

DISTRICT GRANTS MANUAL

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District Grants Manual (2025)

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1. INTRODUCTION

a. Background

Grant funds comprise approximately one-fourth of the District’s annual budget, contributing significantly to the District’s goals and the work of its agencies. This Grants Manual is issued by the Office of the City Administrator (OCA) pursuant to [Mayor’s Order 2021-118](#) as a tool for District agencies, boards, commissions, departments, and offices (agencies) managing federal and/or local grant funding to promote effective, efficient, and fair use of grant funds and consistency in District operations. The Grants Manual (2024) takes the place of any previous versions of this resource (including previous versions of the “Citywide Grants Manual and Sourcebook”). The Manual is a companion to each agency’s general grantmaking policies and procedures. It is intended to support each agency with grants planning and implementation to meet the goals for each grant opportunity.

b. Scope and Purpose

This Manual is intended to support agencies with their grantmaking functions and optimize the impact of grant investments for the District. It summarizes broad federal and District requirements and standards, communicates “best practices,” and provides sample materials for the grant lifecycle stages of:

- Pre-award,
- Award, and
- Post-award.

This resource should be used as a companion to federal, District, and agency grant regulations, policies, and procedures. Users are encouraged to review the Manual in its entirety for an overview on the complete grant lifecycle and reference specific sections as needed. Grant managers are encouraged to consult with their general counsel or OCA if they have any questions about the applicability of the guidance in this Manual to a particular grant or context. If an agency believes following a portion of guidance provided in this Manual would be detrimental or conflict with other federal or District requirements, it should seek further guidance from OCA.

Interpretation: Throughout this document, requirements and good practices are distinguished with key terms:

- **Must:** Refers to a legal requirement

- Should or “best practice”: Reflects a good practice that agencies are encouraged to follow

c. Definitions

Advance Payment: A payment made to a grant recipient before purchases are made or work takes place. Advance payment(s) may take place once or on a predetermined payment schedule. Advance payments may be appropriate if a grant recipient would not have sufficient funds to perform expected activities with working capital.

Agency Grants Point of Contact: Each agency that applies for, receives, or issues grants is required to designate an agency grants point of contact. See “Agency Grantmaking Authority and Responsibilities” section of this Manual for more details about qualifications and requirements.

Agency Fiscal Officers: The chief financial officer’s (CFO) key representatives in District agencies who manage non-programmatic aspects of agency financial operations.

Application Package: A group of specific forms and documents required to apply for a grant funding opportunity.

Assistance Listings (formerly Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) numbers): The publicly available listings of Federal assistance programs.

Assistance Listing Number (ALN): Used by organizations to search for assistance programs on Grants.gov. The assistance listing number is referenced in every funding opportunity and the Notice of Award. The complete Assistance Listing number is a five-digit number, XX.XXX. The first two digits represent the funding agency, and the last three represent the assistance listing. The ALN can be located on www.sam.gov. (Source: U.S. Department of State and the Federal Audit Clearinghouse.)

Award: Financial assistance that provides support or stimulation to accomplish a public purpose. Awards include grants and other agreements in the form of money or property in lieu of money, by District agency to an eligible recipient. An award does not include technical assistance, which provides services instead of money; other assistance in the form of loans, loan guarantees, interest subsidies, or insurance; direct payments of any kind to individuals; and contracts which are required to be entered into and administered under the Office of Contracts and Procurement (OCP) procurement regulations.

Award Transmittal Letter: A letter that accompanies a Notice of Grant Award or grant agreement, generally detailing the grant received and including information such as awardee, amount granted, and grant period.

Board of Ethics and Government Accountability (BEGA): An independent agency that administers and enforces the District of Columbia government's Code of Conduct and certain laws that promote an open and transparent District government. ([BEGA Website Link](#))

Certificate of Clean Hands: A document issued by the Office of Tax and Revenue verifying that an individual or entity has no outstanding tax liability within the Office of Tax and Revenue.

Closeout: Process by which the awarding agency determines that all applicable administrative actions and all required work of the award have been completed by the recipient and the awarding agency.

Code of Federal Regulations (CFR): Codification of all general and permanent regulations issued by federal agencies, updated annually and divided by numbered titles and parts (e.g., [2 CFR 200](#)). Before codification in the CFR, federal regulations are published in the Federal Register.

Cognizant Agency: The agency responsible for negotiating with recipients on cost allocation plans, indirect cost rates, and fringe benefit rates; and for overseeing and resolving audits. When a funding opportunity uses multiple funding sources, the cognizant agency is determined according to the agency that provides the largest proportion of funding to a particular recipient.

Contract: An agreement entered into by an agency, or recipient or subrecipient to procure a good or service. Some aspects of contracts such as the nature of an agreement between two entities through a competitive process are similar to a grant. See "Distinction Between Procurements (Contracts) and Grants" section of this Manual for a discussion of the distinctions between grants and contracts.

Continuation Grant: An extension or renewal of an existing grant award or agreement, that would otherwise expire, for one or more additional budget period(s). Continuation grants may be available to existing recipients of discretionary, multi-year projects so long as it is still within the regulatory or statutory grant period of the grant funds. Receipt of a continuation grant is usually based on availability of funds, project performance, and compliance with progress and financial reporting requirements. (Source: [grants.gov](#))

DC Vendor Portal: An online [portal](#) that allows vendors to submit invoices electronically and helps to standardize the invoice processing throughout the District and improve the payment process for vendors and contractors doing business with District Government.

Direct Costs: Spending that can be directly attributed to the goals and objectives of a grant award.

Discretionary Grant: A grant (or cooperative agreement) for which the awarding agency generally may select the recipient from among all eligible recipients, may decide to make or not

make an award based on the programmatic, technical, or scientific content of an application, and may decide the amount of funding to be awarded. (Source: [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov))

Disallowed Costs: Charges to a grant award that the awarding agency determines to be unallowable, in accordance with the applicable cost principles, authorizing statute, or other terms and conditions contained in the award.

District Grants Clearinghouse: A public listing of upcoming and active grant opportunities from District agencies managed by Serve DC. As described in “Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA)” and “Request for Applications (RFA)” sections of this Manual that follow, agencies are responsible for submitting NOFAs and RFAs to Serve DC for publication in the [District Grants Clearinghouse](#).

District Integrated Financial System (DIFS): Financial system utilized by the District of Columbia. Grantees of District agencies receive grant payments via DIFS. Grantees must register in DIFS to receive payments.

District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (DCMR): The official compilation of the permanent rules issued by DC government executive agencies and the Council of the District of Columbia.

District of Columbia Register (DC Register): The [weekly legal publication](#) of the District of Columbia government that includes D.C. laws, rulemakings, notices, orders, and other items from executive agencies and the Council of the District of Columbia. The DC Register is published weekly on Fridays. Agency grant NOFAs must be published in the DC Register.

DUNS: A unique nine-character identification number provided by the commercial company Dun & Bradstreet (D&B). See UEI.

Federal Register: A daily publication used by Federal agencies to publicly share proposed rules, final rules, and public notices, among other documents. Agency staff may monitor or subscribe to www.federalregister.gov to review federal grant funding opportunities.

Formula Grant: Allocations of federal funding to states, territories, or local units of government determined by distribution formulas in the authorizing legislation and regulations. To receive a formula grant, the entity must meet all the eligibility criteria for the program, which are pre-determined and not open to discretionary funding decisions. Formula grants typically fund activities of a continuing nature and may not be confined to a specific project. Common elements in formulas include population, proportion of population below the poverty line, and other demographic information. (Source: [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov))

Funding Period: The time range when grant funding is available from the start date of a grant award to the end date of that grant award, when awarded funds to a grantee or subgrantee

must be expended. Also known as “period of availability.” The funding period is included in the Notice of Grant Award or grant agreement.

Grant: Financial assistance to a person to support or stimulate the accomplishment of a public purpose as defined by the law that authorizes the grant.

Grant Award Document (GAD): *See* Notice of Award.

Grant Award Notice (GAN): *See* Notice of Award.

Grantee: The entity awarded a grant. Also referred to as “awardee.” A grantee may make a secondary award (i.e., subgrant) to a subrecipient/subgrantee, if permitted under terms and conditions of the award. If an agency makes a secondary award from a federal agency, it is considered a “passthrough” entity. *See* Subrecipient/Subgrantee.

Grantmaking Authority: The legal authority for a District agency to make grants. *See* “Agency Grantmaking Authority and Responsibilities” section of this Manual for more information.

Grantor: The entity making a grant award.

Grant Managers: Staff at an agency responsible for design, implementation, and/or oversight of a grant award. Grant managers typically support grantees/subgrantees with various aspects of implementation and may provide technical assistance.

Grants.gov: The federal government website, centralized workspace, and resource hub that helps grantseekers find and apply for federal funding assistance (federal grants).

Indirect Costs: Costs incurred by a grantee/subgrantee that are not readily identifiable with a particular project or program (of the grantee) but are nevertheless necessary to the operation of the grantee and the performance of its programs (*Source:* [US Economic Development Administration](#)). Examples of indirect costs include costs for managerial staff (for example, a chief financial officer), office space rental, and utilities.

Indirect Cost Rate: The indirect cost rate is designed to provide a method for cost recovery and is a process for allocating costs not directly associated with a single grant, project, or cost objective. *Source:* [Department of Energy](#). It is the ratio (expressed as a percentage) of the indirect costs to a direct cost base. (*Source:* <https://ibc.doi.gov/ICS/indirect-cost/faqs>)

In-kind Contribution: A non-monetary contribution. Goods or services offered free or at less than the usual charge are considered in-kind contributions.

Intra-district Transfer: The movement of funds from one agency to another agency for a specific purpose within DIFS.

Matching Funds: Funds required to pay the percentage of project costs not covered by the grant award to fulfill grant objectives. It is the portion of program cost contributed by the grant applicant. Matching funds may also be referred to as cost sharing and may be a statutorily specified percentage of program costs that must be contributed by a grant applicant to be eligible or where the applicant voluntarily shares in the cost of the program.

Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA): An agreement between a grantor and grantee (or subgrantor and subgrantee) that describes how the grantee will calculate its indirect costs.

Non-competitive Grant: When an agency makes an award to a grantee without holding a competition only applicable in very limited circumstances. See “Deciding on the Grant Type (Competitive or Non-Competitive)” section of this Manual.

Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA): A publicly available document by which a District agency makes known its intentions to seek grant applications. NOFAs must be published in the [DC Register](#) and [DC Grants Clearinghouse](#). See “Notice of Funding Ability (NOFA)” in the “Pre-award” section of this Manual.

Notice of Award (NOA): A legally binding written award document that notifies the grantee and other parties that an award has been made, contains or references all terms and conditions of the award that were included in the RFA, and documents the obligation of funds. See “Making an Award” section of this Manual. Notice of Award (NOA) and Notice of Grant Award (NOGA) are used interchangeably. In addition, a NOGA/NOA is sometimes referred to as a Grant Award Notice (GAN) or Grant Award Document (GAD).

Notice of Grant Award (NOGA): See Notice of Award.

Office of Management and Budget (OMB): The federal agency that serves the President of the United States in overseeing the implementation of their vision across the Executive Branch. [OMB’s](#) mission is to assist the President in meeting policy, budget, management, and regulatory objectives and to fulfill the agency’s statutory responsibilities. OMB is responsible for publishing the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance) located in the Code of Federal Regulations, title 2, part 200.

Outcomes: Results of a program, service, or products provided. Refers to changes that are expected to occur as a result of implementing a project, program, service or activity.

Pass-through Entity: A non-federal entity that provides a subaward (also known as a subgrant) to a subrecipient to carry out part of a federal program. The District is a pass-through entity for several federal grant programs. (Source: [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov))

Procurement: The acquisition of a good or service to support agency needs. Procurement has distinct rules and regulations from grant making. See “Distinction Between Procurements (Contracts) and Grants” section of this Manual.

Records: Documentation related to grant making and grant implementation that grantors and grantees are responsible for maintaining. See “Record Retention” section of this Manual.

Reporting: The process of providing updates on the status of spending and implementation of grant objectives by a grantee to a grantor. See “Reporting” section of this Manual.

Request for Applications (RFA): The document an agency releases to formally solicit grant applications, describe the requirements for grant applications, and describe the process for grant awards. See “Request for Applications (RFA)” in the “Pre-award” section of this Manual for more details on requirements for contents and publication of an RFA.

Review Panel: A team of qualified individuals responsible for reviewing and scoring applicants for grant or subgrant awards. See “Risk Assessment” section of this Manual.

Serve DC: The Mayor’s Office on Volunteerism & Partnerships (Serve DC) is the District of Columbia government agency dedicated to promoting service and strategic partnerships as an innovative, sustainable solution to pressing social challenges. Serve DC engages District communities by building partnerships and organizational capacity, leading local and national volunteer and service initiatives, and providing and promoting meaningful service opportunities. Serve DC hosts the [DC Grants Clearinghouse](#) and publishes a biweekly newsletter including funding opportunities from District agencies.

State Single Point of Contact (SPOC): A single entity or point of contact designated to foster intergovernmental partnerships for federal funding opportunities. The Intergovernmental Review Process of federal programs, referred to as the State Single Point of Contact or SPOC, was created by Executive Order (E.O.) 12372. All District-based organizations complying with E.O. 12372 must complete a request form for a State Application Identifier. See “Grantseeking” section of this Manual.

Subaward: See Subgrant.

Subrecipient/Subgrantee: The legal entity to which a subgrant is made and which is accountable to the recipient for the use of the funds provided. Subrecipients are accountable to the agency for the use of funds provided and the agency is responsible to the originating funding source for both its and the subrecipient’s implementation.

Subgrant: For purposes of this Manual, a subgrant is the secondary award (i.e., subaward) of grant funds received by the District from the federal government (or a private entity) to a subrecipient to accomplish the same public purpose.

Supplanting: The use of one funding source to substitute for another funding source. In the case of grants, some federal grants prohibit the “supplanting” of local funding by federal funding and instead require grant funds to “supplement” existing local investments.

System for Award Management (SAM): A government-wide registry for vendors doing business with the federal government. Entities doing business with federal and/or District entities may be required to maintain an active SAM registration. SAM centralizes information about grant recipients and provides a central location for grant recipients to update organizational information.

Termination: The cancellation of a grant award by either the awarding agency or recipient organization at any time prior to the date of completion. See “Terminating or Discontinuing a Grant” section of this Manual.

Unique Entity Identifier (UEI): The identifier issued through the System for Award Management for those doing business with the federal government. UEI generally replaces DUNS which is no longer used for federal awards.

d. Distinction Between Procurements (Contracts) and Grants

The first step in the grantmaking process is ensuring that a grant is the appropriate vehicle, rather than a procurement.

- **Grants** use funding to **provide assistance** to accomplish a public purpose.
- **Procurements** (contracts) use funding to **acquire something** to support agency needs.

The following questions can help an agency determine whether a grant or procurement is the appropriate funding mechanism. If the answer to the following questions is “Yes,” a grant/subgrant is generally appropriate:*

- Is the principal purpose of the relationship the transfer of money to the grantee to carry out a public purpose (rather than the acquisition of goods or services for the direct benefit of the District government)? (If yes, a grant/subgrant is the most appropriate.)
- Will an outside entity (i.e., the potential grantee/subgrantee) define the specific services, the service levels, and the program approach? (If yes, a grant/subgrant is most appropriate.)

*When a grant is the more appropriate funding mechanism under the standards above, there must also be a District law (in the case of District grants) or a federal statute, regulation, or other authority (in the case of District-issued subgrants) that authorizes the District agency to issue a grant or subgrant for the intended purposes. Subgrants of private grant funds must be authorized by the grant agreement between the private entity and the District.

When an agency decides to award a grant or subgrant to a grantee, it should follow the steps described in this Manual.

e. Unsolicited Proposals

Agencies may receive unsolicited proposals i.e., requests for funding outside of a Request for Applications or subgrant process. Except in limited circumstances (See “Deciding on the Grant Type (Competitive or Non-Competitive), Limited Circumstances for Non-competitive Grants” section of this Manual), an agency may not issue a grant in response to an unsolicited proposal. Generally, agencies should direct senders of unsolicited proposals to public mechanisms for viewing funding opportunities, including the [DC Register](#), funding alerts from the Serve [DC District Grants Clearinghouse](#) website ([sign up to receive alerts](#)), and/or any agency website/communication channels.

f. Agency Grantmaking Authority and Responsibilities

To make grants, an agency must have specific grantmaking authority provided by District law. If it is uncertain whether such authority exists, the agency’s general counsel should be consulted. An agency desiring grantmaking authority must seek and obtain it from the Council of the District of Columbia through legislation.

To make subgrants of federal grant funds or of private grant funds, an agency must determine whether the federal grant award or the private grant award authorizes subgrants. If it is uncertain whether such authority exists, the agency’s general counsel and/or the cognizant federal agency or private grantor should be consulted.

g. General Grantmaking Responsibilities of Agencies

I. Point of Contact and Training

Each agency with grantmaking authority must designate an agency grants point of contact and provide that person’s name and contact information to OCA as requested ([Mayor’s Order 2021-118](#)) by emailing grants.govops@dc.gov. The agency grants point of contact will:

- Serve as a liaison with the OCA on all grants-related matters.
- Serve as an agency representative to attend meetings convened by the OCA related to grants management.
- Respond to all grants-related requests of the OCA and participate in such grants committees and working groups as may be designated by OCA.

- Participate in all reporting requirements, data collection and dissemination activities, surveys, training, and other activities designated by OCA.

This point of contact must possess the qualifications necessary to provide grants-related guidance to the agency and appropriately assist the agency in its compliance with applicable grants-related laws, regulations, policies, and procedures. At a minimum, that person should have knowledge about:

- The District Grants Manual;
- Federal and District laws, regulations, policies, and procedures relevant to the agency's grant activities; and
- Office of Management and Budget guidance relevant to the agency's grant activities.

II. Conflicts of Interest

The agency should take appropriate steps to avoid a conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest in the grantmaking process. A conflict of interest is most likely to occur in grantmaking when an individual's personal interest could compromise, or be perceived to compromise, their judgment, decisions, or actions. This issue arises most frequently in the grantee selection process, where an unsuccessful applicant believes that an individual involved in the selection process was biased against the unsuccessful applicant or biased in favor of the successful applicant.

An appearance of a conflict of interest would arise when an individual involved in the selection process, any member of the individual's immediate family, the individual's partner, or an organization that employs, or is about to employ, any of the aforementioned, has a financial or personal interest in an organization that has applied for a grant or subgrant.

To avoid a conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest, agencies must take steps to review the interests of the individuals making the awards or making recommendations regarding the awards. This includes requiring competitive grant panel members to identify their outside interests and to recuse themselves in certain circumstances. (See "Review Panel" section of this Manual.)

Moreover, the officers, employees, or agents of the agency (including competitive review panel members) making the awards must not request or accept (on behalf of themselves or others) gratuities, favors, employment, or anything of monetary value from grantees or applicants.

As a best practice, the agency grants point of contact, or other designee within the agency, should analyze each planned grant or subgrant process to identify and evaluate potential

conflicts of interest as early in the grantmaking process as possible and avoid, neutralize, or mitigate potential conflicts in advance of the funding opportunity. The agency grants point of contact should seek counsel from their agency ethics officer (who may also consult the [Board of Ethics and Government Accountability](#) (BEGA)) and the assistance of appropriate technical specialists in evaluating potential conflicts.

III. Records

See “Record Retention” section of this Manual.

IV. Disputes

Grantmaking agencies should have formal procedures to receive, administer and resolve disputes relating to their award(s) and all applicants and potential recipients should be made aware of those procedures (See “Challenges to Agency Award Decisions”). These procedures should be published on the agency website and, as a best practice, should also be included in its Request for Applications (RFA). If the dispute procedures are published online, the RFA may include a link to view the dispute procedures.

As a best practice, an awarding agency may offer non-awarded applicants a debrief conversation to review a synopsis of reviewers’ scores and comment (See “Non-Awarded Applicant Debriefings”).

V. Agency Procedures for Grant Funding and Award

This Manual is a supporting resource for agencies. Each agency should have its own written policies establishing procedures for administering and monitoring grants and subgrants.

All written procedures should be in place before releasing any grant opportunities or making awards. As a best practice, agency procedures should be posted on the agency’s website.

VI. Grant Funding Opportunities

The agency’s procedures for grant funding opportunities should ensure that all funding opportunities/requests for applications:

- Are reviewed and certified by appropriate agency staff, including for funding availability, legal risk and sufficiency, and programmatic objectives;
- Incorporate a clear and accurate description of the service(s) to be funded and entities that will be eligible to receive a grant;

- Avoid unduly restricting competition;
- Avoid conflicts of interest;
- Identify all requirements that the grantee must fulfill;
- Identify all criteria for how applications will be reviewed and other factors to be used in evaluating proposals, including factors that would disqualify an applicant.

See “Request for Applications (RFA)” section of this Manual for more detail on components to include in competitive grant opportunities.

VII. Award and Post-Award

The agency’s procedures for review, award, and post-award should ensure that:

- All proposed awards are reviewed and certified by appropriate agency staff, including for funding availability, risk including conflicts of interest, legal sufficiency, and programmatic objectives;
- All reviews apply scoring criteria consistently;
- All proposed grantees have been assessed based on risk;
- A process is included for applicants to receive feedback on their application (e.g., scores) and the opportunity to appeal award decisions;
- A grant award document is provided to awarded applicants at the inception of the award and as needed throughout the grant period (e.g., for amendments to grant award amount or term);
- Notification is provided to non-awarded applicants;
- The confidentiality and security of data and information is maintained;
- All grantees are monitored based on their risk assessment and receive Corrective Action Plans, as applicable;
- Grantees and the agency retain records of grant activities; and
- Grantees gather and provide to the agency information on the impact of the investment.

See “Award” and “Post-award” sections of this Manual for more detail on making and overseeing grant awards.

The agency should regularly review its procedures to ensure that the procedures reflect current laws and regulations, continue to allow for efficient and effective administration of grants, and reflect best practices and lessons learned from grant competitions, awards, and monitoring.

2. PRE-AWARD

a. Deciding on the Grant Type (Competitive or Non-Competitive)

I. Competitive vs. Non-competitive Grants

The initial decision an agency must make when initiating the grantmaking process is whether the agency's grant(s) and/or subgrants will be awarded on a competitive or non-competitive basis. The issuance of non-competitive grants (i.e., grants from the District's local funds) is highly limited by District law. Even where non-competitive grants or subgrants are allowed, the District's strong preference is for grants to be issued on a competitive basis.

Competitive grantmaking allows agencies to request and accept proposals that best align with their priorities and goals. The rigorous process of competitive grantmaking spurs innovation and the opportunity for agencies to fund entities with the best ideas to address their goals.

The agency's default position should be that each grant and subgrant will be issued on a competitive basis, unless there is an important reason to issue a grant or subgrant on a non-competitive basis.

II. Strong Preference for Competitive Grants

As stated above, except in limited circumstances agencies should conduct grantmaking through a competitive process ([2 CFR § 200.320](#)).

To achieve this, agencies must communicate grant opportunities through public documents such as the NOFA and RFA (See "Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA)" and "Request for Applications (RFA)" sections of this Manual for details on requirements and best practices).

Additionally, agencies should avoid actions and practices that limit competition including, but not limited to:

- Placing excessive requirements on organizations in order for them to qualify for a grant, such as unnecessarily long experience;
- Unnecessarily short response periods; and,
- Overly restrictive program requirements.

Prior performance in and beyond the District with similar objectives and/or comparable evidence of likelihood of success may be a factor as part of competitive grant review but should not be a sole factor.

If an agency issues a multi-year grant that was communicated as a multi-year grant in the RFA and award document, no competition is needed to award subsequent year continuation awards. However, if an agency ends a grant and has funds available to award a new grant, the new grant process should be competitive even if the grant is for similar purposes.

Similarly, agencies should not automatically re-award applicants without conducting a competition (e.g., by narrowing criteria to limit to prior grantees or using new funds to extend a prior competition beyond the initial period of performance).

III. Limited Circumstances for Non-Competitive Grants

In limited circumstances, an agency may issue a non-competitive grant or subgrant award. These limited circumstances are:

Limited Situations Non-Competitive Grants are Allowable

- Grant awards of under \$50,000: Under District law ([DC Code § 1–328.13](#)), an agency may award a grant of less than \$50,000 on a non-competitive basis.
- Specific statutory authority: If a District statute specifically authorizes the issuance of a non-competitive grant, authorizes a grant to be issued notwithstanding DC Code 1–328.13, or directs that a grant be issued to a specific entity, then the agency may issue the grant on a non-competitive basis.¹
- Emergency situation: If the Mayor has declared a state of emergency, the declaration may provide agencies with the authority to issue grants on a non-competitive basis.

Limited Situations Non-Competitive Subgrants are Allowable

- Subgrants of federal grant funds must be awarded in a manner consistent with the federal law that authorized the grant to the District, any federal regulations implementing that federal law, the terms and conditions of the federal agency's grant award to the District, and the Uniform Guidance, as applicable (collectively, the "federal

¹ For example, section 2053(a) of the Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Support Act states that the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development "shall issue a grant of \$2 million to the Douglass Community Land Trust" (See <https://code.dccouncil.gov/us/dc/council/laws/25-50>).

grant standards”). An agency may award a non-competitive subgrant of federal grant funds only if a non-competitive subgrant is allowed by the federal grant standards.

- Subgrants of private grant funds must be awarded in a manner consistent with the private entity’s grant to the District. The agency may award a non-competitive subgrant if the private grantor authorizes subgrant to be issued on a non-competitive basis.

IV. Documentation and Requirements for Non-Competitive Grants

If an agency issues a grant or subgrant without a competitive process, the agency should document the rationale (e.g., federal law, District legislation) in writing in its grant files, internal memorandum declaring intended award recipients, or a file memo. This documentation must be made available to OCA upon request.

In addition, the grantee still must submit an application and supporting documentation to the agency for the non-competitive funding. The District does not make grant awards without applications and application reviews regardless of whether the grant is competitive or noncompetitive.

Non-competitive grant awards remain subject to all other Manual provisions, particularly those regarding award documentation requirements, as well as financial and programmatic reporting and monitoring.

In addition, even when a non-competitive grant is authorized, competitive grants are still generally preferred unless the only means to satisfy the objective are a non-competitive award, such as in the following situations:

- Only one entity can offer the necessary services or meet the eligibility criteria,
- The grant is necessarily restricted in such a way that only one entity would be eligible; or
- Urgent timing precludes a competitive award (*See “Grantmaking During Emergencies”*).

b. Providing Notice to the Public

Each competitive grant opportunity of an agency must be announced to the public through two mechanisms:

- A notice of funding availability (NOFA); and
- A request for applications (RFA).

Each of these mechanisms is described in the two sections that follow.

c. Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA)

Opportunities for competitive grants must be communicated publicly through a notice of funding availability (NOFA) prepared by the agency. The purpose of the NOFA is to publicly announce a forthcoming grant funding opportunity, including what the opportunity aims to achieve, who can apply, and how applications will be released and submitted. A NOFA precedes the release of a request for applications (RFA).

I. Contents of NOFA

The NOFA must include:

- A brief description of the purpose for which grant funds will be available.
- Criteria for eligible applicants (i.e., what types of entities will be eligible for apply for and receive a grant and any other minimum standards of applicant eligibility); and
- The date, time, and location (website) at which the RFA may be obtained.

II. Publication of NOFA

The NOFA must be posted publicly in two ways:

- *DC Register*: An agency must submit each NOFA to the DC Register for publication. A NOFA must be published in the DC Register at least 14 calendar days before the agency plans to release the RFA. The DC Register publishes weekly on Fridays. Agencies may visit <https://dcregs.dc.gov/> and access the “District of Columbia Register Submission Deadline Schedule” on the bottom right-hand corner of the webpage to determine the deadline for submission of the NOFA. If an agency intends to publish a NOFA fewer than 14 calendar days before the release of the RFA, justification for the shortened notice period should be provided in the NOFA.

As a best practice agency policies and procedures should dictate who has the authority to submit to the DC Register. For support creating or accessing an account to submit to the DC Register, please contact the Office of Documents and Administrative Issuance (ODAI) at DCDocuments.EOM@dc.gov.

- *Serve DC*: Agencies must email each NOFA to the Serve DC office for posting on the [District’s Grants Clearinghouse website](#) and for inclusion in the Serve DC’s weekly Funding Alert. The NOFA must be sent to Serve DC (via grants.servedc@dc.gov) at least three business days before the desired date of posting on the [District’s Grants Clearinghouse website](#). As a best practice, an agency should coincide the publication

date of the NOFA on the Serve DC [District's Grants Clearinghouse website](#) with the publication date of the NOFA in the [DC Register](#).

In addition to the DC Register and Clearinghouse, an agency should consider sharing a NOFA through additional channels including:

- *Agency Channels:* An agency may share its NOFAs on its website, newsletters, email lists, or other existing agency channels.
- *Other Channels:* An agency may choose to disseminate a NOFA by publishing it in local newspapers and community newsletters, or any other reasonable form of distribution.
- *Other Partners:* As applicable based on an agency's grant processes and procedures, notification of the grant opportunity should be shared with key partners and stakeholders (e.g., Advisory Neighborhood Commission ([ANC](#)), interest groups, and industry groups).

Example Schedule

An agency may take the following steps to plan for NOFA and RFA publication:

1. Determine desired RFA publication date (*e.g., October 4, 2024*).
2. Subtract 14 calendar days to determine the minimum date prior that the NOFA must be published (*e.g., by September 20, 2024*).
3. Review the District of Columbia Register Submission Deadline Schedule to determine the deadline to submit the NOFA for publication on September 20 (*e.g., no later than September 12, 2024*).
4. Submit the NOFA to the DC Register (via login established as needed with support from ODAI) and to Serve DC (via grants.servedc@dc.gov) (*e.g., by September 12, 2024*).
5. NOFA is published in the DC Register and by Serve DC (*e.g., September 20, 2024*).
6. Publish the NOFA in additional agency channels, if desired (*e.g., September 20, 2024*).
7. Send the RFA to Serve DC (via grants.servedc@dc.gov) (*e.g., by October 1, 2024*).
8. RFA is published in Serve DC Funding Alert and DC Grants Clearinghouse (*e.g., October 4, 2024*).
9. Publish RFA in additional agency channels, if desired (*e.g., October 4, 2024*).

d. Request for Applications (RFA)

After the NOFA has been published in the [DC Register](#) and posted on the [Grants Clearinghouse](#), an agency must issue a Request for Applications (RFA) for each competitive grant. The RFA is the document an agency releases to formally solicit grant applications, describe the requirements for grant applicants, and describe the process for grant awards.

I. Contents of RFA

The RFA should include information in the following categories:

- **General Information:** Includes program purpose and allowable services, legal authorization, available funding amount, anticipated number of grant awards, period of performance, eligibility, limitations or requirements on the use of grant funds, and definitions.
- **Application Process and Submission:** Includes submission deadline (minimum of 30 calendar days), submission instructions, date of grant award determinations, interest and training opportunities, required elements of a proposal, point of contact, agency grantmaking conditions, and agency procedures for submitting challenges.
- **Application Review and Evaluation:** Includes unscored and scored evaluation criteria.
- **Budget and Funding:** Includes payment provisions and application budget template.
- **Performance and Monitoring/Oversight:** Includes goals and results, past performance, data collection and reporting, and monitoring and oversight.
- **Applicant Disclosures, Certifications, and Documentation:** Includes applicant disclosures/certifications and documentation required of the applicant.

These categories are detailed in the components listed below (a-aa). An agency may wish to use this list as an outline or checklist to write an RFA for a grant funding opportunity. RFA components must at minimum include all elements outlined in [DC Code § 1–328.13](#) and may appear in a different order than described below.

General Information

- a. **Program Purpose and Allowable Services:** The RFA must include a description of the purpose of the grant program, including a definition of the type and range of services or activities that a grantee or subgrantee must carry out under a grant or subgrant ([DC Code § 1–328.13](#)). As applicable, an agency may describe how the grant opportunity connects to agency, District, and/or federal initiatives and goals. As a best practice, an

agency may offer an executive summary at the beginning of its RFA to provide a short overview of the grant opportunity.

- b. *Legal Authorization:* The RFA should include citations to the statute and implementing regulations that authorize the grant/subgrant and the agency's authority for grantmaking.
- c. *Available Funding Amount:* The RFA must state the amount of funding available for the grant or subgrant awards ([DC Code § 1–328.13](#)).
- d. *Anticipated Number of Grant Awards:* The RFA must state the number of grant awards the agency expects to issue under the RFA ([DC Code § 1–328.13](#)).
- e. *Period of Performance:* The RFA should state the time period for performance, and by which grant activities must take place. The period of performance may be the duration or a portion of a fiscal year, a complete fiscal year, or multiple fiscal years. In the case of multi-year awards, the agency should specify that subsequent funding years are contingent on grantee performance and available funding ([DC Code § 1–328.13](#)).
- f. *Eligibility:* The RFA must list the requirements an applicant must meet to be considered eligible to receive a grant. Eligibility criteria may include the type of entity (e.g., must be a nonprofit organizations), characteristics of the entity (e.g., location of the applicant's headquarters, size of the entity, etc.), and qualification factors (e.g., must be in corporate good standing, must have "Clean Hands," must have Workers' Compensation, Errors and Omissions and/or Professional Liability insurance that covers activities that might be undertaken in connection with performance of the grant), and required documentation.

If documentation is required to demonstrate eligibility, specific instructions on what and how documentation should be provided should be outlined. As needed, an agency should explicitly specify ineligible applicants that would otherwise be eligible (i.e., if a current award recipient is not eligible) ([DC Code § 1–328.13](#)).

Minimum standard required documentation to award grants to nonprofit organizations includes: (a) Certificate of Good Standing; (b) Certificate of Clean Hands (if applicable); (c) IRS W-9 Tax Form; (d) IRS Determination Letter; and (e) financials (e.g. the most recent fiscal year audited financial statements and/or a Form 990).

- g. *Limitations or Requirements on the Use of Grant Funds:* In alignment with the legal authorization and grant funding purpose, the RFA should include a description of the limitations or requirements on how grant funds must, may, and may not be used. Specify any requirements or competitive preferences on the use of funds for particular populations or locations, as applicable. If limits exist for particular purposes (e.g., x% of

a grant may be budgeted to personnel), such restrictions should also be specified) ([DC Code § 1–328.13](#)). For example, if a grant must “supplement, not supplant” existing activities, this should be specified clearly. In addition, if the grant is subject to the Nonprofit Fair Compensation Act (NFCA) (D.C. Code [§ 2–222.01 et seq.](#)), a specific statement regarding the NFCA should be included.

- h. *Definitions:* As a best practice, specific terms used in the RFA should be defined and cited, as applicable, to ensure shared understanding among the agency and applicant.

Application Process and Submission

- i. *Submission Deadline:* The RFA must include a reasonable deadline for submitting applications; a reasonable deadline is generally considered to be 30 calendar days. The RFA should specify the specific date and time by which applications must be received (e.g., by 5:00 p.m. Eastern time on Friday, October 19, 2024). The RFA should also state clearly that no applications will be accepted after the date and time specified. If an agency rule, policy, or other circumstance necessitates a shorter time, an agency may release an RFA with less time for applicant responses. In such situations, as a best practice an agency should document the justification for varying the shorter response time in the grant file. For complex grants, or in other circumstances where a longer response time would be beneficial, the agency may include a longer response time in the RFA.
- j. *Submission Instructions:* The RFA must provide the method(s) for submission of an application (e.g., upload to an application portal, by mail, in-person delivery). If an online portal is required, the agency must provide instructions on how to register in the system (if registration is necessary) and, as a best practice, on how to receive technical support, if needed. As a best practice, an agency submission system should “lock” after the submission deadline to prevent applicants from interpreting a late submission as “accepted.”
- k. *Timeline for Grant Award Determinations:* An agency must notify each applicant of the acceptance or rejection of their application for grant award within 45 days after the application submission deadline ([DC Code §§ 1–328.13-14](#)).
- l. *Required Elements of a Proposal:* This section of the RFA specifies the required contents of an application and often the order of such contents. In addition to the narrative description of the proposed grant activities, application budget and certifications, the required contents may include (but are not limited to) a work plan, description and/or resumes of key personnel, and narrative responses to scoring criteria. As a best practice, an agency may provide applicants a checklist of the required proposal contents and/or tips for submitting a complete, competitive application. This promotes equity and streamlines agency review by promoting a consistent organization of materials. An

agency should also state explicitly if absence of any component(s) will disqualify an application.

- m. *Past Performance and/or Capacity*: The RFA should request an applicant demonstrate or confirm it has a satisfactory record of integrity and business ethics and performing similar activities as detailed in the award or, if the grant award is intended to encourage the development and support of organizations without significant previous experience, that the applicant has otherwise established that it has the capacity, skills, and resources necessary to perform the grant. An agency may request applicants provide letters of support as part of its application. This information may be scored or unscored; the RFA should clearly specify if it will be scored or unscored.
- n. *Supplemental Opportunities*: An agency may offer a pre-response conference (See “Pre-response Conference” section below), and/or allow submission of written questions to be reviewed and responded to prior to the application deadline. If any such components are offered by the agency, they should be described in the RFA and the RFA should state whether any of the components are mandatory and list any relevant requirements (e.g., pre-registration for the bidder’s conference), locations, and deadlines. If the agency allows submission of questions through the pre-response conference or through other channels (e.g., email), it should publish responses with adequate time for applicants to review the responses prior to the application submission deadline.
- o. *Point of Contact*: The RFA should list the individual(s), by name, title, address, email and/or phone number, whom applicants should contact about the grant opportunity.

Conditions

- p. *Agency Grantmaking Conditions*: The RFA should list general conditions of the RFA, including at a minimum:
 - The RFA does not commit the agency to make an award.
 - Funding for the contemplated award(s) is contingent on continued funding from the grantor.
 - The agency reserves the right to accept or deny any or all applications if the agency determines it is in the best interest of the agency to do so.
 - The agency may suspend, terminate, or rescind the RFA if it determines it is in the agency or District’s interest or in accordance with any applicable federal regulation or requirement.
 - The agency reserves the right to issue addenda and/or amendments to the RFA after the issuance of the RFA.

- The agency shall not be liable for any costs incurred by an applicant in the preparation of an application in response to the RFA.
 - The agency may conduct pre-award on-site visits to verify information submitted in the application and to determine if the applicant’s facilities are appropriate for the services intended.
 - The agency may enter into negotiations with an applicant and adopt a modified funding amount or other revision of the applicant’s proposal that may result from negotiations.
 - If there are any conflicts between the terms and conditions of the RFA and any applicable federal or District law or regulation, then the provisions of the applicable law or regulation will control, and it is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure compliance.
- q. *Procedures for Submitting Challenges:* The RFA should describe the procedures for how applicants may submit concerns about the grant competition, including to whom, how, and when they must be submitted for review by the agency (See “Challenges to Agency Award Decisions”).

Application Review and Evaluation

- r. *Disqualifying Factors:* An agency should describe any factors that will lead to an application being rejected without formal evaluation. For example, to make clear that additional documents will not be accepted after the submission deadline, the RFA should state that only complete application packages will be considered. Also, the agency should state that late-filed applications and applications from applicants that do not meet the grant’s eligibility criteria will not be considered by the agency.
- s. *Unscored Evaluation Criteria:* An agency may have factors that contribute to the overall grant evaluation but are not part of the scoring rubric such as risk and preferences.
- Risk: If risk factors will impact the agency’s evaluation process, guidelines should be shared in the RFA to provide transparency to applicants.
 - Preferences: The agency may consider factors such as location, constituents served, or other factors with a preference that is not scored. For example, if an agency wants to promote an activity in a particular part of the city but not limit potential awards to that ward, it may plan to make two separate award slates for

review - one for applicants serving those wards and one for all other regions. This is different from offering a specific number of points to applicants who will serve those wards. This design may enable an agency to award applicants with lower scores overall because they meet a broader preference. An agency should communicate in its RFA if it plans to use this type of preference strategy to determine final awards.

- t. *Scored Evaluation Criteria:* The RFA must list all criteria that will be used to score applications. Each criterion must be listed separately and include at least the following information:

- (1) the name of the criterion,
- (2) the number of points assigned to the criterion, and
- (3) a description of how an applicant's application will be scored. A scoring criterion may be broken into separate sub criteria to provide additional refinement and clarity for scoring.

Examples of Scoring Criteria:

Criterion 1 - Project Purpose and Approach (20 points)

- The applicant provided a comprehensive and clear explanation of the proposed project, ensuring alignment with the Request for Applications (RFA). This alignment demonstrates a thorough understanding of the project's purpose and scope. **(10 points)**
- The applicant identified the overarching problems or challenges that the project aims to address. These problems are well-defined and relevant to the project's context. Additionally, the applicant outlined contributing factors that exacerbate these problems. **(5 points)**
- The applicant described how the proposed project intends to tackle the identified problems. This included specific strategies, interventions, or approaches. It has highlighted the potential impact on mitigating or resolving the identified issues. **(5 points)**

Criterion 2 - Program Goals and Outcomes (15 points)

- Program goals and supporting objectives and activities are clearly defined, measurable, and time-specific.
- Applicant clearly demonstrates the outcomes of the programs.
- Applicant demonstrates that the program uses best practices and/or is based on national standards to manage information.

- u. *Preference Points:* If an agency is offering a competitive preference to potential applicants, it should outline what the preference(s) is and how it will be scored. For example, if applications serving Wards 7 and 8 are preferred, the agency should outline if (and how many) points will be added to applications serving that location.

Budget and Funding

- v. *Payment Provisions:* The RFA should state how the grantee will be paid for its performance under the award (e.g., advance, reimbursement, milestones, a combination). Except in unusual circumstances such as a grant objective that invites applicants who may not have sufficient working capital to complete activities or achieve desired outcomes without advance payment, grantees should be paid only on a reimbursement basis.
- w. *Application Budget Template:* The RFA should also provide a budget template for submission as part of the application. This template may include fields to input budget by cost category (e.g., personnel, supplies, indirect costs), funding year (if multi-year grant), funding source (e.g., matching funds), etc.

Performance and Monitoring/Oversight

- x. *Data Collection and Reporting:* The RFA should describe the agency's requirements and expectations for data collection and reporting by an applicant if the applicant is awarded a grant. If data sharing agreements are applicable, expectations should be outlined. Required reports may include programmatic reports, financial reports, and any special reports. This section may also request the applicant propose measurable goals, objectives and timeframes, target recipients, and provide a plan of evaluation for grant activities.
- y. *Monitoring and Oversight:* The RFA should outline the agency's planned cadence and nature of monitoring and oversight if an applicant is awarded a grant. This should include any risk factors that may be used by the agency in determining the type and frequency of monitoring and oversight.

Applicant Disclosures/Certifications and Documentation

- z. *Applicant Disclosures/Certifications:* The RFA should include a comprehensive list of the disclosures and certifications that are required of each applicant. The RFA should include a template statement and/or check box format by which each applicant must provide the required disclosures and certifications.

At minimum, agencies should require the following disclosures and certifications:

(i) Disclosures

- *Legal Actions Against the Applicant:* Whether the applicant, or where applicable, any of its officers, partners, principals, members, associates or key employees, within the last three years prior to the date of the application, has:
 - been indicted or had charges brought against it (if still pending) and/or been convicted of (a) any crime or offense arising directly or indirectly from the conduct of the applicant's organization or (b) any crime or offense involving financial misconduct or fraud, or
 - been the subject of legal proceedings arising directly from the provision of services by the organization.

If the response is in the affirmative, the applicant should be required to fully describe any such indictments, charges, convictions, or legal proceedings (and the status and disposition thereof) and surrounding circumstances in writing and provide documentation of the circumstances.

- *Debarment:* Whether the applicant is proposed for debarment, suspension, or ineligibility or presently debarred, suspended, or declared ineligible, to receive

contracts or grants by any agency, including the District government, federal government, and any state or local jurisdiction (See e.g., [Executive Order 12549](#); [2 CFR 180](#)).

- *Other District Grants or Contracts:* Require grantees at time of application to disclose any other grants or contracts with any agency of the District government, or that they had in the past three years.
- *Subgrants and Subcontracts:* Require grantees at time of application to disclose any subcontracts or subgrants they receive or have received in the past three years from another entity that receives the money for work the applicant is performing from the District government in whole or in part.

(ii) Certifications

- The RFA should require the applicant to provide a certification (affirmed by an individual who may legally bind the applicant organization), including at minimum that the applicant:
 - Agrees that all costs incurred in developing the application are the applicant's sole responsibility.
 - Will maintain adequate files and records and can and will meet all data collection and reporting requirements.
 - Has and will continue to maintain all fiscal records in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).
 - That all fiscal records will be accurate, complete, and current at all times.
 - That the applicant's records will be made available for audit and inspection by the District, the agency, any applicable federal department, the Comptroller General of the United States, or any of their duly authorized representatives, as requested.
 - Will provide timely and reasonable access to grantees' personnel for the purpose of interviews and discussions related to the applicants' records and operations.
 - Is in compliance with, and will continue to comply with, the applicable District licensing and tax laws and regulations, including being current on payment of all federal and District taxes (or on an approved payment agreement), including unemployment insurance taxes and workers' compensation premiums. (See "Supporting Documentation Required of the Applicant" in the RFA section below regarding the [Clean Hands](#) certificate.)
 - Is in compliance with, and will continue to comply with, the applicable required minimum insurance coverages required of grant recipients (e.g., Workers' Compensation, Errors and Omissions, and Professional Liability)

that cover activities that might be undertaken in connection with the performance of the grant.

- Has the necessary organization, experience, accounting and operational controls, and technical skills to implement the requested grant, or the ability to obtain them.
- *(If required by the grantmaking agency)* Is able to secure a bond, in an amount not less than the total amount of the funds awarded, against losses of money and other property caused by fraudulent or dishonest act(s) committed by any employee, board member, officer, partner, shareholder, or trainee.
- *(If required by the grantmaking agency)* Has the financial resources and technical expertise necessary for the production, construction, equipment, and facilities adequate to perform the grant or subgrant, or the ability to obtain them.
- Has the ability to comply with the required or proposed delivery or performance schedule, taking into consideration all of its existing and reasonably expected commercial and governmental business commitments.
- Meets other qualifications and eligibility criteria necessary to receive an award under applicable laws and regulations.
- Agrees to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the Government of the District of Columbia and its authorized officers, employees, agents and volunteers from any and all claims, actions, losses, damages, and/or liability arising out of this grant or subgrant from any cause whatsoever, including the acts, errors or omissions of any person and for any costs or expenses incurred by the District on account of any claim therefore, except where such indemnification is prohibited by law. (Agencies are not allowed to indemnify grantees.)
- Agrees to comply with any special requirements emanating from the authorizing statute, federal grant agreement or regulations and all applicable District and federal statutes and regulations.² The agency should determine and list all applicable laws and regulations which may include the following:
 - Federal:
 - ✓ Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Pub. L. 94-135, 89 Stat. 728 (42 U.S.C. 6101 et. seq.)
 - ✓ Age Discrimination in Employment Act, Pub. L. 90-202, 81 Stat. 602 (29 U.S.C. 621 et. seq.)
 - ✓ Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Pub. L. 101-336, 104 Stat. 327 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.)
 - ✓ Assurance of Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity, 29 CFR 34.20

² Laws change over time and new laws may be added over time.

- ✓ Drug Free Workplace Act of 1988, Pub. L. 100-690, 102 Stat. 4304 (41 U.S.C. 701 et seq.)
 - ✓ Equal Pay Act of 1963, Pub. L. 88-38, 77 Stat. 56 (29 U.S.C. 201)
 - ✓ Executive Order 12459 (Debarment, Suspension and Exclusion)
 - ✓ Fair Labor Standards Act, Pub. L. 75-718, 52 Stat. 1060 (29 U.S.C. 201 et seq.)
 - ✓ Hatch Act, Pub. L. 76-252, 24 Stat. 440 (7 U.S.C. 361a et seq.)
 - ✓ Hobbs Act (Anti-Corruption), Pub. L. 79-486, 60 Stat. 420 (18 U.S.C. § 1951)
 - ✓ Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, Pub. L. 99-603, 100 Stat. 3359, (8 U.S.C. 1101)
 - ✓ Lobbying Disclosure Act, Pub. L. 104-65, 109 Stat. 693 (31 U.S.C. 1352)
 - ✓ Medical Leave Act of 1993, Pub. L. 103-3, 107 Stat. 6 (5 U.S.C. 6381 et seq.)
 - ✓ Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, Pub. L. 91-596, 84 Stat. 1590 (26 U.S.C. 651 et seq.)
 - ✓ OMB Guidance for Federal Financial Assistance (also known as Uniform Grants Guidance or Uniform Guidance)
 - ✓ Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Pub. L. 93-112, 87 Stat. 355 (29 U.S.C. 701 et seq.)
 - ✓ Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Pub. L. 92-318, 86 Stat. 235, (20 U.S.C. 1001)
 - ✓ Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Pub. L. 88-352, 78 Stat. 252 (42 U.S.C. 2000d et seq.)
- District of Columbia
 - ✓ Campaign Finance Reform Amendment Act of 2018 (CFRAA), D.C. Law 22-250 (D.C. Official Code § 1-1001.03 et seq.)
 - ✓ Human Rights Act of 1977, D.C. Law 2-38 (D.C. Official Code § 2-1401.01 et seq.)
 - ✓ Language Access Act of 2004, D.C. Law 15-414 (D.C. Official Code § 2-1931 et seq.)
 - ✓ Nonprofit Fair Compensation Act of 2020, D.C. Law 23-185 (D.C. Official Code § 2-222.01 et seq.)

aa. *Supporting Documentation Required of the Applicant:* The RFA should include a comprehensive list of the supporting documents and information that are required of

each applicant as part of its application. The required documents should include but are not limited to the following:

- **Authorized Representative(s):** This is the point of contact, authorized by the applicant, with whom the agency would negotiate and finalize a grant prior to or after an award.
- **Certificate of Insurance:** As a best practice, an agency will require an accord documenting the name of its insurance carrier(s) and the type of insurance provided (e.g., its general liability insurance carrier and automobile insurance carrier, workers' compensation insurance carrier, fidelity bond holder, if applicable). If not collected in the application submission, the RFA should indicate that before execution of the award, a grantee/subgrantee will be required to (a) provide a copy of the binder or cover sheet of their current policy for any policy that covers activities that might be undertaken in connection with performance of the grant, showing the limits of coverage and endorsements, (b) add endorsements naming the Government of the District of Columbia, and its officers, employees, agents and volunteers as additional named insured with respect to liability abilities arising out of the performance of services under the award, and (c) require their insurance carrier of the required coverage to waive all rights of subrogation against the District, its officers, employees, agents, volunteers, contractors and subcontractors.
- **Evidence of Financial Stability:** This may include the most recent and complete set of audited or unaudited financial statements available for applicants. If audited financial statements have never been prepared due to the size or newness of the applicant, the applicant should be required to provide, at a minimum, an organizational budget, an income statement (or profit and loss statement), and a balance sheet certified by an authorized representative of the organization, and any letters, filings, etc. submitted to the Internal Revenue Service within the three years before the date of the grant application.
- **Evidence of Compliance with District Taxes:** In addition to the general certification above, it is best practice for an agency to require the applicant to provide a "[Certificate of Clean Hands](#)" from the District of Columbia Office of Tax and Revenue stating to demonstrate that they are in compliance with the filing requirements of District of Columbia tax laws and has paid taxes due to the District of Columbia, or is in compliance with any payment agreement with the District of Columbia Office of Tax and Revenue. If not requested at the time of application, an agency should communicate that this documentation is required in order to be awarded. A Certificate of Clean Hands may be requested online at MyTax.DC.gov.

- **Evidence of Legal Entity:** Evidence of being a legally-authorized entity (e.g., certification of incorporation, 501(c)(3) determination letter, UEI, tax ID number); a current business license, if relevant for the applicant's business status; and any correspondence or other communication received from the IRS within the three years before submission of the grant application that relates to the applicant's tax status.

II. Publication of the RFA

Agencies must email each RFA to the Serve DC office (via grants.servedc@dc.gov) for posting on the [District's Grants Clearinghouse website](#) and for inclusion in the Serve DC's weekly Funding Alert. The RFA must be sent to Serve DC at least three business days before the desired date of posting on the District's Grants Clearinghouse website.

Reminder: An agency must indicate where an RFA will be made publicly available in the NOFA released in the DC Register and published to the District's Grant Clearinghouse website a minimum of 14 calendar days prior to release of the RFA. (See "Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA)" section of this Manual for a sample timeline.)

In addition to posting an RFA to the Clearinghouse, an agency should consider sharing an RFA through additional channels including:

- Agency Channels:* An agency may share an RFA (or link to its RFA) on its website, newsletters, email lists, or other existing agency channels.
- Other Channels:* An agency may choose to disseminate an RFA by publishing it or a link to it in local newspapers and community newsletters, or through any other reasonable form of distribution.
- Other Partners:* An agency should provide notification about the issuance of the RFA to key partners and stakeholders (e.g., Advisory Neighborhood Commission ([ANC](#)), interest groups, and industry groups).

These additional channels must be used in addition to the minimum required distribution via the DC Register and Serve DC.

e. Pre-response Conference

An agency may offer (or require) potential applicants to attend a pre-response conference to be held after an RFA is released. If an agency plans to host a pre-response conference, it should consider the following:

- *Before the Conference:* Indicate in the RFA whether participation in the pre-response conference is mandatory for potential applicants, when and where the conference will take place, and procedures to register and access the conference.
- *During the Conference:* As noted above, a pre-response conference generally includes restating the material in the RFA and emphasizing key factors to promote understanding among potential applicants. Agencies should not provide information that is different than what was included in the RFA or that could risk the integrity or equity of the competition (e.g., information provided to some but not all applicants). If questions and answers are included in the pre-response conference, the agency should document and share the questions and responses online so all applicants have access to the response. An agency may choose to accept questions and opt to respond to some later (e.g., in a published questions and answers document). As a best practice, an agency should record a pre-response conference and make a recording publicly available alongside any questions and answers.
- *After the Conference:* An agency should maintain a record of the presentation, recording, and notes on questions and answers as part of the competition record (See “Record Retention” section of this Manual). If the agency allows submission of questions through the pre-response conference or through other channels (e.g., email), it should publish responses with adequate time for applicants to review the responses prior to the application submission deadline.

f. Indirect Costs

I. Compensation of Indirect Costs for District-Funded Grants

The District’s Nonprofit Fair Compensation Act (NFCA) generally requires each grant awarded by a District agency to a nonprofit organization (other than a foundation, hospital, college, or university) shall include compensation for the indirect costs incurred by the grantee in performing the grant ([DC Code § 2–222.02](#)), if the grant is funded with District (local) funds.

Under the NFCA, nonprofit organizations shall be compensated for their indirect costs pursuant to the nonprofit organizations unexpired federal Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA), if one exists. If a nonprofit organization does not have an unexpired NICRA, the nonprofit organization may elect to be compensated for indirect costs:

- A. As calculated using a de minimis rate of 10% of all direct costs under the grant or contract;

- B. By negotiating a new percentage indirect cost rate with the awarding agency;
- C. As calculated with the same percentage indirect cost rate as the nonprofit organization negotiated with any District agency within the past two years; however nonprofit organizations may request to renegotiate indirect cost rates; or
- D. As calculated with a percentage rate and base amount, determined by a certified public accountant using the nonprofit organization's audited financial statements from the immediately preceding fiscal year, pursuant to the OMB Uniform Guidance, and certified in writing by the certified public accountant.

Exception: These indirect cost requirements do not apply to foundations, hospitals, colleges, or universities ([DC Code § 2-222.02\(d\)](#)).

An agency may choose, but is not required, to provide indirect cost compensation for District-funded grants not covered by the NFCA.

II. Compensation of Indirect Costs for Subgrants of Federal Grant Funds

If a grant/subgrant is funded with federal dollars, indirect cost rates should be calculated and compensated consistent with federal law, regulations, and guidance.

III. Inclusion in RFA

The RFA should state whether the agency will compensate indirect costs incurred by grantees. If the agency will compensate indirect costs, the RFA should include indirect costs as part of the budget template provided with the RFA.

IV. Subgrantees

Each District-funded grant awarded to a nonprofit organization must include an indirect cost compensation clause that obligates the grantee to pay indirect costs to any nonprofit organization subgrantee at the same rate as the nonprofit organization would receive as a grantee with the District. This requirement does not apply if the subgrantee is a foundation, hospital, college, or university ([DC Code § 222.02\(c\), \(d\)](#)).

3. AWARD

a. Eligibility Review

After the NOFA has been published and the RFA released, agencies must follow a formal review process to determine grantees for all awards. As a best practice, this review process should

include an eligibility review, described below, as well as a review panel and a risk assessment, discussed in the sections that immediately follow.

Prior to formally scoring applicants, agency grant staff should review applications for eligibility, completeness, and timeliness:

- Applicant Eligibility: Does the applicant meet all eligibility requirements set out in the RFA?
- Application Completeness: Did the applicant submit all information and documentation required by the RFA?
- Application Timeliness: Did the applicant submit its application before the submission deadline?

If an applicant does not meet all of the eligibility requirements or if the application was submitted after the submission deadline, the application should be considered ineligible, and an agency should not continue with the scoring and review.

If an application is determined to be incomplete, an agency generally shall not proceed with scoring and review, except as follows. In limited circumstances, an agency may allow an applicant a designated window to provide missing documentation if such additional time will not risk the integrity of the competition. If the agency allows an applicant to provide missing information or documentation, all similarly situated applicants who submitted incomplete applications should be given a similar opportunity to provide missing information or documentation. To avoid the appearance of impropriety, the agency should state in the RFA whether the agency may provide an opportunity for applicants to submit information and documentation to complete an incomplete application after the submission deadline, and the circumstances in which that may be allowed by the agency. Generally, such additional time should only be allowed where the additional information or documentation is administrative in nature (e.g., signed acknowledgement of released addenda) or unrelated to the core, scored substance of the applicant's grant proposal.

Applications not scored due to ineligibility and/or incompleteness should be notified alongside other non-awardees (*See "Making an Award"*). If an agency receives late submissions, immediate communication to the applicant should be made to notify the applicant the application was received after the deadline and therefore, per the terms of the RFA, it will not be reviewed.

b. Review Panel

The agency must score each application submitted by an eligible applicant that is determined to be timely and complete. (Applications that are submitted timely, complete, and by eligible

applicants are referred to in this section as “eligible applications.”) Each eligible application must be scored against the scoring criteria in the RFA.

I. Review Panels Should be Used

An agency must establish a review panel (or review panels) to score each of the eligible applications. A review panel may include staff external to the agency; however, oversight of the panel should be managed by the agency. Although eligible applications may be scored by a single individual, a review panel helps ensure that a diversity of skill sets, experiences, and viewpoints are part of the scoring process; promotes a greater sense of fairness (i.e., that a single individual is not on their own determining the “fate” of the applicants); and allows for interactive discussion among the panel members regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the applications.

Review panels do not make grant award decisions. The work of the review panel(s) culminates in scoring that supports the agency grant staff and the agency director (or the director’s designee) in making determinations on which entity(ies) to award grants to and in what amounts to award grants.

II. Composition of Review Panels

The composition of review panels will depend on the number of applications that need to be reviewed, the scope of the proposals, and the goals of the grant opportunity. To determine the number of applications that will need to be reviewed, as part of its RFA, an agency may require or request potential applicants submit a notice of intent to apply to assist with planning how many members they will need on a panel.

The size of each application and time available to review will determine how many applications each reviewer can feasibly review during the designed review period. An agency may need to utilize multiple panels to review all applications for a grant.

The following practices must be followed to create review panels:

- *Experience:* Review panel members should have demonstrated knowledge and expertise in the objectives of the grant and RFA, as well as in the administrative requirements mandated by the source of funds. The necessary knowledge and expertise may be confirmed by the agency through prior grant reviews, resume, and/or interview. As a best practice, agencies should maintain a registry of potential and past reviewers that also includes agency satisfaction with any prior reviews completed at minimum in the last three years.

- *Quantity:* A minimum of three members is required for each review panel. For larger panels, as a best practice, an odd number of panel members is recommended. Additional vetted “backup” panel members are recommended in the case of unforeseen conflicts or other unforeseen circumstances to avoid delays in grant application review.
- *Payment:* If funding is available and panel members are external to the District of Columbia government, payment may incentivize high-quality engagement in the process. The commitment (timeline and deliverables) and amount of payment should be communicated prior to selecting and beginning panel work. Payment should be made after satisfactory performance is demonstrated. The maximum dollar amount of the panel member payment will depend on (1) the maximum rate allowable by the federal grantor agency for its own review panelists, (2) the maximum rate of pay for a DS-15 employed based on the District’s current pay scale, in the case of District-funded grants; and (3) the amount available in the administrative budget of the grant or subgrant. Panelists who are employees of the District government may not be compensated and should only serve if they have written authorization from their supervisors to serve on a panel.

III. Obligations of Review Panel Members

Panel members must uphold their commitments to the review process and standards of integrity including:

- *Fairness and Impartiality:* Each panel member is expected to participate in the review process with their unique background and experience. Their expertise must be applied explicitly to judging each application against the scoring criteria outlined in the RFA. The agency should promote fairness and impartiality by providing training for panel members (See “Agency Staff Support for Reviews” immediately below).
- *Diligence:* When agreeing to engage in a panel review, a panel review member is obligated to designate the time to provide thorough reviews and comments to justify their scoring decisions. The agency should confirm panel members willingness and availability to engage with the specific schedule for each grant review, including the timelines review will take place, how long each application review should take, when reviews must be completed by, and specific dates/times for training and calls. If a panel member is not completing their assignments on time or with or in alignment with the parameters outlined at the panel member training, it is the responsibility of the agency lead to consult with the panel member and improve performance or assign an alternate reviewer to the panel.

- *Conflict of Interest*: Any potential review panel members should be reviewed and vetted to avoid conflicts of interest with the agency and/or potential subgrantees. Review panel members should be informed of their obligations to disclose potential conflicts that exist or that may arise during the panel. As a best practice, a Conflict of Interest Affidavit/Agreement should be collected from each panel member. If conflicts are identified at the onset, a panel member may need to be recused from the review (and replaced to ensure an equal number of reviewers) and may be assigned an alternative application(s) for review pending the nature of the conflict.
- *Confidentiality and Nondisclosure*: Panel members and agency staff who support the panel's work must maintain the confidentiality of the grant applications and of the deliberations of the panel members. This includes an obligation not to disclose information contained in a grant application outside of the review process and to maintain the confidentiality of panel deliberations and internal agency deliberations, along with the identities of their fellow panel members. As a best practice, each panel member should sign a non-disclosure agreement. Any of this information that is subject to public disclosure should be made through the agency's public information or FOIA process.

IV. Agency Staff Support for Review Panels

The agency should identify grant manager(s) and/or other staff to support and oversee each review panel. The staff member(s) are responsible for:

- a. Assigning application(s). Reviewers will only receive the application(s) and supporting materials assigned to them for review. (As discussed above, depending on the number of applications, the complexity of the applications and reviews, and the timeline for awards, more than one panel may be needed.)
- b. Training panel members. (See "The Orientation Process" section immediately below.)
- c. Leading and supporting each review panel. In addition to the distribution of applications and supporting material to panel members, the agency staff member is responsible for collecting scoring documents, scheduling panel conversations, facilitating panel consensus discussions, and project management to ensure adherence to agency deadlines for review. The agency staff should serve as a resource to panel members including technical support (e.g., access to application materials), clarification on grant criteria (e.g., reiterating training materials), and coherence of scores (e.g., that scores align with the rationale for the score provided).
- d. Summarizing the outcomes of the panel review. Following the conclusion of each panel, the agency staff should create a table ranking the overall application scores and

documenting the sub-scores by criteria, by applicant (*See “Agency Review” section below*).

V. The Orientation Process

Before the review panel starts its review and scoring process, the agency should provide an orientation and training session for review panel members. As a best practice, all review panel members should be oriented and trained in the same session, so that they have a fully shared understanding of the processes, procedures, and requirements. A recording of the training is also recommended to provide documentation that the training took place and to enable reviewers to reference again during the review process.

Panel members should receive orientation and training on the following, at a minimum:

- The goal(s) and purpose(s) of the grant program;
- The elements of the RFA relevant to the work of the review panel, with particular emphasis on the evaluation factors;
- How to implement the scoring process; and
- Conflicts of interest and confidentiality.

The training should also include an opportunity for panel members to review examples. Reviewers should be informed that average scores and/ or paraphrased comments may be shared with applicants and/or the public (with the reviewer’s identity redacted).

VI. Application Review and Scoring Process

After providing training, assignments, and application materials to a reviewer, an agency may take the following steps to engage a review panel:

- Provide each reviewer with a scoring rubric to document scores and comments for each criterion for each application. Agencies may develop specific parameters for narrative comments to accompany the score for each criterion to ensure the reviewers provide sufficient rationale to justify each score (e.g., at least one strength and one weakness; minimum of three descriptive bullets).
- Collect initial scores and comments from all reviewers. The agency staff member leading the panel should aggregate the scores and review for instances where there is a spread across criterion scores of more than 20 percent of the total points available (or some other threshold predetermined by the agency). If such a spread is identified, the criterion should be included in the panel member call/meeting. The agency staff leading the panel should also review comments for clarity and coherence and alignment to the scoring rubric (i.e., if a high score is given, do the comments align; if a low score is given,

is the rationale clear). If any significant lack of clarity or coherence or non-alignment with the scoring rubric, the agency staff should include the criterion in the panel call and/or follow up directly with the panel member.

- Conduct a call/meeting with panel members to discuss the scores for each application. The goal of this call is to ensure all relevant information for scoring an applicant on each criterion has been appropriately assessed against the scoring rubric (e.g., to ensure a peer reviewer didn't score a criterion low because they missed a relevant page of the submitted application or because they misread a component of the scoring rubric). The goal of this call is not to come to consensus on the score for each criterion; rather, the goal is to ensure the scores are grounded in the responses provided by the applicant and the criteria outlined in the agency's scoring rubric.
 - Following the call/meeting, panel members should be provided a designated time period to update scores and comments, if desired, before final submission.
- At the conclusion of the panel, the agency staff lead should create a panel summary, listing each application that the panel(s) reviewed, the score for each criterion by reviewer, and the total score for the applicant by reviewer, and the average score, in rank order by highest average score to be included in the agency's grant award recommendation memo.

VII. Agency Review

The agency has an obligation to ensure fairness in the review process. Agency staff should review scores and comments provided by panel members for clarity, thoroughness, and potential conflicts. If any issues are identified, then the agency should address them with the panel before scoring is finalized. If a conflict or lack of adequate participation arises, an agency may dismiss a panel member and reassign application(s) to an alternate panel member to maintain the same number of panel members for all applications.

Review panel member's scores and comments will not match – each reviewer will come with unique expertise, experience, and judgments. However, significant variation across scores may indicate that a panel member missed content provided by an applicant, misunderstood the rubric, or is reviewing with bias. Agencies should consider means to mitigate any potential threats to equity and fairness arising from these types of issues. This may include comprehensive training before the review panels reviews applications (See "The Orientation Process" above); required follow up for score spreads that exceed a particular threshold (See "The Review and Scoring Process" above), and ensuring panels meet to discuss their reviews prior to finalizing scores (See "The Review and Scoring Process" above).

Agency staff who are involved in the support and oversight of the review panels, and agency staff who are involved in the development of the recommendation memo, have similar responsibilities as review panel members with respect to diligence, fairness and impartiality, confidentiality, and conflicts of interest. More specifically:

- *Confidentiality:* All materials received by the agency from an applicant should be protected, treated as confidential, and used only for purposes of evaluating the applicant's proposal.
- *Diligence:* Staff responsible for the grant competition should approach their duties with conscientiousness. As a best practice, agencies will determine metrics to include as part of applicable staff's performance reviews to assess leading indicators for a successful grant review (e.g., timeliness of panel task completion, panel members recommended to return).
- *Fairness:* Staff are responsible for ensuring applicants are reviewed in accordance with the criteria in the published RFA.
- *Conflicts:* Staff must ensure panel members are aware of their obligation to report known conflicts or conflicts that may arise during the review process.
- *Recordkeeping:* All scores and comments must become a part of the grant record. (See "Record Retention" section of this Manual.)

c. Agency Recommendation for Award

Following the panel review, agency staff should create a grant award recommendation memo for the agency director (or designee). The recommendation memo should include, but is not limited to, the following:

- **Purpose:** Overview of the grant program and the intended outcomes of the RFA, including the total funding available, the expected number of applicants, and the date of expected notification to grantees included in the public notice.
- **Suitability and eligibility of applicants:** Certification that as part of developing the recommendation memo, the agency staff reviewed application materials to confirm all proposed grantees and/or subgrantees met eligibility requirements and are responsible organizations possessing the demonstrated ability to perform successfully under the terms and conditions of a proposed award.
- **Summary the outcomes of the panel review:** A table listing all eligible applications reviewed and ranking the overall application scores and documenting the sub-scores by criteria, by applicant. This should also document any applications not reviewed and why (e.g., rationale for ineligibility determination, time of late submission).

- Summary of pre-award budget review: The agency should review grantee/subgrantee budgets for allowability before issuing a grant award. The pre-award allowability review is more general in nature, since specific costs have not been incurred. During this review, the agency should focus on reviewing the budget and budget narrative to ensure all proposed costs are allowable, allocable, and reasonable. If any updates will be requested prior to award, these should be included in the analysis of the memo.
- Options and risks: Staff should offer one or more possible ways to award grant funding to eligible applications. The description should analyze possible risks and benefits of each option. As appropriate, the agency staff may recommend awards to the applicant(s) that received the highest score(s) from the review panel(s). If the staff person decides not to recommend the highest-scoring applicant(s), the memo should provide a written justification with rationale.
- Staff recommendation: Of the outlined options, highlight which option is preferred and why to achieve the intended grant outcomes.
- Next steps: Staff should describe the next steps in the award process following the agency director (or designee's) determination, including when award decisions will be posted and communicated and whether coordination is underway with other teams to facilitate such an announcement (e.g., internal or EOM communications team).

d. Risk Assessment

I. Purpose and Need

Before making a grant award, an agency should perform a risk assessment of each planned awardee. The purpose of the pre-award risk assessments is to assess the ability of the applicant to appropriately manage a grant award and fulfill grant objectives. Risk assessments assist grant managers to determine appropriate resources and time to devote to project oversight and monitor recipient progress and to determine appropriate provisions to include in the grant agreement to mitigate any risks identified.

Level of risk does not determine whether an applicant is awarded a grant.

II. Risk Assessment Process and Factors

The risk assessment should be used to inform and prioritize activities and frequency of monitoring. The agency should create a structured process for its risk assessments that includes risk categories and scoring criteria. To complete a risk-based assessment and document its results, the agency may use risk-assessment tool(s). These tool(s) may consider the following factors denoted as criteria for federal risk assessment (See [200.206](#)) and these factors may also apply to the District context:

- (1) *Financial stability.* The applicant's record of effectively managing financial risks, assets, and resources;
- (2) *Management systems and standards.* The applicant's key personnel, Board (if applicable) systems, and internal controls; ability to meet management standards described in the grant opportunity;
- (3) *History of performance.* The applicant's record of managing federal and/or local grants within and beyond the awarding agency, including compliance with reporting requirements, monitoring, and conformance to the terms and conditions of previous and current awards ([2 CFR Part 200 D § 200.332](#)).
- (4) *Audit reports and findings.* The applicant's reports and findings from audits (including a Single Audit, if applicable); and
- (5) *Ability to effectively implement requirements.* The applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on grantees.

The outcome of a risk assessment should classify grantees/subgrantee into a minimum of three categories (e.g., high, medium, and low risk). As a best practice, the agency should communicate its risk-assessment process to each subgrantee as well as the outcomes for the particular subgrantee and offer an opportunity for the subgrantee to respond to determinations before they are finalized.

III. High-risk Applicants

As noted above, level of risk does not determine whether an applicant is awarded a grant, but the level of risk identified should be reflected in the agency's monitoring plan and/or terms and conditions of an award. Entities identified as "high-risk" may require additional agency oversight and additional conditions on the grant.

Common reasons for identifying an applicant as "high risk" include when the applicant:

- Has been designated "high risk" by the federal government or another entity,
- Has a history of unsatisfactory performance,
- Is not financially stable,
- Has a management system which does not meet the management standards of the awarding agency or grant program, or
- Has not conformed to terms and conditions of a previous award.

IV. High-risk Programs

The nature of specific grant activities may also warrant all or multiple grantees to be designed as high-risk to devote appropriate resources to implement additional oversight that may be warranted beyond an agency's standard grant management procedures. Examples of activities that could be designated as high-risk provided in federal guidance that could also pertain in the District context include grant activities that could pose fraud or cybersecurity risks.

An agency may modify its risk assessment at any time during the lifecycle of an award.

Risk assessment resources are available at:

- [2 CFR 200.206](#) (Oct. 2024 version)
- Federal Register: Guidance for Federal Financial Assistance
- Email Office of Risk Management (ORM) at orm@dc.gov for support creating risk assessment tools

e. Making an Award

I. Award Decisions

After the review process is complete, the agency director (or the director's designee) will determine which applicant(s) to award grants based on a review of the staff recommendation memo and, as necessary, supporting documentation such as the applicant eligibility determinations, the review panel scores, and the risk assessments of the applicants; available funding; and other factors the agency director deems relevant. A meeting between the agency director (or designee) and the staff member who prepared the recommendation memo is often appropriate and helpful during this process.

Before non-award and award recipients are notified, best practice is for the agency to document and vet awards include the following:

- *Director's Decision Memo*: The director's award decision(s), along with the rationale for the decision(s) should be documented in a written memo signed by the director. When appropriate, the director may directly adopt the recommendations in the staff memo. If the agency director decides not to follow the staff recommendation, the memo should provide a written justification with rationale.
- *Requirements/Conditions for High-risk Grantee(s)*: If the agency decides to fund a high-risk grantee, it must determine what conditions or monitoring process should be placed on the award/awardee to protect against the risk. The agency should notify the grantee

as early as possible, in writing, of the nature of any funding or implementation restrictions; the reason(s) for imposing them; the actions required before the restrictions will be removed and if there is a specific time period to provide evidence or other documentation; and the method of requesting reconsideration of the restrictions imposed.

Conditions for a high-risk grantee may include:

- Payment on a reimbursement basis (which should generally be the process by which the agency for all grantees, regardless of risk level; See “Request for Applications (RFA), Contents of RFA, Budget and Funding” section above),
- Required advance posting of a security bond (if applicable),
- Requiring additional and/or more detailed financial or performance reports,
- Specialized monitoring,
- Requiring the grantee or recipient to obtain specific technical or management assistance, and/or
- Establishing additional prior approvals.

Any conditions and their rationale should be documented in the director’s award memo (if not already documented in the staff recommendation memo).

- *Availability of Funding:* It is important that the agency determine that adequate funding is available for each intended grant before any grants are awarded. The Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) should certify on the agency’s Certification of Available Funds Form that funding is available for each grant. A best practice is to obtain a funding certification for the grant program at the beginning of the fiscal year for planning purposes (and to have the certification updated, as needed, if grant program funding is reallocated to another purpose during the fiscal year or additional funding becomes available for the grant program). However, even if an annual certification has been issued for the grant program, an individual certification for each intended grant must be obtained before the grant is awarded. Agencies may follow the following steps to obtain certification from OCFO/agency fiscal officer (AFO):
 1. Annual/aggregate certification: Agency staff develops a memorandum that indicates the agency has budgeted the grant funds for the award in the current fiscal year and identifies the fund detail, program/activity, and any other relevant DIFS account coding. This memorandum is provided to the agency AFO as part of the agency’s request for the AFO to certify that such funds are available in the amount of the planned grant NOFA/RFA amount.

2. Award-specific certification: Agency staff develops a memorandum that indicates the agency has budgeted the funds for the specific grant program. The agency fiscal officer (or designee) determines whether the agency has proper, current, adequate and unencumbered budget authority and funds to pay the grant or subgrant in the full amount of the proposed award. If the agency fiscal officer determines that such budget authority and funds exist, the AFO should provide a written certification of funding availability. If the AFO does not determine that such budget authority and funds exist, the AFO should provide a written explanation to the agency staff.

II. Categorizing Applicants

After an agency completes the review process (i.e., after the agency director or designee issues the award memo), entities that applied for the grant should be divided into two categories:

- *Not Awarded*: Applicant entities not awarded funding.
- *Awarded*: Applicant entities awarded funding.

Entities receiving funding the agency originally received through a federal source and is now distributing per the terms of the original award are called *sub-grantees, sub-awardees, or subrecipients*.

Entities receiving funding directly from the agency (e.g., via local funding) are called *grantees*.

III. Not Awarded Applicants

The agency must provide a letter of non-award to not awarded applicants within 45 calendar days after the closing of the application (D.C. Code [§1–328.14](#)). It should include details including the applicant name, agency name, and grant name alongside communication that the grantee was not awarded. This may be explained further, i.e., due to available funds, the agency could only fund a limited number of applications at this time. The agency may want to include instructions on how applicants can find/be notified of future funding opportunities as well as gratitude for the entity's interest. In addition, the agency may want to include information on how the applicant may request a debriefing, if debriefings are offered by the agency. (See "Non-Awarded Applicant Debriefings.")

As applicable based on an agency grants manual/process, ensure notifications (e.g., [ANC](#), project managers, construction partners, DC Register, [DC Grants Clearinghouse](#)).

Ensure not awarded applicant records are maintained (See "Record Retention" section below).

IV. Awarded Applicants

1. Award Transmittal Letter

The agency should provide an award transmittal letter to each awarded entity that communicates that the entity has been selected to receive a grant. The letter should include the following information:

- What grant the entity has been awarded;
- The grant period;
- Any required next steps (e.g., budget finalization based on available funds, attendance at a post-award conference);
- Documentation requirements (e.g., a certificate of insurance if an accord was not provided at the time of application submission and is required); and
- Any conditions to the award of the grant (See “Conditional or Modified Awards” immediately below).

As applicable based on an agency grants manual/process, ensure notifications (e.g., [ANC](#), project managers, construction partners, DC Register, [DC Grants Clearinghouse](#)).

2. Conditional or Modified Awards

An agency should outline conditions or requirements that an awardee must meet for the entity to receive an award. These may include:

- Submission of a final work plan and/or budget addressing any requirements or feedback from the agency (e.g., available funds may require a lower final budget than in the application, so the applicant must provide documentation to align with the final anticipated award).
- Updated documentation of eligibility to receive funds, including submission of assurances and certifications, documentation of non-debarment or suspension, evidence Clean Hands.
- Agreement to comply with specific terms and conditions based on the funding source, agency, and/or specific award, including prohibitions on uses of funds and record retention.
- Understanding of planned funding distribution, including the schedule and any required invoice templates.

- Confirmation that the awardee will participate and utilize specific tools/templates for monitoring and reporting provided by the agency.

If the award amount and/or project period are different from those in the grantee's application, or if the agency requires further clarification of any element of the application, the applicant should be required to submit to the agency and obtain approval from the agency of the required modifications. This may be accomplished either before the formal award to the awardee or afterward. If afterward, the award should contain a special condition that prohibits expenditure of funds by the grantee until submission and approval of the required modification(s).

3. Award Document

The agency must provide subgrantees/grantees with a legally binding written award document: either a Grant Agreement or Notice of Award. These award document(s) should contain but are not limited to the following information:

- Name, title, address, telephone number, and email address of the grantor points of contact;
- Grant or subgrant number assigned by the granting agency;
- Assistance Listing Number, if funding is from a federal grant (this should be included in the Notice of Award the agency received from the federal funder and can also be located on www.sam.gov);
- Citations to the statute and implementing regulations that authorize the award (parallel to those provided in the RFA for the award);
- Beginning and ending dates of the award (i.e., period of availability or performance period);
- Name, title, address, telephone number, and email address of the official point of contact for the grantee/subgrantee;
- Key terms and conditions that apply to the award;
 - Special conditions and performance standards (if applicable);
 - Reporting requirements (including required forms or instructions, if available);
 - Process and/or conditions for amending the award; and
 - Process and/or conditions for terminating the award;
- Grantee's/subgrantee's Tax ID or Unique Entity ID (UEI);
- Amount of the funds awarded;

- Amount of any financial or in-kind matching resources, if any, that the grantee must contribute; and
- Language incorporating the application by reference.

An agency subgranting federal funds must ensure Single Audit requirements are included in subrecipient grant award documents. Any subgrantee receiving \$1 million or more in federal funding in a year is required to conduct a Single Audit. See [2 CFR Part 200 D § 200.332](#) for more detail on federal funding pass-through requirements.

4. Terms and Conditions

As noted in the prior section, the grant award document must include terms and conditions that describe the agency’s administrative requirements and extend any requirements that may be applicable based on the originating funding source. For grant agreements, the terms and conditions are included in the grant agreement itself; for GANs, the terms and conditions are usually appended to the GAN.

Terms and conditions in the grant award document should include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Specific requirements of the federal and/or local funding source (for federal awards, include the ALN number);
- All applicable federal and District laws and regulations,³ (See “Request for Applications (RFA), Applicant Disclosures/Certifications and Documentation” sections of this Manual);
- Payment provisions identifying how the grantee will be paid for performing under the award including when and how payment will be made and what information must be provided in to request a payment;
- Certification with each invoice that items will not be billed to another District government agency grant or any other grant by another funder for the same work.
- Requirement for the grantee to notify the awarding agency if the grantee receives a new grant, contract, subgrant, or subcontract from another District agency.
- Compliance requirements and conditions that must be met by the grantee;
- Deliverables and deliverable dates;
- Reporting requirements, including programmatic, financial, and special reports required by the agency. Any required formats/forms should be provided or information on when/how to access report formats/form should be specified;
- Breach and termination provisions; and

³ Laws change over time and new laws may be added over time.

- A statement that the District reserves all rights to use any remedy available in law or equity to address any grantee/subgrantee non-compliance with the grant agreement.

5. Official Subgrantee/Grantee Record

The agency must establish an official record for awarded grants/subgrants. See the “Record Retention” section below.

4. POST-AWARD

a. Non-Awarded Applicant Debriefings

An agency may offer debriefings with each non-awarded applicant. During a non-awarded applicant debriefing, the agency walks through a synopsis of the agency’s review of the applicant’s proposal. This typically includes sharing the scoring rubric and the applicant’s scores, providing an oral synopsis of key strengths and weaknesses of the applicant’s proposal identified by panel reviewers in their comments, and responding to questions from the applicant. A non-awarded applicant debriefing may provide an opportunity for the agency to build capacity among applicants for future potential grant opportunities.

Prior to initiating a competition, the agency should establish a process for non-awarded applicant debriefings. The process should include:

- *Request:* How non-awarded applicants may request a debriefing. Will conversations be offered to all non-awarded applicants as part of a non-award letter, or available upon request?
- *Participation:* How to determine who from the agency will participate. Will a grant manager facilitate the meeting and who else will accompany them (e.g., programmatic, legal, and/or fiscal staff)?
- *Content:* Guidelines for what will and will not be discussed during a debriefing should be clearly communicated to both agency staff and non-awarded applicants. Agencies should only share the scores and a synopsis of comments for the specific applicant during a non-awarded applicant debriefing. If the agency opts to make awarded applicant information public (i.e., posting scores or applications on its website), such information needs to be available to all applicants equitably not only those requesting a non-awarded applicant debriefing.
- *Closure:* Follow up procedures which may include providing the applicant information on capacity-building programs and other training and educational opportunities and directing applicants to publicly available information on future grant competitions.

In addition to or instead of a debriefing, an applicant may request their individual scores and comments, and the agency is responsible for sharing that record in the format determined to be compliant per consultation with the agency's legal team.

In limited circumstances, a non-awarded applicant debriefing may lead to a challenge in an agency award decision (See "Challenges to Agency Award Decisions" below).

b. Challenges to Agency Award Decisions

The agency should establish written procedures for challenge and complaints ("challenge and complaint procedures") related to award decisions that include guidelines for applicants submitting complaints and how the agency will handle any complaints received. Best practices include:

I. Guidelines for Applicants Submitting a Challenge

- *Publish Procedures:* As a best practice, the agency's challenge and complaint procedures should be posted on the agency's website. In addition, the agency should consider including a link to the procedures in each RFA and in each notification to a non-awarded applicant. The procedures should describe in what types of circumstances (e.g., alleged error or misconduct affecting awards) a challenge will be considered by the agency.
- *Explain What to Include in the Challenge or Complaint:* If an applicant opts to submit a challenge or complaint to the agency, it should include at minimum: the grant competition for which the applicant is appealing, a statement of the applicant's position and the facts and reasons in support of its position. In addition to this statement, the challenging applicant should include any documents supporting its position.
- *Explain Where to Submit a Challenge or Complaint:* The agency should provide a location (an email address, online form, or mailing address) where the applicant may submit a challenge.
- *Explain When to Submit a Challenge or Complaint:* The agency should specify a deadline by which a challenge or complaint must be filed in order for the challenge or complaint to be considered. The agency should establish a default deadline in its procedures (e.g., "the agency will review and respond to challenges submitted by [two weeks following award decisions]") but also indicate that the RFA or non-award letter may establish a different deadline where circumstances warrant; the RFA or non-award letter may, in turn, set forth a longer or shorter deadline where warranted. Since the resolution of complaints, as opposed to challenges, do not impact award decisions, a longer deadline may be appropriate.

II. Agency Procedures for Responding to Submitted Challenges

- *Identify a Challenge Team:* Outline who in the agency will review and respond to challenges. This may include the grant manager, legal counsel, agency director, and programmatic staff. The agency procedure should outline who will receive and catalog incoming challenges, how applicable agency staff will be notified of challenges, and how a final determination on a response to the challenge will be made.
- *Offer a Debrief Call:* The agency should review each challenge and determine if a non-awarded applicant debrief call would support the agency's response to the stated concerns.
- *Appeals:* Determine if a secondary escalation process is applicable. In the case of awards funded federally, if the federal agency provides appeal instructions, the agency may offer an applicant instructions for appealing to the agency's funder.

In limited circumstances, a challenge may result in a change to an award decision. The agency should document the rationale for any such changes and include it in the central record for the grant competition. Any challenges that result in changes in funding must be communicated to the agency's fiscal officer and the amount of any new awards or increases in funding to an existing award must be certified by the AFO if applicable.

c. Record Retention

The agency must maintain a file for the grant opportunity as a whole and a grant file for each awardee and non-awardee. The files should be updated during the duration of the grant period and maintained following the conclusion of the grant period for a minimum of three years and up to seven years ([2 CFR § 200.334](#)). The active retention period is normally three years from the date when the final programmatic and financial reports are submitted to the federal grantor or, if an audit is conducted within that three-year period, the date when the audit report is officially closed. After the active retention period, District regulations require archival retention for an additional four years.

I. Central Record for the Grant Opportunity

Agencies should maintain documentation of the grant decision-making process as a whole. Agencies should include the following in the record for the grant opportunity as a whole:

- NOFA

- RFA (including any amendments)
- Records of any pre-bid conference
- Communication with applicants (emails, phone logs, question & answers, webinars)
- Applications
- Scoring sheets
- Agency staff recommendation memo
- Agency director decision memo
- Statutorily required records retention

Pursuant to DC Code § [1.328.14](#), the agency must retain written communication or any other communications, including telephonic or face-to-face communications, between the grantor and any District government official or staff regarding: (i) the development of the selection criteria or eligibility requirements; (ii) selection by the grantor of a grantee; or (iii) issues with a grantee's compliance with grant-program requirements.

The documents should be maintained in a central file (e.g., a specifically identified folder on an agency's shared drive or OneDrive) for a minimum of three years. Appropriate safeguards should be put in place to protect the integrity and confidentiality of the files.

II. Individual Grantee Record Components

Awarded Applicants

Agencies should include the following in the record for each applicant who is awarded a grant:

- Application of grantee (original and any modifications);
- Review/scoring of application;
- Risk assessment;
- Award letter;
- Original and any modifications to the Notice of Award or grant agreement, including changes to award amount, points of contact, or grant period;
- Fiscal payment requests, reviews, and approvals;
- Amendment requests, reviews, and approvals; and
- Monitoring documentation, including desktop and onsite reviews and any documentation collected at, prior, or subsequent to engagement.

Communications between the agency and grantee must also be included in the grant record at minimum in compliance with DC Code § [1.328.14](#) as described above. The agency should develop procedures to outline what types of communication should be included in the grant record (e.g., emails, phone calls, meetings) and how (printed records, summarized call notes).

Non-Awarded Applicants

For each applicant who is not awarded a grant, the record should include the following, as available:

- Application of grantee
- Review/scoring of application
- Non-award letter
- Call log or emails related to debriefing between agency and applicant along with a written summary of the debriefing session
- Challenge to the grant award, if filed, and documentation of the agency's response to the challenge

A grant management system may support an agency with record compilation and retention (See "Grant Management Systems").

III. Making the Record Available

The subgrantee/grantee record must be provided upon request, within a reasonable time, to the Mayor, or their designee, to a member of the Council, to auditors, and/or the originating federal agency ([D.C. Code 1-328.14\(2\)\(B\)](#)).

The agency must comply with requirements of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). This may require the agency to release scores and/or provide NOGAs of awarded applicants. Agency legal teams typically lead the FOIA response process and will work with grant staff to obtain documentation necessary for compliance.

IV. Period of Retention

Not awarded: Agencies must maintain records of unsuccessful applications for one year from the date that the RFA closed.

Awarded: Subgrantee/grantee records should be maintained for up to seven years:

- Records must be maintained for a minimum of three years ([2 CFR § 200.334](#)). If any litigation, claim, or audit takes place beyond three years of the end of final programmatic and fiscal report submission; the initial three-year record retention period will be extended until resolution.
- District regulations require archival retention for an additional four years beyond the initial three years.

Other circumstances may also require longer periods of federally required retention under [2 CFR § 200.334](#). This timeline may also be extended based on the terms and conditions of a specific federal award.

d. Payments to Grantee

Prior to grant release, the agency should establish procedures for payments to the grantee that align with the requirements and purpose of the grant award. When developing a grantee payment procedure, an agency should consider the following:

- *Timing of Payments:* As discussed in the “RFA: Budget and Funding” section above, except in unusual circumstances, grantees should be paid only on a reimbursement basis. For example, if an agency is implementing a grant program with an objective that invites potential grantees who may not have working capital to function on a reimbursement basis, an agency may consider an alternative payment method. If the agency plans to make advance payments, it must consider steps it will take to minimize risk to the District (*See Reconciliation of Advance Payments, below*).
- *Invoice Requirements:* Agencies should explain what a grantee needs to provide when submitting an invoice for processing, including what documentation should be attached as part of the invoice submission to the agency and what documentation the grantee should keep in its grant files for review as requested (i.e., during monitoring). For example, for personnel-related payments, the agency may require the time period worked to be specified in the invoice and a general ledger record and time and effort documentation to be on file. For reimbursement of non-personnel costs, the agency should require copies of invoices and other appropriate documentation to be submitted with the invoice. The agency may also require that the grantee link the invoice payments to line items in the grant budget. The agency should consider providing a template to ensure grantees provide all information needed to review each invoice. The agency should also require that the grantee register in the District’s DIFS financial system promptly after the grant award, if the grantee is not already registered. Payments to grantees will not be made by the Office of the Chief Financial Officer if the grantee is not appropriately registered in DIFS. Every grantee invoice for payment should include a certification that the grantee is not/has not billed any other District

agency or other grant funder for the same work. (See “Awards” – “Terms and Conditions”).

- *Invoice Review:* An agency must review and approve each invoice prior to authorizing payment in DIFS. As a best practice, an agency may require a grantee to submit invoices for review to the grant team directly for review and approval prior to submission of the payment request in DIFS. As a best practice for internal controls, a minimum of two agency staff (e.g., grants officer, grants officer manager) should review and approve each invoice prior to approving it for payment. Agencies may consider developing a grant-specific checklist to ensure allowability, requirements, and other factors unique to each grant are reviewed and to organize feedback that may be required for the grantee to address prior to invoice approval.
- *Arranging for Payment:* An Agency Fiscal Officer will require evidence of approval of the invoice by the agency prior to initiating payment in DIFS. Agency grant and fiscal staff should determine a routine for communicating and documenting the status of review and payment for each invoice.
- *Reconciliation of Advance Payments:* In instances where an agency determines its grant objective may justify advance payments rather than reimbursements, it should establish a process to review grant spending after it takes place. This should include procedures similar to the invoicing review process described above with the grantee providing documentation of expenses to which the revenue was applied.

e. Common Questions on Uses of Funds

The agency and grantee are responsible for determining that the grantee’s use of grant funds is “allowable.” For federal funds, [2 CFR-200-E](#) Cost Principles and [GAO guidance](#) provide guidance on the allowability determination for federal grant funds. District agencies should use the same or similar standards for determining the allowability of the use of grants funded with District (local) dollars. The concept of “allowability” includes a number of standards that must be considered by the agency and grantee ([2 CFR 200.403](#)). The most common of the standards are the following:

- *Legally Conforming:* The use of funds must be in line with applicable law and regulations, any agency regulation or guidelines, and the provisions of the RFA;
- *Reasonable:* A cost is generally considered reasonable if it does not exceed an amount that a prudent person would incur under the circumstances prevailing when the decision was made to incur the cost. Factors to consider when determining whether a cost is reasonable are described at ([2 CFR 200.404](#)); and

- *Allocable:* The cost incurred by the grantee must be appropriate to allocate to the grant award. In general, this standard is met if the cost was incurred specifically and solely for the purposes of the grant activities. Other costs, however, may also be allocable to the grant ([2 CFR 200.405](#)).

The following are cost areas that agencies commonly have questions about and best practices for agency consideration:

- *Food:* Grant funds generally may not be used to purchase food or entertainment unless the purchase is necessary to achieve the goals/objectives of the grant. For example, if the goal of a grant is family/community engagement, purchase of reasonable food costs may be considered. Federal restrictions on the use of grant funds for food are strict, and agencies should follow the federal guidelines for both federally funded subgrants and District-funded grants.
- *Capital Projects:* If grant funds support a capital project, an agency should consider consulting with a subject-matter expert (e.g., Department of General Services) to gather input on the reasonableness of the capital costs.

The agency should review proposed grant expenditures for allowability, reasonableness, and allocability before the grant award is made (See “Agency Review” section above). In addition, during the performance of the grant, the agency should review actual grant expenditures for allowability, reasonableness, and allocability (See “Payments to Grantee” and “Monitoring” sections below).

Disallowed Costs

The agency must review each request for a disbursement of grant funds to reimburse the grantee for expended costs (and each reconciliation of an advance of grant funds) to determine whether any of the expenditures are disallowed costs (i.e., unreasonable, non-allocable, etc.). If unallowable costs are identified, the agency action will depend on when the unallowable costs are identified during the grant period and how payments are issued under the grant. The agency should provide notice to the grantee that the costs have been disallowed. If additional time and funds remain on the grant award, and an advance payment was made by the agency, an accounting adjustment can address the disallowed costs in a future payment (i.e., subtracting the disallowed costs from the total subsequent payment). If all grant funds have been disbursed because grant funds were disbursed in advance, the grantee should return funds to the agency within 45 calendar days. If grant disbursements are made on a reimbursable basis, disallowed costs should be addressed by reducing the reimbursement payment to the amount of the allowable costs.

f. Amendments

During the grant period, the agency may determine a need to change, or “amend,” the grant agreement or Notice of Award. Common reasons that an amendment may be considered include:

- *Funding Amounts*: Changes based on underspending by some grantees or additional funding from originating funding source.
- *Time*: Additional time becomes available (e.g., based on Tydings period for certain federal education grants or extension from federal funding agency) or a longer period of performance becomes necessary.
- *Purpose*: Modification to a subgrantee/grantee budget and/or program plan to meet grant objectives (including addressing unexpected conditions or results).

Either the agency or the grantee may request an amendment. It is best practice for an agency to communicate to the grantee a specific method and format for amendments to be requested (e.g., email using a specified template, a grants management system portal) and to respond to amendment requests within 14 calendar days.

To consider an amendment, the agency should follow procedures similar to those used at the time of the agency’s approval of the initial grant application. These steps should include:

1. Review by the agency’s grant manager, including verification of whether the proposed amendment is allowable (i.e., available funds, allowable use). During this process, the agency grant manager should communicate with the grantee as necessary to better understand the purpose of and rationale for the amendment. In addition, if the agency grant manager supports the general purpose of the amendment but has concerns with specific elements of the proposed amendment, the agency grant manager and grantee may discuss alternative amendments.
2. Preparation of a recommendation memo by the grant manager. The memo should include a summary of the requested amendment, its rationale, a statement verifying whether the proposed amendment is allowable, and the grant manager’s recommendation whether to approve the proposed modification. If discussions between the agency grant manager and grantee took place as part of the prior step, the memo should as a best practice mention that the discussions took place and describe. Any relevant documents should be included as attachments to the memo.
3. Review of the memo and supporting documentation by agency director (or the director’s designee).

4. Review by the agency's fiscal officer to confirm sufficient available funds for specified time and purpose, if additional funding or an extension of the period of the grant is part of the amendment request. If the agency fiscal officer does not confirm sufficient funds are available, the amendment request should be returned to the agency grant manager along with a written explanation.
5. If the agency grant manager and agency director approve the amendment and the agency fiscal officer confirm that sufficient funds are available (for amendments where the funding level of the grant will increase), then the agency should issue either a modified Notice of Award or a NOA amendment to the grantee/subgrantee of, in the case of a grant agreement, the agency and grantee should enter into an amendment to the grant agreement. Best practice is to number and date the amendment for version clarity (e.g., "First Amendment to the Notice of Grant Award to [Grantee Name] for [Description of Grant Services]").
6. The modified Notice of Award, NOA amendment, or grant agreement amendment should be shared with the grantee/subgrantee and included in the grantee/subgrantee record.

g. Terminating or Discontinuing a Grant

I. District (Local)-Funded Grants

Under [DC Code 1-328.15a](#), a grant agreement for a District (local)-funded grant awarded on a competitive basis may only be terminated before the end of a grant agreement if:

- The grantee fails to comply with the terms or conditions of the grant agreement or applicable laws; or
- The agency and grantee mutually determine that the continuation of the grant agreement would not produce beneficial results commensurate with the further expenditure of funds.

For an agency to initiate the termination of a grant because the grantee has failed to comply with the grant agreement or applicable law, the agency must provide a show-cause notice to the grantee. The show-cause notice must include:

- (a) A statement that the agency intends to terminate the grant;
- (b) A description of the agency's reason(s) for the proposed termination;
- (c) The effective date for termination;

(d) A statement that the grantee has the opportunity to show cause why the grant should not be terminated by responding within 10 business days and including any facts bearing on the intended termination.

The agency must deliver the show-cause notice by hand, certified mail, courier, delivery service, or electronic mail.

If the grantee submits a response, the agency must reply to the grantee within 15 business days after receiving the grantee's response. The agency's response must include whether it agrees or disagrees with the facts and arguments presented by the grantee and the agency's final decision—that is, whether it will proceed to terminate the grant agreement or whether it will revoke the show cause notice.

If the agency will issue an amendment to the NOGA (or if the agency and the grantee will enter into an amendment to the grant agreement) to formalize termination of the grant, a recommendation memo prepared by the agency grant manager, along with an approval memo or notation by the agency director or designee are recommended.

II. Federally Funded Grants

A federally funded award may be terminated in part or in its entirety. All termination provisions should be included in the terms and conditions of the grant award. When the federal award is terminated in part or its entirety, the federal agency or pass-through entity and recipient or subrecipient remain responsible for compliance closeout and audit requirements. ([CFR § 200.340](#), [§ 200.344](#), and [§ 200.345](#).)

h. Monitoring

The agency must monitor every grantee/subgrantee during the grant period to determine compliance with grant requirements, ensure fiscal accountability, and prevent waste, fraud, and abuse.

It is important to note that the agency is ultimately responsible for ensuring that grant funds are used in accordance with all legal and programmatic requirements, even if it is acting as a pass-through entity. The use of grantees/ or subgrantees does not relieve the agency of this responsibility.

What activities are used for monitoring and the frequency of such activities should be determined by the agency based on factors including:

- Risk level of recipient (See "Risk Assessment" section, below);
- Scope and size of award; and/or

- Terms and conditions and/or expected outcomes of the grant, including the requirements of originating funding source.*

Agencies should review federal, District, and agency guidance to inform its monitoring practices.

*Federally-funded grants are governed by monitoring requirements outlined in [2 CFR Part 200 D including § 200.329, 200.331, 200.332](#). These regulations outline the general need for oversight of each portion of a grant program as well as fiscal management (this includes if the grant program qualifies as a “major program” and will be subject to Single Audit requirements for any subgrantee receiving \$1 million or more in federal funding in a year) and performance measurement of the goals and objectives of the grant.

I. Monitoring Best Practices

- *Frequency:* The agency should conduct a minimum of two monitoring activities of low-risk grantees and subgrantees per year to check for fiscal and programmatic compliance. Higher risk grantees and subgrantees should be subject to more frequent monitoring.
- *Type:* The agency should consider the types of monitoring that will provide the most valuable information to assess its grant investment. The following are types of monitoring that an agency may consider at different points in the grant period:
 - Project monitoring includes review of milestones, deliverables, resource allocation, and performance measures. Project monitoring may take place through written reports, phone calls, or site visits.
 - Compliance monitoring includes review of requirements of a grant, such as specific fiscal uses of funds or application of grant requirements. Compliance monitoring may take place through review of documentation or site visits.
 - Beneficiary monitoring includes assessing the impact of a grant by gathering feedback from constituents or other parties served by the grant project. Beneficiary monitoring may take place through surveys, interviews, data collection, or site visits.
 - Financial monitoring includes review of the use of financial resources, including the pace and use of grant funds. Agencies commonly conduct financial monitoring as part of reviewing invoices and making reimbursement of advance payments to the grantee. (As discussed in the RFA: Budget and Funding” section above, except in unusual circumstances, grantees should be paid only on a reimbursement basis.)
- *Communication:* As a best practice, the agency should communicate its monitoring plan and schedule, including activities, frequency, and risk-based monitoring to

grantees/subgrantees at the time of award and any updates, as applicable. The agency should also communicate any next steps following monitoring engagement(s) at a predictable frequency, including timelines and required activities needed to remedy any identified deficiencies.

- *Staffing:* Monitoring personnel should have duties that are separate from program and fiscal management, technical assistance or any other function related directly to grant administration. This separation of duties allows for the independence and greater objectivity of the monitoring staff.

Monitoring may take place in a range of settings, including the following:

- *In person:* Includes site visits, in-person interviews, and in-person document review.
- *Virtual:* Includes check-ins, meetings, and/or interviews via Teams and/or phone.
- *Desk:* Examples include review of programmatic reports, data, questionnaires, and fiscal documentation by grantee. Typically, desk monitoring involves the grantee submitting documentation and agency staff then reviewing the documentation for adherence to grant requirements and goals.

II. Risk-based Monitoring

Monitoring should be informed by the risk assessment of the grantee (See “Risk Assessment” section).

III. Monitoring Results

An agency should include monitoring documentation in the subgrantee record and provide written communication of findings and concerns to the subgrantee and agency director (or designee).

A monitoring report should include, but is not limited to the following:

- Identify subgrantee information and the award(s) monitored;
- Describe program activities and eligible client population;
- State the date(s) of the review and the agency staff reviewer(s);
- Describe the monitoring activities and test procedures (if any) used to collect information;
- Clearly set forth the findings together with associated references to applicable federal and/or District regulations and requirements;

- Identify corrective actions the grantee needs to take (*See “Corrective Action Requirement” section, below*); and,
- Describe staff’s observations (strengths and weaknesses) of the grantee’s internal controls and financial reporting, at a minimum.

IV. Corrective Action Requirements

An agency must issue a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) to a grantee to address and resolve findings identified during the monitoring review. A CAP document identifies deficiencies and provides a clear path to resolve issues and reduce the risk of future noncompliance.

A CAP should include but is not limited to the following:

- General information on the monitoring review necessitating the CAP: When the review took place, the grant program(s) reviewed, who conducted the review.
- For each finding: The requirement, a statement of the non-compliance, analysis of why the noncompliance occurred, steps needed to correct the noncompliance, evidence to be provided to demonstrate resolution of the noncompliance (including any interim progress measures), responsible parties to address the noncompliance, timeline to complete all steps and provide required evidence demonstrating the CAP is resolved.
- General information on resolution and next steps: Who the grantee should contact for questions, potential consequences if a CAP is not fulfilled.

An agency should provide a grantee with a draft CAP prior to formally issuing the CAP and starting the clock on timelines for deliverables. As a best practice, an agency should provide a grantee a reasonable amount of time (e.g., one week) to review a draft CAP prior to formal issuance as well as an opportunity for a call with the agency to walk through the draft CAP together. This ensures the CAP is accurate (i.e., any deficiencies noted are not due to accidentally missing relevant documentation, responsible parties are accurate) and that both the agency and the grantee agree that the timelines and actions required by the CAP are reasonable and will address the identified noncompliance and mitigate future recurrence.

As a best practice, the agency should check in with the grantee throughout the duration of the CAP to discuss progress and offer technical assistance. For example, if a deficiency is related to a policy or procedure, the agency may provide the grantee sample policies or procedures to review to consider incorporating.

Following a grantee’s submission of its CAP response, the agency should review the evidence and make a determination as to whether it meets the outlined conditions. If so, the agency should issue a letter confirming the CAP actions have been satisfied. If not, the agency should discuss the outstanding deficiencies with the grantee. If the agency program staff and grantee

cannot work through and resolve issues, the agency should consult with its general counsel for escalation for noncompliance, including but not limited to grant conditions and/or potential termination of award.

i. Reporting

In addition to and as a complement to monitoring, an agency should require grantees/subgrantees to provide documentation of grant implementation through reporting on grant-related fiscal and programmatic progress and outcomes. Agencies should share guidelines on reporting at the time of award, including due dates, formats, and any supplementary documentation that will be required for submission.

Agencies will need to determine the content, frequency and format of reporting that best meets the needs of each grant program. Agencies may opt for one reporting format during the grant period and a different format for a final report to close out the grant. For subgrants awarded with federal funds, the agency must ensure that the reporting requirements are consistent with the terms and conditions of the federal award to the agency, any relevant regulations or guidelines or the awarding federal agency, and the Single Audit requirement (See “Single Audit” below).

The following are reporting elements an agency may consider:

- Synopsis of whether the grant activities and performance are on time, on budget and rationale for any unforeseen deviations to date or anticipated moving forward
- Summary of actions taken during the reporting period (month, quarter, year)
- Update on financials (for example, expenditures to date, obligations to date, burn rate, contracting information, etc.)
- Highlights of specific outputs achieved (in alignment with specific performance measures identified in the application or at the start of the award period, if applicable.)

As a best practice, an agency may provide grantees a template, examples, and/or offer training to review reporting expectations.

I. Single Audit

Any subgrantee receiving \$1 million or more in federal funding in a year is required to obtain an annual Single Audit ([2 CFR 200](#)). An agency subgranting federal funds must ensure Single Audit requirements are included in subrecipient grant award documents. An agency may require the grantee to provide the single audit report to the agency as a requirement of the agency’s award of the subgrant.

II. Closeout

As a best practice at the conclusion of the grant period, an agency should formally “closeout” a grant/subgrant award. The closeout process will vary and may be informed based on the size of the award, the originating funding source, the agency’s risk assessment of the grantee/subgrantee, and the intended outcomes of the award. Closeout is essentially the final form of monitoring and reporting at the end of a grant period.

Closeout typically includes two components: (1) fiscal and (2) programmatic. The following are questions the agency may want to consider in a closeout process:

- *Fiscal Closeout*
 - Has the grant budget been fully spent in accordance with the approved budget? Is there documentation (i.e., receipts, reimbursements) showing this?
 - If all funds were not spent in accordance with the approved budget, have funds been returned (if advanced) and do any records of underspending match between agency and subgrantee/grantee records?
 - Have any Single Audit or other external audit reports been shared, and any outstanding corrective actions resolved?
- *Programmatic Closeout*
 - Has the subgrantee documented the impact of grant funds?
 - Has information on sustainability and/or recommendations for improvements for potential future investments been requested/provided?
 - Has data been provided on the outcomes/performance of the award? Will data collection continue beyond the project period?
 - Has subgrantee information, data, or other information needed to satisfy performance reporting to the originating funder been provided?

5. MISCELLANEOUS GRANT GUIDANCE

a. Grantmaking During Emergencies

An agency may need to revise its grantmaking procedures when administering and overseeing grants during a time of emergency (i.e., the Mayor declares a state of emergency). If a Mayor's declaration of a state of emergency specifically states that standard grant procedures are subject to flexibility and modification, the agency may modify its grant operations from their normal state in order to better respond to the emergency (See for example "Financial Assistance to Support the Public Emergencies Response" page five in [Mayor's Order 2023-41](#)). However, before deviating from an agency's normal state of grant operations, an agency must confer with OCA.

Examples of questions and issues that an agency may consider while grantmaking during an emergency include:

- *Grant Type:* The standard competitive grant process generally takes a substantial amount of time before an award is made. Would a non-competitive process more effectively address the emergency? Are there other avenues to award funds to meet desired outcomes (e.g., expanding existing awards)?
- *Timeline:* If a competitive process is used, should potential applicants be provided with shortened time periods to complete and submit applications? Should applications be accepted and awarded on a rolling basis? Will dates for monitoring and/or reporting need to adjust?
- *Review Panel:* Will a different structure be used to review applications (i.e., internal vs. external; smaller group of panel members)?
- *Uses of Funds:* Will the emergency impact how funds may need to be used to meet desired outcomes?

If an agency is modifying its process during an emergency for federally or privately funded subgrants, the agency should determine whether it is necessary or appropriate to contact funders prior to making any adjustments to timelines or requirements based on the initial grant award to the District.

As a best practice, an agency should document rationale for any changes from normal procedures and the rationale for emergency-based changes in case of auditing and/or reporting.

b. Grant Management Systems

To organize and oversee the grant lifecycle, an agency may consider utilizing an electronic grants management system. Grants management systems will vary based on the specific needs and resources of an agency. The following are questions an agency may want to contemplate when considering potential in-house or vendor-supported grants management systems:

How/will the grant management system support the following grant lifecycle activities?

- **Pre-award**

- *RFA/Application:* Create and release an application to applicants to complete/submit and any amendments to the application.
- *Accepting Applications:*
 - Accept applications through a specified/date and time
 - Organize proposals for review
 - Conduct eligibility screen (e.g., based on clean hands, affidavits, entity characteristics)
- *Review Process:*
 - Request and select reviewers
 - Document external panel scores and comments
 - Compile scores and a synopsis of comments to provide to applicants
 - Document award recommendations and award decisions
- *Record Retention:* Maintain pre-award records (including RFA, amendments, internal and external communications, recommendation memos, and award decisions)

- **Award/Post-award**

- *Notifications:*
 - Issue not award/award letters
 - Issue Notice of Award or grant agreement
 - Issue terms and conditions
 - Issue modifications, as applicable, to award documents
 - Document notification to required entities, as applicable based on agency grants process
- *Record Retention:* Maintain grantee/subgrantee record.
- *Amendments:* Collect requests for modifications from grantee/subgrantee for agency review.
- *Payment:* Grant management systems are not able to directly connect to DIFS. Agencies will need to determine how payment documentation/processes in a grant management system support/integrate with formal payment processes in DIFS.
- *Reporting, Monitoring and Closeout*

- Collect materials related to reporting, monitoring, and/or closeout (in a required format, if applicable)
- Store any documentation in an organized repository, as applicable (consider potential required formats (e.g., documents, videos, images, etc.)

c. Grantseeking

1) Authority to Apply for Grants

If an agency meets the eligibility criteria for a federal or private grant opportunity, it may apply for the grant without the need for any specific District statutory authority. The agency should ensure that any agency-internal review and approval processes are followed. An agency should also consult with its deputy mayor's (DM) office in appropriate circumstances.



In addition to agency-level approvals (and any applicable DM approvals), an agency seeking federal grant funding of \$1 million or more must obtain approval to apply for the grant funding from OCA (see [CA Order #2024-6](#)). To request OCA approval, agency staff responsible for putting the grant application together can complete the [OCA Federal Grants Review form](#) no later than two weeks before a grant opportunity's deadline. OCA approval is expected to take no longer than five business days.

The agency must also go through the intergovernmental review (The State Single Point of Contact or SPOC) process for federal funding programs covered by Executive Order 12372. A federal program's notice of funding opportunity will indicate whether it is covered by Executive Order 12372. To initiate the SPOC process, an agency must complete a request form for a State Application Identifier by writing to spoc.request@dc.gov. OCA's Grants Policy Division will respond to requests within 48 to 72 business hours.

Agency staff may monitor or subscribe to www.grants.gov to review federal grant funding opportunities.

2) Indirect Costs

When an agency applies for federal funding, it is best practice for it to include in its application a request for the maximum indirect costs permitted. The agency may have to negotiate an indirect cost rate prior to application submission in order to request indirect costs in an application budget.

6. APPENDICES

a. Grant Resources

Commonly Used Grantmaking Websites:

- [DC Register](#)
- [DC Grants Clearinghouse](#)
- [Grants.gov](#)
- [Sam.gov](#)

Federal Requirements:

- OMB Guidance (2CFR200): [Guidance for Federal Financial Assistance](#)

District / Local Requirements:

- [Part B. Grant Administration. | D.C. Law Library](#)
- [Chapter 1-50. SUBGRANTS TO PRIVATE AND PUBLIC AGENCIES, Title 1. MAYOR AND EXECUTIVE AGENCIES, D.C. Municipal Regulations](#)

Finance:

- [Office of the Chief Financial Officer \(OCFO\) Grants Job Aid: P&G Training Job Aids, Policies, and Resources | DIFS \(dc.gov\)](#)