders, and it is the responsibility of the project director, with assistance from the grants office, to understand and comply with these requirements. If a funding agency does not specify procedures to amend a grant, the project director should contact the funder to determine the amendment process.

4. Establish a Relationship With Funding Agency and Program Officer

Funding agencies typically assign a person to serve as a grants program officer, whose responsibilities include maintaining contact with grant-funded projects. It is important to establish and maintain a positive relationship with program officers, since these individuals can help project directors achieve grant goals and objectives. Program officers can also provide preliminary advice on budget modification requests and can help solve problems associated with implementation of the grant.

5. Set Up Restricted Account and Review Budget Process With Project Director, Including Budget Modifications

Finance Office staff will initiate a meeting with the project director to explain College requirements for expending grant funds. Both the project director and the Finance Office should be aware of forms, documents, and procedures provided by the funding agency for submission of grant expenses. Both should also be aware of the process for transmitting funds, for example, if the funder transmits funds according to a periodic schedule, or only through a request for reimbursement.

Grant budget timelines should be adhered to. It is generally a good idea to have half the budget expended or encumbered (allocated) within six months after the grant start date for a twelve-month grant project.

Many grants require that the College match grant funds by a certain percentage of the total project. If this is the case, the grant budget will reflect how the matching funds are to be spent. Spending and documenting matching funds accurately and completely is just as important as spending and documenting grant funds.

Matching funds can be either “cash” or “in-kind.” Cash matching funds refer to purchases that are made with College funds, for example, pieces of equipment. In-kind matching funds refer to, for example, a portion of a staff member’s College salary that supports the achievement of grant objectives.

Although the College submits a budget with each grant proposal, most funding agencies have rules and procedures for modifying the budget once it has been approved. Recognizing that unforeseen circumstances can alter a project’s direction and/or budget, most funding agencies will allow grant recipients to amend their projects. For example, some funders might require a budget modification or amendment if a line item changes by a certain percentage. They may also have established dates beyond which amendment requests will not be accepted. Most funders will also require amendments if grant objectives change, even if this does not involve budget changes. If, for example, the position of project director changes, an amendment should be submitted.

Requirements for amending grants vary among funders, and it is the responsibility of the project director, with assistance from the grants office, to understand and comply with these requirements. In addition, HCC’s Request for Change in Grant-Funded Project must be filed and signed for all changes to grant projects that require funding agency approval, and copies of the desired change must be submitted to the Director of Grants Development and Assistant Director of Finance prior to any such change occurring, for their review. Procedures outlined on the Request for Change form and Grants Accounting Manual must be followed. Either the Assistant Director of Finance (for budget changes only) or Director of Grants Development (for budget and programmatic changes) will submit the change request to the funder. If a funding agency does not specify procedures to amend a grant, the project director should contact the funder to determine the amendment process. Project directors should be aware of any procedures related to budget modifications, since these can affect whether the College will be able to spend all grant funds appropriately by the end of the grant period. Any unspent grant funds must be returned to the funding agency, a circumstance that is not a positive outcome for either the College or the funding agency.

6. Verify Record Retention Procedures

Records related to state and federal awards (financial, technical, and other records pertinent to the project, such as participant files for participant-focused grants) must be retained for three years after the last financial report for that grant is submitted, unless

otherwise specified in grant award terms. When a grant is awarded, the Director of Grants Development, when announcing the award to executive officers and project personnel, will notify Admissions, Records, and Registration, as well as Human Resources if record retention award terms specify any other time period for which grant records must be retained. The project director, in consultation with the grants office, will determine specific records retention strategies for his or her project (i.e., which records will be kept electronically and which will be kept on paper, as well as what information must be retained).

If a funder/sponsor specifies another grant records retention period, it is important to make note of that and follow their specifications.

If litigation regarding the grant occurs, records must be retained until any matters related to that litigation are resolved.

7, 8, 9. Project Personnel (Securing, Orienting, Supervising)

Once the grant budget is approved and a restricted account is established, you can begin the hiring process for project personnel. Staffing and compensation specifications are usually detailed in the grant proposal; it is essential, however, to abide by the College's current approved staffing and compensation plan and procedures. If, for example, the grant proposal projected a 2% cost of living adjustment each year but the College's policy changes to allow 1% increases each year, College policy will supersede what is detailed in the grant proposal. Similarly, if project personnel actually hired do not meet qualifications outlined in job descriptions presented as part of the grant proposal, salaries may be adjusted to reflect this fact. In other words, salaries presented as part of the grant proposal are guides which should be followed as closely as possible; some circumstances may require that what was projected in the grant proposal be adjusted to meet current needs and conditions.

The hiring of grant-funded personnel must follow the College's normal hiring practices and procedures. In cases where grants support Alternative Assignments for faculty or staff, the immediate supervisors of these individuals must be consulted in changing work assignments. All project staffing and compensation must be consistent with appropriate HCC hiring and compensation practices, as well as with all applicable state and federal regulations. Questions concerning HCC hiring practices and processes should be addressed to the office of Human Resources.

There are several types of project personnel: non-college temporary full-or part-time staff; non-college consultants and professional services providers; and college faculty and staff with grant responsibilities.

Non-college temporary staff may be hired by the College to carry out specified project responsibilities. Standard HCC hiring practices apply for non-college personnel:

- A position requisition, including a job description, must be submitted and approved at all levels, including the President.
- Grant-funded positions are temporary, with clearly stated start and end dates that correspond with specifications in the approved grant. The only exception to this rule is if the grant agreement specifies that the College is required to assume funding for one or more positions once the grant period, and the funding, have concluded.
- Compensation rates for grant-funded positions may be found in the College's *Annual Plan and Budget*.
- Positions should be advertised and standard search procedures followed.
- Prospective grant-funded staff must engage in the same selection and orientation process as other College employees.
- Since temporary employees are not usually familiar with College policies and procedures, supervisors must provide adequate orientation for, and appropriate ongoing assistance to temporary staff.
- Time and Effort reports must be completed and maintained with other project records as required by the funding agency and College guidelines. More information about Time and Effort reporting is found in the Grants Accounting Procedures Manual.
- Supervisors of grant-funded staff are responsible for ensuring that staff have the necessary materials to complete grant-related work, and that grant-funded staff follow all grant and College-mandated requirements.

College faculty, if the approved grant specifies, and with the approval of the Vice President of Academic Affairs, may be released from a portion of their ongoing responsibilities for a specified period of time to conduct project activities.

- Faculty members' grant responsibilities should be detailed using the Faculty Alternative Assignment process. Compensation for grant-funded activities must adhere to the College's Alternative Assignment guidelines. It is important to document both grant-funded and in-kind work performed as part of a grant. Therefore, Time and Effort reports must be completed and maintained with other project records. Copies of all College timesheets should also be maintained.

College staff, if the approved grant specifies, and with the approval of the appropriate executive officer, may be designated as grant project staff or director.

- If additional compensation is paid for this work, or if part of the staff member's salary is paid from grant funds, it must be clearly evident to a funding agency that work on grant project activities is above and beyond the staff member's usual duties and responsibilities. Therefore, Time and Effort reports must be completed and maintained with other project records. Copies of all College timesheets should also be maintained.
- In-kind contributions by College faculty and staff often support grant project implementation and sustainability. Such efforts may be initially built into the

grant proposal as College match or in-kind contributions or they may naturally emerge as a result of faculty and staff interest generated by the project's success. In either case, it is important to document the time and effort for reporting purposes.

Non-College Professional Services and Consulting Personnel are often engaged to deliver specified services (e.g. conduct a project evaluation, provide expert assistance). When College expertise is not available to provide the necessary services, it is important to determine who might be able to perform the required duties. Funding agencies may specify whether a consultant can be hired on a "sole source" basis or whether the desired services must be let out to bid.

However the consultant is identified, the College requires that consultants perform services in accordance with a completed Independent Contractor Agreement (Contact Planning & Institutional Effectiveness for the latest agreement format). The project director, in consultation with the offices of Human Resources and Administration and Finance, is responsible for developing the agreement, securing all required signatures, and making copies for all parties. Using the payment schedule specified in the Agreement, the consultant will submit an invoice detailing the work accomplished. The project director will complete a Request for Check form and submit it, along with a copy of the Agreement, for signatures.

10. Purchase Equipment and Supplies

With grant funding assured, and a restricted account established, the project director should immediately begin purchasing needed materials, especially equipment, since equipment especially requires considerable time to purchase, receive, and install. Project time is limited and all funds must be expended by the conclusion of the project.

- Become familiar with the levels of authorization needed for equipment and material purchases (see Grants Accounting Procedures Manual).
- To assure the most current and accurate prices, obtain dated product specifications, as well as shipping and handling charges, from vendors on their letterhead.
- If major equipment is to be purchased, follow up with the Maintenance Office as soon as possible to arrange for installation.
- Meet with the Director of the Business and Procurement Services (BPS) Office, prior to making or authorizing purchase orders, to review and finalize materials and equipment specifications contained in the grant. All purchase orders and check requests are routed to Assistant Director of Finance for review and approval prior to going to the College Payables office for approval and processing.
- Prepare purchase requisitions. For items costing \$1,000 or less, obtain approval from the appropriate cost center manager. Items costing more than \$1,000 require approval from the appropriate area dean or vice president. For

tracking purposes, most grant purchases should be made using a purchase requisition. An exception would be an item or items that total less than \$50, in which case a Request for Check form may be used. Project directors should follow HCC's Grants Accounting Procedure Manual for purchases. For a copy of the Requisition for Purchasing Material or Services, see the Intranet.

- If formal quotes or competitive sealed bids/proposals are required, 4-6 weeks should be allowed for the process to be completed.
- Keep track of purchase requests and follow up with BPS to ensure delivery. Delivery of equipment and furniture can take up to eight weeks. BPS does not expedite orders.
- Technical equipment and software must be compatible with existing College technology. The Director of Information Technology (IT) should be consulted during the proposal development process if purchase of technology equipment or software is planned. If for some reason this has not occurred, the project director should meet with the Director of IT as soon as possible after the grant has been funded.

Occasionally, specific equipment and material needs and prices change, between the time a grant proposal was submitted and the official approval date. If that is the case, project directors should contact the funder's program officer as soon as possible in order to prepare any required amendments. Project directors should also keep the grants office informed.

When orders are filled and equipment and materials arrive on campus, it is the project director's responsibility to contact the Finance Office to make sure the College has received an invoice. Further, if the order was initiated through a purchase order, the project director must verify, by signing a copy of the purchase order and designating which grant is to be charged, that the order has been received and that the Finance Office may proceed to pay the invoice. No grant invoices will be paid without this authorization from the project director. Note that if a purchase order has been issued, payment will not be made through a Request for Check form.

11. Monitor, Manage, and Document Grant Activities and Budget and Spend Down to \$0

The major responsibility of a grant project director is to manage the grant's activities and budget. Activities management involves making sure that planned activities take place and are documented. Management also involves making sure that grant objectives are being completed, and that progress is being made toward achieving project outcomes. The grants office may be consulted at any time for assistance in project management.

For all grants, unless otherwise specified by the funding agency, expenditures must be completed within the time frame of the grant project. Most projects will run concurrently with the College fiscal year, July 1 to June 30. In most cases, funders will

specify that purchases must be made, delivered, and paid for by June 30. It is the project director's responsibility, working with the Finance Office, to monitor budget line items and expenditures, including matching requirements, and to completely expend grant and matching funds. It is also the project director's responsibility to document and maintain comprehensive records of purchasing and matching funds.

Since the College has committed through a grant to use a certain amount of funding to accomplish project outcomes, it is important to spend down grant funding to \$0. If it becomes apparent that grant objectives and expenditures as originally envisioned cannot be realized, the project director should consult as soon as possible with the grants office.

12. Implement Evaluation Plan

Grant evaluation plans specify how projects will demonstrate that their objectives and outcomes have been met. At the beginning of project implementation, project directors and personnel should establish, with the help of the Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness (PIE), data collection procedures and protocols. These procedures and protocols should also include specific data measures required by the funding agency. If a consultant is to be responsible for completing the project evaluation, a consultant contract should be developed.

Regular monitoring of progress toward achieving evaluation outcomes will indicate whether adjustments may need to be considered.

13. Publicize/Disseminate Project Outcomes

Grant funders frequently require recipients to specify how they will disseminate the results of their projects. Dissemination efforts can include conference presentations, hosting meetings, and publications. Project directors should plan these events and activities early in the life of the grant.

Grants received and successfully managed can bring a great deal of positive publicity to the College. Project directors can work with the Office of Public Information and Government Relations to plan and carry out grant-related public relations activities.

14. Prepare and Submit Interim and Final Program and Fiscal Reports as Required by Funder

When funders send initial grant award documents to the College, they will usually specify dates by which they expect to receive progress and final reports. They will also normally specify reporting formats as well. Project directors should make sure that the grants office and the Finance Office receive copies of any material relating to reports, including communication sent by funders, as well as copies of reports. The Grants Office

maintains a database that is used to alert project directors to reporting dates, and project directors may share drafts of reports with the grants office for feedback and assistance. All reports must be submitted to the area Dean or Vice President for approval before they are sent to the funder.

Typically, funders request two types of progress reporting: narrative and fiscal. A narrative report focuses on progress toward meeting grant objectives, any obstacles that have arisen, and how these obstacles have been addressed. A fiscal report details progress toward spending all grant funds, and should be completed with assistance from the Finance Office. Note: some funders require submission of narrative and fiscal progress reports prior to reimbursing the College for grant-funded activities.

It is important to follow directions provided by the funder when preparing a program report. Project directors should review the funder's guidelines to make sure every goal, objective, and activity specified in the proposal is addressed in the report. If there were unanticipated changes or goals were not fully attained, exceptions to the proposed plan must be clearly explained. The funder may also have specific questions to be answered in the report.

Fiscal reports generally consist of a spreadsheet displaying the approved budget alongside the expended budget. Difficulties can sometimes arise when attempting to reconcile the differences among the funder, proposal, and College budget line items. Project directors may need to review notes made during the budget preparation process to ensure College budget categories are properly coded for consistency with the funder's approved budget categories and line items. The Assistant Director of Finance will assist with this process.

Final grant reports are usually due to the funder within 30 days after the end of a grant period. These reports require more detail and include all results of grant activities, along with a final fiscal accounting.

15. Hold Interim and Final Grant Management Meetings

Project directors should regularly keep the appropriate area dean(s) or vice president(s) informed of a grant's progress. This is especially important if there are difficulties associated with grant activities; for example, if a grant's objectives are not being achieved, or if there are unresolved budget issues. Since current and future relations with funders are crucially important to the College, the project director and area dean or vice president may decide to involve the grants office or other areas of the College in special meetings to resolve problems related to the grant. It is vitally important that steps be taken as soon as possible to confront and deal with grant-related problems.

Also, please note that in order to maintain appropriate internal controls, the Director of Grants Development (Sponsored Research Office) will convene regularly

scheduled grant progress meetings (at least quarterly for most grants totaling over \$50,000, and at least twice per year for grants below that threshold but above \$10,000)---but meetings may be held more frequently if progress toward any objective outlined in any grant, including the overall objective to spend down grant funds, is known to be greater than 20% behind the percentage of time that has been completed for the grant period. In other words, if 100 students are supposed to be enrolled over 1 year, and it is six months past the grant start date and only 29 students are enrolled, additional grant meetings may be scheduled (percentage of time passed during grant period = 50%, or six months out of one year; percentage of progress toward goal = 29%, or 29 students out of 100 needed). E-mail updates may be requested between meetings. Project directors, executive officers, and the Director of Grants Development may request additional grant progress meetings as needed. Meetings may also be held for smaller grants (below \$10,000) as needed. During grant progress meetings, the project director and other grant project team members will discuss progress toward meeting goals and objectives, ongoing progress on grant activities, and the status of the grant budget. The grant budget will be tracked/reviewed at least quarterly for every grant; most of these reviews will take place during grant progress meetings, but for grants for which progress meetings are not held on a quarterly basis or for budget questions and adjustments that need to be made in between progress meetings, additional budget meetings will be scheduled.

16. Prepare for Project Sustainability

While this step is listed late in the grant administration process, planning for sustainability is usually addressed in the initial grant proposal and should be planned for early in the grant funding period. Most grant funders want to know how the College will maintain a project with local funding once grant funds are no longer available. This is especially the case when grant funds are used to support salaries. Project directors should discuss the issue of sustainability when they meet with their area dean or vice president, and include any sustainability-related resource requests in their annual unit plans.

17. Complete Project on Time and on Budget; Close Out Grant

An important goal for every grant the College receives is that it be completed on time and on budget. While some funders will allow recipients to apply for an extension to complete grant activities, this is not generally allowed, and if it is allowed by the funding agency, it should be a “last resort” solution. If an extension is considered, it should have the approval of the appropriate executive officer and the President.

All grant documents, including reports, faculty and staff time and effort documentation, and purchasing records, should be maintained for five years after the grant has been closed out, unless a funder specifies a longer time period.

Conclusion

Grant funding, by providing crucial supplemental resources, can help Hagerstown Community College achieve its vision, mission, strategic goals, and institutional priorities. To achieve individual project goals, as well as overall College objectives, it is important to manage each and every grant with fiscal and programmatic integrity. Grant management tasks are made easier if guidelines and procedures are understood and followed. The Grants Office is prepared to assist grant staff and project directors in this endeavor. If questions or potential problems arise, project directors should not hesitate to contact Grants Office staff.