

Grant Compliance: How to Keep Your Grants and Win Successive Awards

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Congratulations! Once your municipality has won a grant award, you need to secure your grant funds and improve your chances of winning successive rounds of funding.

Here are some practical tips for ensuring compliance and improving your chances of future success:

1. Fully understand the compliance obligations of your grant award.

All grants are tied to some form of compliance, typically in the form of binding commitments. These often tie your receipt of the grant funds to performance of obligations regarding the proper use of grant funds.

Be sure to:

- Speak to your grant administrators at the grant maker's office to get a full understanding of all compliance obligations.
- Read all contracts and relevant regulations that concern your receipt and accounting for grant funds. If contracts or other binding commitments are involved, be sure to get authorized approvals and review these matters with your attorneys.
- Submit all compliance reports in a timely and complete manner. When in doubt, ask your grant maker for guidance.
- Be able to account fully at all times for the proper use of your grant funds. This means keeping all back-up documentation, such as proof of payment, paid invoices, receipts, cancelled checks, etcetera. Keep track of all expenditures for which you are using the grant funds, and do so in a separate file and spreadsheet.

2. Understand the proper use of grant funds.

Grants are typically restricted in some way. You must understand for what purposes and uses you may use the grant funds, and what purposes and uses may not be covered. It may be helpful to develop a master list of the types of expenditures allowed and the types that are not allowed, and distribute this to any departments or groups that may be responsible for spending grant funds. Budget accordingly.

3. Be pro-active and invite your grant maker to visit you and to play an active part in seeing how the grant funds are being put to good use.

For example, if the grant is awarded to fund a specific program, invite your grant maker to visit the program and speak to the officials involved in carrying out the program. This is a very powerful and positive opportunity to show the grant maker how its investment is worthwhile, and most importantly, why it should be continued.

4. Send regular updates and thank you letters to your grant maker.
Update reports are usually required as part of your compliance obligations, but even if they are not, you should develop and send these to your grant maker. You should also take every opportunity to thank your grant maker and keep the grant maker interested in your progress. Get them excited! Let the grant maker know how its investment is making a difference in your community.

5. Make sure that all compliance reports are thorough, professional and comprehensible.
Often a grant award will be tied to specified types or forms of reports which must be submitted to receive or continue funding. Of course, you should abide by the letter and spirit of every such report that is required. Moreover, every such report should be absolutely airtight, professionally crafted and understandable. For example, it may be wise to include thorough budget notes, memorandums of explanation for any items of expenditure requiring further detail or notes explaining the particulars of your grant-funded activities. Similarly, if you are unable to submit any piece of required information, you should say so and explain why or provide updates of any timelines which are relevant to your funding. As a rule of thumb, it's better to be more comprehensive than less so.

6. Develop and be sure to have a set of evaluation measures.
For every grant, it is critical to have a set of evaluation or performance measures to show how the grant produces real world results. Go over such metrics with your grant maker at the outset and be able to show a track record of success (how each grant dollar awarded to your municipality has yielded tangible, positive results).

Best of luck!

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