

FY19-21 Better Connections (BC) Program Grant Administration Guide

Complete Grant Agreement

Completing the Grant Agreement involves three separate steps:

- The Resolution must be printed, signed by the Selectboard, and emailed to VTrans (already included in the grant application).
- The Project Commitment Form (PCF) must be printed, signed by the Local Project Manager or Authorized Municipal Official, and emailed to Jackie Cassino, the VTrans BC Program Manager.
- The Grant Agreement must be electronically signed by the Local Project Manager or Authorized Municipal Official.

To complete these steps please follow the instructions provided below.

1. Review and sign the Project Commitment Form (PCF)
Awardees receive the PCF via email with the official award notification. Please review and have the Local Project Manager sign this document within 10 business days. Submit the signed PCF to Jackie Cassino- electronic submission via email is acceptable. Once the signed PCF is received, VTrans begins the grant agreement process.
2. Review the Grant Agreement
Within 30 days of submitting the PCF, you should receive your grant agreement electronically. Make sure the information about your grant is correct and that you understand the terms of the Grant Agreement.
3. Sign the Grant Agreement
VTrans will generate the Grant Agreement and will provide the LPM an electronic copy. The Municipal Official/LPM whose name appears on it must review and sign it via E-Sign. Once the signed signature page is received by VTrans, you will then:
 - Receive an email notification of the “Grant Awarded” status of your grant;
 - Receive an electronic copy of your fully executed

KEY DATES

April 12, 2019
Signed PCF due to VTrans

May 31, 2019
Grant Agreement due
Begin consultant procurement

October 31, 2019
1st Invoice & Progress Report
*Reflecting work completed through
September 30, 2019*

January 31, 2020
2nd Invoice & Progress Report
*Reflecting work completed through
December 31, 2019*

April 30, 2020
3rd Invoice & Progress Report
*Reflecting work completed through
March 31, 2020*

July 31, 2020
4th Invoice & Progress Report
*Reflecting work completed through
June 30, 2020*

October 31, 2020
5th Invoice & Progress Report
*Reflecting work completed through
September 30, 2020*

December 1, 2020
**Project completion/all funds
spent**

December 31, 2020
Final invoice, report
documentation and products
submitted by 4:00PM EST.

Grant Agreement; and

- Be enabled to begin the consultant procurement process.
- Note: It is recommended that you move forward with the development and deployment of your project RFP during this timeframe. Consult with the BC Program Managers for RFP development and prior to issuing the RFP.

Grant Start-Up

1. Please inform your Municipal Clerk/Treasurer of the grant award and:
 - Provide the Clerk a copy of the invoice template;
 - Explain that the final 10% payment is a local cash match and the Town will need to document all project payments;
 - Recommend that the Town dedicate an accounting number for the grant and determine the best way to document grant income and expenses.
2. Set up a summary ledger (or similar tracking method) to keep track of grant expenditures. Grant administrators must maintain financial records throughout the progress of the grant project.
3. A [sample press release](#) is available. Note that all press releases, public communications or products related to your grant project must reference funding support from a Better Connections Grant awarded by the Vermont Agency of Transportation and the Vermont Department of Housing & Community Development. (This helps promote the program and ensure funding is available in the future.)
4. See the Sample Request for Proposal (RFP) Guidance available as well as instructions on where to advertise on the [Program website](#).

Roles & Responsibilities

Programmatic expectations of project roles and responsibilities are described below.

- **Program Managers Role in Local Projects-** VTrans and ACCD program managers will assist the municipality throughout the planning process, assisting in the consultant procurement process, including, but not limited to: serving on the municipal project selection committee; cooperatively developing the final scope of work, schedule, budget, and contract for each individual project along with the municipal project manager, local representative, and where appropriate, RPC representative. In addition, the Program managers will actively work with the awarded communities during the life of the project, serving on the local steering committee, attending public outreach meeting, reviewing draft products, and providing targeting assistance and resources to support the development and implementation of the local planning effort. Program managers also provide post-plan technical assistance and connect the municipality to funding resources and partners to support plan implementation.

- **Local Project Management (LPM)**- Local commitment and engaged project management are critical to the success of the project. As a condition of the award, grantees will be asked to provide a written commitment that they will meet all grantee obligations in a timely manner. Grantees must designate a local program manager (LPM) who will:
 - Serve as principal contact person for the project;
 - Develop the RFP (review the RFP Guidance Document and RFP template online) and advertise (review the RFP Advertisement Guidance document [online](#));
 - Manage and coordinate work, including consultant work products;
 - Inform local decision makers and elected officials about the process in a timely manner;
 - Provide logistical arrangements for stakeholder meetings, public meetings and other engagements as necessary;
 - Provide public notification for all local meetings and public events;
 - Work with the state Program grant managers and consultant to ensure the completion of all work is on time and within budget;
 - Work and coordinate with state Program managers on arranging a state agency review of the draft (50-75%) plan in progress;
 - Review consultant work produces and payment requests, and;
 - Prepare progress reports, match reports, close-out reports, and reimbursement requests.

- **Regional Planning Commissions**- The grantee is strongly encouraged to work with their Regional Planning Commission (RPC) and must provide a letter of support and a municipal planning process confirmation letter from the RPC. The grantee must employ third party contractors in order to complete the work associated with a project. The grantee shall have the demonstrated ability to manage federal funds or provide a letter from their RPC confirming their grant technical assistance. The grantee or their RPC shall be the local project manager. RPC technical assistance of projects funded through the Program will be reimbursed directly through the Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI) program funds. The Program does not fund RPC or municipal staff time.

GRANT ADMINISTRATION ROLES

Grant Administrators- May perform all the functions described in this document, EXCEPT signing the Grant Agreement and Resolution

Local Project Managers (LPMs)- Only this role can sign and accept the Grant Agreement. LPMs may also perform all other grant administration functions.

Grant Administration

Grantees are required to submit project invoices and progress reports on a quarterly basis, beginning upon execution of the grant agreement. The reimbursement is made when the project and its deliverables, as detailed in the Grant Agreement, are complete, the expenditures are

properly budgeted and documented (copies of invoices and canceled checks or a detailed transaction report) showing that the funds were spent for the purposes specified in the grant agreement. Invoices must show that grantees have spent or obligated all grant funds and match funds, if applicable, no later than December 1, 2020. Funds that are unused as of December 1, 2020, as well as expenditures that are ineligible or have not been documented, must be returned to VTrans.

While grant activities must be completed by December 1, 2020, grantees have until the end of the month to assemble the final report. The final close-out report and the project reports/files must be submitted electronically via email no later than December 31, 2020.

Minor alterations to the work plan or the approved budget may be allowed but only upon request and approval from VTrans. Substantial alterations are not allowed and the final product must remain the same. Projects that cannot be completed within the grant period under the terms of the grant agreement are closed out. The grant will cover eligible work completed and documented costs, however, ineligible or undocumented costs will not be funded and associated funds must be returned.

Invoicing and Progress Reports

- Invoicing and Progress Reports shall occur quarterly and can be submitted as one document.
- Invoices and Progress Reports shall at least
- differentiate the time period billed for, the grant agreement number, and the amount of grant funds requested- noting local match funds utilized for that billing cycle.
- Progress Reports shall be broken up by tasks and based on the final work plan.
- An Invoice Template, inclusive of the Progress Report can be found on the [Program website](#).

AMENDMENTS

Changes to Work Plan and Budget? Please contact us.

VTrans approval is required to change a task or sub-product in your Work Plan and Budget. To request Agency approval, contact the BC program manager with a proposed amended work plan and budget. BC program managers will review the revised work plan and budget and will either: approved your amendment; deny your amendment or require modifications to your amendment. Major changes to the final product or grant due date extensions are not allowed.

Closeout Documentation

1. Make certain all outstanding grant expenses have been incurred by December 1, 2020. Provide a copy of all studies or other products developed with grant funds making sure that all of the Grant Agreement requirements have been met.
2. Compile and submit the following financial documentation:
 - Summary Ledger or similar document: Grant Administrators must maintain financial records throughout the progress of the grant project providing an overview of all your grant- related financial transactions.
 - All receipts and invoices for grant expenditures showing grant work was completed within the

grant period, including any work covered by match funds;

- Copies of cancelled checks OR a detailed transactions report, certified by the Treasurer, including date/recipient/check # and amount showing that payments were made for all project expenses (including evidence of match payments, if applicable).

Detailed instructions for submitting the final closeout documentation and requisition can be found on the [Program website](#).

Grant Timeline

Better Connections Program projects must be completed within 21 months from the award date. No time extensions are granted.

- Award Decisions: March 15, 2019
- Project Started: June 3, 2019
- Project Completed: December 1, 2020
- Final Report Due: December 31, 2020

Final reports must be submitted electronically and in hard copy no later than 4:00PM EST December 31, 2020 to VTrans Better Connections program manager – [Jackie Cassino](#).

Program Manager Contacts

For questions regarding the Program, contact the Program Managers:

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