

SONOMA COUNTY STRATEGIC GRANT PROGRAM

The Grant Program operates in alignment with the County's Strategic Plan and Legislative Program to advocate for state and federal program funding. Grants are an important resource for a variety of resiliency and strategic planning efforts at the County. While the County grant function is decentralized, the funding associated with 2017 fire recovery efforts highlighted the need for a centralized understanding of grant activity across County departments and agencies. The Grant Program works in coordination with the Legislative Affairs Program to maximize funding opportunities that reflect the County's highest priority needs.

Today the Grant Program is primarily focused on identifying or managing funding for the Climate Resilience Comprehensive Action Plan (Climate Plan). The capacity to shift the CAO grant role into a centralized coordinator and/or consultant role is expected to change over time. The following roles and policies will provide a foundation for the newly reestablished Grants Program and will be updated as needed.

Board

- 1) County Strategic Priorities: Through the County's Strategic Plan and adoption of an annual Legislative Platform, the Board prioritizes departmental program efforts and provides authority to pursue identified funding opportunities.
- 2) Authority to Submit Grant Applications with County Funding Commitment: Grant applications which require financial commitments beyond those approved in the adopted County Budget require Board preauthorization. If a deadline does not permit preauthorization, the lead department will obtain Board approval after application submittal; if the Board does not approve the application, the lead department will withdraw the application and notify the grantor.
- 3) Authority to Accept Grant Awards: The Board of Supervisors must take action to approve the acceptance of grant awards. The lead department will request Board acceptance of the grant award before entering into any contract or work related to the award.

County Administrator's Office

- 1) Role: CAO Grant Program staff serve as the first point of contact for general, grant-related questions and coordinate post-disaster recovery funding efforts as needed. While they do not submit grant applications on behalf of departments or agencies, they may assist in coordinating cross-departmental Board items as needed.
- 2) Grant Consultant Contract Management: The CAO currently manages contracts with grant consultants for a range of services, including grant seeking, research and writing services, and bid-no-bid analysis. There is a growing need across departments for technical assistance to support compliance with state and federal grant requirements. The CAO will explore a pilot contract to gauge utility and effectiveness of technical advisory services, but in the meantime, is leveraging the collective knowledge of the Grant User Network and the California State Association of Counties Grants Initiative.
- 3) Quarterly Grant Reports to the Board: Grant Program staff collaborate with departments to provide a quarterly report to the Board on County grant activity that includes recent grant awards received, pending applications, and anticipated grant application submissions.
- 4) Climate Plan Grants: In CY 2025, Grant Program staff will primarily focus on identifying or managing funding for the Climate Plan. Staff will work with departments to respond to grant-related Board inquiries, and as capacity permits, meet with departments in an advisory capacity to discuss specific

funding opportunities, potential projects, and feasibility/competitiveness.

As the Grant Program evolves and more resources are available to dedicate to grant-related efforts, staff roles could expand to the following focus areas:

- Initial Department Consultation: When a County department identifies a funding opportunity worthy of further investigation, Grant Program staff and/or the County's grant consultants could schedule and meet directly with the department head(s) or their designee(s) to discuss the proposed project, application requirements and potential partners to evaluate if a competitive project application could be developed.
- Partnering with County Department(s) on Application Strategy: Grant Program staff and/or the County's grant consultants could provide strategic services in the development of grant applications for a limited number of projects, with priority given to projects aligned with the Strategic Plan or Legislative Platform. The level of service provided for each application would depend on the needs of the department, application complexity, level of coordination required, available department expertise and resources, and program capacity.
- Internal Review: Grant Program staff and/or the County's grant consultants could assist in the coordination and circulation of the application for review by County department(s) and partner(s).

County Departments

Applicant departments are generally the lead and subject matter experts on grant applications. They respond to Notices of Intent to Apply (NOI's) and submit applications for grant funding, either independently or with assistance from a grant-writing consultant. County departments and agencies are responsible for meeting the conditions of the award, including submission of relevant documentation, progress reports and adherence to the grant timeline and budget.

If a grant application requires participation from other departments, agencies, non-profits, or other organizations, the applicant department will coordinate applicable agreements, including memoranda of understanding and contracts. The applicant department is also responsible for obtaining Board approval for any grant-related match funds or financial commitments prior to application and for compliance with all County contract and purchasing policies with respect to grant funding. On a quarterly basis, departments will provide an update of their grant activity to the CAO to inform the quarterly Board update.

- 1) Department Director: Has primary programmatic and fiscal responsibilities for a designated department and ensures adequate resources are in place for the appropriate conduct of project management duties and grant award management.
- 2) Project Manager: Responsible for programmatic activities on a project as authorized by the grant agreement. Although some tasks may be delegated, the Project Manager is responsible for overall administration of the grant award, meeting the terms and conditions of the award, and for representing the project to the grantor.
- 3) Award/Fiscal Manager: An award (or fiscal) manager may reside within a department receiving a grant or this role may be contracted out to a consultant. The award manager is responsible for managing the financial requirements and maintaining the award record in the County's financial system. Additionally, the fiscal manager works with their department's CAO budget analyst to ensure that the appropriate resolutions and budgetary processes are completed.
- 4) Grant Auditor: An outside consultant may be engaged to conduct a risk assessment and an internal control review to identify key controls for each grant.

Grant User Network

A Grant Steering Committee was established in the wake of the 2017 fires to bring together the relevant departments applying for recovery funding, so that efforts could be both coordinated and prioritized. The GSC has dissolved and in its place is the Grant User Network, a department staff-led forum for best practice and information sharing. The users are County staff who work on grants in a range of capacities.