

VISION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM GRANT MANUAL

1.0 Program Overview

The Vision Partnership Program is a planning grant available to local municipalities and multi-municipal regions seeking to improve their planning programs and achieve consistency with the goals, objectives, and policies of *Landscapes2*. The Chester County Board of Commissioners first established the Vision Partnership Program in 1996 to promote cooperation between local governments and the County to implement *Landscapes*, the County's Comprehensive Policy Plan. The Vision Partnership Program was revised and re-established in 2010 to reflect the County's updated Policy Plan, *Landscapes2*.

This manual provides the guidelines and procedures for successfully applying for, obtaining, and completing a Vision Partnership Program (VPP) planning grant. The manual also establishes the municipal and consultant responsibilities that arise under the provisions of the grant program.

Appendix C of the Grant Manual provides an overview of the grant application steps and procedures.

2.0 Program Purpose

The County Board of Commissioners, recognizing the benefits to the County of allocating grant awards to municipal planning projects that most effectively implement *Landscapes2*, established the VPP grant program to achieve the following purposes:

- 2.1 Encourage revisions to municipal plans, ordinances, and planning studies to achieve consistency with the principles of *Landscapes2* and the County's Strategic Plan;
- 2.2 Encourage innovation in municipal planning to effectively manage growth in a manner consistent with *Landscapes2*;
- 2.3 Foster multi-municipal planning efforts to effectively address planning issues facing Chester County municipalities;
- 2.4 Promote the use of professional planning expertise to address growth management and other planning issues at the municipal and multi-municipal level; and
- 2.5 Provide funding to municipalities to supplement the Chester County Planning Commission staff's ability to directly assist municipalities in the implementation of *Landscapes2*.

3.0 Eligible Applicants

The VPP grant is open to all Chester County municipalities. Eligible applicants include a single municipality, a group of two (2) or more contiguous municipalities, or a group of two (2) or more municipalities when located in the same school district. The application shall be submitted by a municipality or a designated lead municipality in the case of a multi-municipal application.

4.0 Consultant Selection and Qualifications

4.1 Consultant Selection

- A. The Chester County Planning Commission (for in-kind grants) or a qualified professional planning consulting firm (for cash grants) shall be retained to complete the projects eligible under the grant program. When seeking a planning consultant, municipalities are encouraged to review the County's publication Planning Bulletin #50 *Selecting and Working with Professional Consultants* (2002).
- B. The municipality shall select the planning consulting firm prior to the submission of a formal VPP grant application but shall not enter into a formal agreement with the consultant prior to a VPP grant award.
- C. A grant award shall be denied if the selected planning consulting firm(s) does not qualify to undertake the proposed project. **If there is any question as to whether the consultant and lead planner meet the qualifications outlined in Section 4.2, the VPP Grant Administrator¹ should be contacted for a determination prior to final consultant selection.**
- D. Municipalities may wish to obtain multiple proposals when seeking professional planning services under the VPP grant program. While not required under this program, the request for proposal process (RFP) provides the municipality an opportunity to select the best consultant, scope, and cost for a given project.

4.2 Consultant Qualifications

- A. Consultant qualification requirements are intended to ensure that the final product will be comprehensive; accurate; consistent with the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), where applicable; consistent with the goals, objectives, and policies of *Landscapes*²; and tailored to the municipality's needs and character. County planning staff designated to work on in-kind grant projects shall also possess planning experience necessary for the type of project assigned.
- B. The consulting firm and its lead planner preliminarily selected by a municipality shall comply with the conditions stated and minimum requirements outlined below to demonstrate that they possess the necessary experience to undertake the anticipated project and the scope of work.
- C. The prospective firm and lead planner shall submit their qualifications to both the municipality and the County as part of the VPP grant application (see Section 4.2.F). Submission of consultant qualifications is recommended in association with the pre-application grant meeting with the County (see Section 6.1.E). The municipality and County will review qualifications to mutually determine if the consultant(s) is suited for the proposed project. In all cases, the County will make the final determination of consulting firm and lead planner eligibility (see 4.2.G).
- D. Planning consultants shall qualify on a project-by-project basis. The qualification of a planning consultant on a given project does not guarantee qualification for future planning

¹ The **Grant Administrator** is the CCPC staff person responsible for the administration of the VPP grant program, generally the Planning Services Director. The **Grant Monitor** is the CCPC staff planner assigned to monitor a specific municipal grant after it has been awarded.

projects. Given that a variety of innovative projects are eligible for funding under this program, the County reserves the right to impose additional requirements where appropriate.

- E. The County has the right to reject a consulting firm and/or lead planner that is unqualified for the specific project or unqualified in a specific planning area. A consulting firm may subcontract with another consultant provided the subcontracting firm possesses expertise in the planning area(s) in which the primary consultant is deficient. The County will not fund a project if a municipality proceeds with an unqualified consultant. (See Section 4.1.C regarding assistance with the determination of qualification.)
- F. Planning consulting firms shall include the following information in writing as part of the VPP application:
 - 1. A summary of the consulting firm’s experience on projects of similar scope and size and with municipalities of similar character, size and structure. The consulting firm may also submit a summary of projects not directly related to the proposed project, but which demonstrate successful project management including product delivery and municipal client satisfaction. A minimum of two (2) references and contact numbers shall be included; and
 - 2. A description of staff resources, including brief resumes and an identification of the lead planner (see 4.2.G) and primary team members to be assigned to the proposed project.
- G. Lead Planner Qualifications

The planning consulting firm or team shall designate a “lead planner” to lead the work program. The lead planner shall be responsible for the overall execution of the work program; act as the principal contact with the various stakeholders; and attend all work sessions, public meetings, and public hearings as outlined in the scope of work. The planning consulting firm shall provide verification that the lead planner meets the following minimum requirements:

- 1. Bachelor’s or Master’s Degree in Planning, Landscape Architecture, or related field, from an accredited college or university;
- 2. A minimum of five (5) years of professional planning work experience, at least two (2) of which have been in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and proficiency in the specific work program area. This experience shall include primary responsibility for major planning projects as well as experience in municipalities of similar size and character;
- 3. Proven experience in:
 - a. Project management.
 - b. Working with municipal officials to establish public policies and programs.
 - c. Analyzing the consequences of recommended actions.
 - d. Applying elements of the planning process, including problem identification, goal setting, identifying alternatives, implementation, and evaluation.

4. Membership in the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) is preferred, but not required.

5.0 Eligible Projects

5.1 General Project Eligibility Requirements

The following requirements shall be met for a project to be considered eligible for funding under the VPP grant program:²

- A. The project shall implement one or more of the policies of *Landscapes2* at the municipal or multi-municipal level. (See Section 6.3 for a full description of required grant application contents.)
- B. Projects enabled by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), Act 247, as amended shall demonstrate compliance with the requirements of the MPC.
- C. The municipal comprehensive plan should be less than ten (10) years old prior to pursuing a VPP grant for projects other than a full comprehensive plan update or amendment. A municipality may request a waiver of this requirement if they have followed the procedure described in Section 301(c) of the MPC concerning the review of municipal and multi-municipal plans at ten-year intervals. Documentation of this procedure and a discussion indicating why the older plan is still relevant, and why the proposed project is more urgent, shall be included with the VPP application.

5.2 Eligible Projects

- A. The following projects are eligible for funding under the Vision Partnership Program. Projects to be adopted under the provisions of the MPC shall demonstrate compliance with the minimum requirements of the MPC. Projects not adopted under the provisions of the MPC are defined as “Planning Studies” for the purposes of the grant manual.

**Table 5-1
VPP Eligible Projects**

<i>Landscapes2</i> Elements	Eligible Projects
	(Other projects not listed will be considered for funding on the basis of their consistency with and implementation of <i>Landscapes2</i>)
1.0 Land Use	
1.1 Countywide Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive Plans • Zoning Ordinances • Subdivision and Land Development Ordinances • Official Maps and Ordinances • Community Design Guides (including Streetscape Improvement Plans)
1.2 Urban Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban Center Revitalization Plans³

² See Sections 8.2 and 8.3 for a listing of eligible and ineligible costs associated with approved projects.

³ See Appendix D for minimum requirements for Urban Center Revitalization plans. Revitalization plans shall be adopted as a comprehensive plan component to be eligible for VPP funding.

Landscapes2 Elements	Eligible Projects
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional Neighborhood Development and Transit Oriented Development Plans and Ordinances • Central Business District Plans • Form Based Codes • Streetscape Improvement Plans • Brownfield Site Redevelopment Plans or Studies
1.3 Rural/Agricultural Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village Plans, Studies, and Ordinances <p>*See also 4.0 Agriculture</p>
1.4 Suburban Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suburban Center Plans • Traditional Neighborhood Development, Transit Oriented Development, and Mixed Use Development Plans and Ordinances • Brownfield Site Redevelopment Plans or Studies
1.5 Natural Landscape	*See 2.0 Natural Resources below
2.0 Natural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural Resources Protection Plans and Ordinances • Stormwater Management Ordinances (in SLDO or as stand-alone ordinance)
3.0 Open Space and Greenways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Space, Parks, and Recreation Planning • Trail Plans/Non-Motorized Circulation Plans or Studies • Greenway Corridor Plans
4.0 Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural Planning and Preservation Activities including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Effective Agricultural Zoning ○ Cluster Design Options ○ Transfer of Development Rights
5.0 Historic Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historic Resource Surveys (in accordance with PHMC standards) • Historic Resource Plans or Studies (in accordance with the planning standards of “<i>Preserving Our Places</i>” (CCPC, 1998)) • Historic Resource Ordinances <p>(See Section 5.2.B of the grant manual regarding historic resource plans and surveys)</p>
6.0 Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation Improvement, Access Management or Corridor Plans/Feasibility Studies • Parking Management Plans or Studies • Capital Improvement Plans (including Transportation Capital Improvement Plans in Article V-A of the MPC) and Traffic Impact Fee Ordinances. • Bicycle-Pedestrian-Transit Related Plans and Ordinances • Airport Planning and Zoning
7.0 Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Plans or Studies

Landscapes2 Elements	Eligible Projects
8.0 Utilities And Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital Improvement Plans (See also 6.0 for CIPs related to Transportation).
9.0 Community Services	Issues relating to community services can be addressed under 1.1 Comprehensive Plans and 1.2 Urban Center Revitalization Plans.
10.0 Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Development and Central Business District Plans and Studies
11.0 Energy Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy Conservation and Sustainability Plans and Studies • Traditional Neighborhood Development, Transit Oriented Development, and Mixed Use Development Plans or Ordinances <p>*See also 1.2 Urban Landscape.</p>

- B. Historic Resource Surveys and Plans - Historic resource surveys shall only be funded as a “planning study” (see Section 8.1) and only when in compliance with PHMC (Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission) standards. Updates to historic resource elements of comprehensive plans shall comply with the historic preservation plan standards of *Preserving Our Places* (CCPC, 1998). Projects that fail to meet these standards risk the loss of grant reimbursement.

5.3 Ineligible Projects

Funding under the VPP grant program is established to support the implementation of *Landscapes2* at the municipal or multi-municipal level. The funds are for planning and related activities and are not intended for land acquisition, equipment or other capital expenses. In addition, projects undertaken by municipal staff shall not be eligible for funding. The following list provides examples of projects that are *not* eligible under this program:

- A. Plans, ordinances and studies which are inconsistent with the goals, objectives and policies of *Landscapes2*;
- B. Act 537 plans and updates (state funding is available from the Department of Environmental Protection);
- C. Park master plans (state funding is available from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources);
- D. Building codes and similar products;
- E. Geographic Information System hardware or software;
- F. Road maintenance plans;
- G. Those portions of otherwise eligible projects that have commenced prior to the awarding of a VPP grant award; and
- H. Projects that have received funding under another Chester County grant program (projects that are eligible for more than one County grant program will be directed to the most appropriate program).

6.0 Grant Application Requirements

6.1 Requirements for All Applications

Municipalities shall comply with the following requirements when preparing a VPP grant application:

- A. The municipality shall **not** enter into a formal agreement for planning services with a planning consulting firm prior to the approval of the consultant selection and the awarding of the grant by the County, as conditions of the grant may have a direct impact on the work program. Such conditions shall be incorporated into the contract between the planning consultant, the municipality, and the county to be signed by all parties after the VPP grant is awarded.
- B. The municipality shall submit a completed original VPP grant application to the County Planning Commission. Applications may be obtained through the Planning Commission office or website (www.chesco.org/planning.)
- C. Only one (1) project may be submitted per application.
- D. Unless approved in advance by the County, only one (1) VPP grant shall be awarded to a municipality at a time in order to ensure proper administration of the grant and promote successful completion of the project. If approved by the County, a municipality may be permitted to submit an application for an individual project while participating in a multi-municipal project. (See also Section 6.2.D.)
- E. **Pre-Application Meeting** - Applicants are strongly urged to schedule a pre-application meeting with the Grant Administrator (Planning Services Director) to discuss their project prior to submitting a formal grant application. At this meeting, the Grant Administrator can determine if the proposed project is eligible for grant funding and review the grant application and program requirements with the applicant.

6.2 Requirements for Multi-Municipal Applications

In addition to the requirements of subsection 6.1 above, a multi-municipal planning group shall comply with the following requirements when preparing a VPP grant application:

- A. Each multi-municipal project shall be clearly defined in terms of scope, funding, and municipal participation. Participating municipalities shall agree to the proposed work program and provide individual letters of support for the project. The municipal endorsement letters shall be attached to the grant application.
- B. A single application shall be filed and a single municipality shall be designated as the lead municipality responsible for administration of the contract. All communications and transactions shall be directed through the lead municipality. (Note that the County will be responsible for invoice reimbursement in the case of multi-municipal projects. See Section 8.1.E.1 for details.)
- C. Each member municipality shall agree to actively participate in the work program by designating a representative from both the governing body and the planning commission to participate on the Task Force.
- D. Municipalities involved in a multi-municipal comprehensive plan shall not be eligible for VPP funding to undertake a full comprehensive plan update at the same time as the term of

the multi-municipal plan. Partial updates to a specific comprehensive plan section, such as the historic resources plan, may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

6.3 Application Contents

Municipalities shall be responsible for packaging and submitting all application materials, including material that the consultant produced (e.g. scope of work). The grant application shall include the following information and shall be deemed incomplete without all documentation:

- A. **Grant Application Form.** A completed grant application form (see Appendix A) signed by the appropriate member of the governing body (also available as a fillable PDF at www.chesco.org/planning).
- B. **Project Description.**
 1. A summary of the overall goal and nature of the project.
 2. A narrative that describes how the proposed planning project is consistent with and will further the implementation of the goals, objectives, and policies of *Landscapes2* and the County Strategic Plan goals (see Table 6-1 for website links). The narrative shall include specific citations of goals, objectives, and policies within *Landscapes2*, *Watersheds* and *Linking Landscapes* that are applicable to the project.
 3. For projects adopted under the provisions of the Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), a narrative describing how the project will comply with the requirements of the MPC, including applicable MPC section references.
 4. A detailed scope of work, including, but not limited to:
 - a. A detailed description of the proposed work program that outlines specific actions to occur, and the various sections, articles, or chapters of the document under study. All proposed work shall consist of clearly defined, measurable actions with definitive interim and final deliverables.
 - b. A project schedule or timeline indicating when major steps of the project will be completed. (See Section 6.6 for project timeframes.)
 - c. A description of the public participation process.
 - d. A description of how and when elected officials will be kept informed of the status and recommendations of the project throughout the process, including specific benchmarks during the work program for presentations and updates to elected officials.⁴
 - e. An itemized budget, including the fee for each major task by section, article, or chapter, including work products and all deliverables.

⁴ Involvement of elected officials is an important component of VPP funding projects and may be accomplished in several ways including a combination of the following: participation on the task force (recommended for all projects and required for multi-municipal projects), appointing a liaison between elected officials and the task force, presentations to elected officials at designated benchmarks, provision of task force minutes to elected officials, briefings of newly elected officials, and attendance of elected officials at public meetings.

- f. The distribution of time per team member and timing of invoice submittal (monthly, quarterly, etc.).
5. The narrative and scope of work should indicate how the project addresses the “Policy Implementation” portion of the evaluation criteria shown in Table 6-1, below.

C. Letter of Commitment

For all projects, a letter of commitment that addresses the following two items shall be required as part of the application package. The letter shall be signed by the governing body.

1. Forming a task force. The letter shall include the municipality’s commitment to form a task force and a listing of the groups that will be represented on the task force (i.e., planning commission, governing body, municipal staff, and other municipal groups if applicable). The awarding of a grant shall require a chairperson to be elected to guide the task force through the process.
2. Financing the project. The letter shall also state that the municipality has committed the necessary funds to finance the proposed work program with the understanding that, for single municipal projects, grant reimbursement does not occur until after the project is adopted or accepted.⁵ When additional, non-municipal funds (such as federal, state, or private funds) are being used to help finance the project, a copy of that agency’s financial commitment letter shall be included as well.

D. Municipal Endorsement Letters for Multi-Municipal Projects

For multi-municipal projects, individual letters of support for the project from each participating municipality shall be included with the grant application. The letter of support should also indicate their proportional share of financial commitment for the project. For multi-municipal projects, each member municipality shall actively participate in the work program by designating a representative from both the governing body and the planning commission to serve on the task force and the individual letters of endorsement shall include each municipality’s willingness to comply with this grant provision.

E. Consultant Qualifications

The qualifications of the consulting firm and the lead planner, as outlined in Section 4.2.F of this Manual shall be included with the grant application.

6.4 Grant Application Review and Evaluation Criteria

- A. Evaluation Criteria - Project applications shall be reviewed and scored on the basis of the criteria in Table 6-1. The weight indicates the maximum number of points that can be awarded in each category.
- B. Grant applications shall be reviewed and scored by the Chester County Planning Commission (CCPC) staff. Funding recommendations shall be made by the Chester County Planning Commission and forwarded to the Board of County Commissioners for final approval. Recommendations shall be based on the following criteria:
 1. Extent to which the proposed scope of work meets the criteria listed in Table 6-1. The grant application, accompanying narrative, and scope of work should demonstrate how the project addresses these criteria.

⁵ See Section 8.1.G for financing provisions applicable to multi-municipal projects.

2. Financial feasibility of the proposed project in terms of identifying and accurately estimating eligible project costs.
 3. Availability of the necessary matching funds, including the cash portion required to be provided by the municipality.
- C. The County reserves the right to offer a grant of a lesser amount than requested by the municipality for a specific project. If the municipality chooses not to accept the lesser grant amount, the next highest scoring project may be offered funding or the funding may be reserved for a future grant round.

Table 6-1

	Project Evaluation Criteria	Weight
	Policy Implementation	
1	Alignment with <i>Landscapes2</i> policies and actions and the County Strategic Plan goals - Clear demonstration of specific policies, actions, and goals supported appropriate to landscape. ⁶ Implementation of high priority actions.	20
2	Project implements specific recommendations of a prior VPP funded plan, including municipal implementation of regional goals.	10
3	Creativity and innovation; promotion of sustainability; transferability of products to other applications; ability to be implemented.	10
4	Multi-municipal vs. single municipality project	5
5	Age of current comprehensive plan or ordinance; urgency of project in achieving local planning goals.	5
6	Public participation process and plan for involvement of elected officials.	5
	Administrative Quality	
7	Completeness of application submission ⁷ ; thoroughness, detail, and quality of scope of work	20
8	Funding support and cost effectiveness of project - Higher matching funds provided by municipality; ability to leverage other grants; cost of project versus what it will achieve.	15
9	VPP grant administration and project management track record of the municipality	5
10	VPP grant administration and project management track record of the consultant	5
	Total	100

- D. Municipalities not receiving grant awards in a given round may contact the VPP Grant Administrator for feedback as to how their grant application was scored and how future applications could be improved.
- E. Grant applications not funded in one round can be resubmitted for consideration in the next grant round. Applications not funded in the subsequent round cannot be resubmitted for a third round without revision and update of the proposed project application.

⁶ *Landscapes2* is available at www.landscapes2.org. The county strategic plan goals are available at www.chesco.org - click on “Strategic Planning” icon.

⁷ As noted in Section 6.1.E, a pre-application meeting is recommended to ensure the grant application requirements are fully understood prior to formal submission of the application.

6.5 Timing of Grant Application Submittal

- A. **Grant Rounds.** There will be two Vision Partnership Grant application rounds per year, funding permitting. Rounds will be announced via the Chester County Planning Commission websites (www.chesco.org/planning and www.landscapes2.org). An email announcement will also be sent to all municipalities.

Round 1: First quarter of each year. Grant round will be announced approximately two months in advance of the application deadline.

Round 2: Third quarter of each year. Grant round will be announced approximately two months in advance of the application deadline.

- B. **Application Review and Scoring.** Grants received by the applicable deadline will be reviewed, scored, and recommendations made to the Chester County Planning Commission Board by the second CCPC meeting following the application deadline.
- C. **Grant Awards Notification.** Upon the recommendation of the CCPC Board, grant recipients will be notified and VPP contracts for the projects processed and forwarded to the grant recipients for signatures of the municipality and consultant. Once returned to CCPC, contracts will be placed on the next available Commissioners' agenda for final approval. The final decision of the grant award rests with the Board of County Commissioners.
- D. **Grant Award Timing.** Total timing for this process, from the time of the grant application submittal deadline to final approval by the Commissioners will be approximately three to four months, depending on when the signed contracts are returned to CCPC for processing and the dates of the Commissioners' meetings.

Note: See Section 7.0 and Appendix C for a full description of administrative and application procedures.

6.6 Project Timeframes

Project timeframes shall be specified in the grant contract and include completion of the work program and the adoption or acceptance process. Minimum contract timeframes shall be as follows:

Plans

- | | |
|--|-------------------------|
| 1. Municipal Comprehensive Plan Update | Twenty-four (24) months |
| 2. Multi-municipal Comprehensive Plan | Thirty-six (36) months |
| 3. Urban Center Revitalization Plan | Eighteen (18) months |
| 4. Community Center Development Plan | Eighteen (18) months |
| 5. Municipal Transportation Improvement Plan | Eighteen (18) months |

Ordinances

- | | |
|--|-------------------------|
| 6. Zoning Ordinance Update | Twenty-four (24) months |
| 7. Qualified Zoning Ordinance Amendment | Twelve (12) months |
| 8. Subdivision & Land Development Ordinance Update | Eighteen (18) months |
| 9. Qualified Subdivision Ordinance Amendment | Twelve (12) months |
| 10. Traditional Neighborhood Development | Twelve (12) months |

Other Projects

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 11. Special Project | Eighteen (18) months |
| 12. Official Map | Twelve (12) months |

7.0 Administrative Procedures

7.1 Contract Development and Project Management (cash grant awards)

- A. **Grant Award.** Following preliminary approval of the grant by the Chester County Planning Commission, the following steps shall take place:
1. The Grant Administrator⁸ shall notify the municipality of the preliminary grant award.
 2. The Grant Administrator shall prepare a contract with the agreed upon scope of work attached as an appendix. The County may specify conditions in the grant contract to ensure that the work program will support *Landscapes2* and meet the requirements of the Vision Partnership Program.
 3. Copies of the contract shall be forwarded by the Grant Administrator to the municipality for signature by the governing body and their consultant. Signed copies of the contract shall be returned to the Grant Administrator within forty-five (45) days of their receipt by the municipality. Additional time for municipal signatures may be granted for multi-municipal projects.
 4. The Grant Administrator shall place the contracts on the next available County Commissioners' meeting agenda for final approval and signature by the Commissioners. Note that grants do not have final approval until the contracts have been officially approved and signed by the County Commissioners. Any work commencing prior to official approval by the Commissioners or prior to the start date on the contract shall not be reimbursable under the VPP grant program.
 5. Upon receipt of the fully signed contracts, the Grant Administrator shall send an original signed contract to the municipality and to the Consultant.
 6. **Pre-Contract Discussion** - During this time period, the Grant Administrator shall review the contract contents in detail with municipal representatives and planning consultant to ensure that requirements of the contract are understood by all parties prior to signature, including requirements for invoice review and the ramifications of multiple extension requests.
- B. **County Monitoring.** The County Planning Commission shall assign a County Grant Monitor⁹ to facilitate the progress of the work.
1. The Grant Monitor shall be a non-voting task force member and shall be included on all mailings (hardcopy or electronic) provided to the municipal task force members by the municipality or Consultant.
 2. The Grant Monitor shall review and comment on all draft materials as necessary, and will attend select work sessions in which discussions will involve substantive material as it relates to *Landscapes2*.
 3. Grant Monitors are responsible for ensuring, throughout the project, compliance with the VPP contract, scope of work, and grant manual provisions and shall provide feedback to the municipality regarding any of these issues as they arise. The Grant Monitor shall be responsible for documenting failure to comply with specific grant requirements,

⁸ The **Grant Administrator** is the CCPC staff person responsible for the administration of the VPP grant program, generally the Planning Services Director.

⁹ The **Grant Monitor** is the CCPC staff planner assigned to monitor a specific municipal grant after it has been awarded.

particularly in those instances where grant reimbursement may be jeopardized for failure to comply with the grant requirements.

4. Draft materials and work session agendas shall be submitted to the Grant Monitor at the same time as the municipal task force, preferably no less than one (1) week prior to scheduled work sessions in order to provide adequate opportunity for review and comment. Draft materials, including maps, shall be dated.
- C. **Initial Briefing Meeting.** The purpose of the initial briefing meeting is to ensure that all parties, including the project task force, are fully aware of the project scope, administrative procedures as outlined in the contract, and project benchmarks. The initial briefing meeting will be held concurrent with the first task force meeting. The meeting participants shall include, but need not be limited to:
1. Municipal representatives, including the task force and task force chair, municipal administrative/financial officer, an elected official, manager or secretary;
 2. The lead planner from the planning consulting firm; and
 3. Representatives from the County Planning Commission staff, including the Grant Monitor.
- D. **Interim Briefing Meeting.** Representatives of the municipality, the lead planner, and County Planning Commission will meet as necessary to assess the progress of the work program, resolve any contract compliance issues, review the product-to-billing ratio, ensure consistency with *Landscapes2*, and determine any revisions to the scope of work or the project timeframe.
- E. **Email Updates.** Grant recipients and Consultants will be sent periodic updates and reminders during the course of the project concerning VPP procedures and requirements. The Grant Monitor and Grant Administrator are available throughout the process to answer questions regarding all aspects of grant program procedures.

7.2 Review of Consultant Invoices (cash grant awards)

- A. The consultant shall submit a copy of each invoice to the County Grant Administrator at the same time they are submitted to the municipality and *prior* to payout by the municipality. Invoices shall not be paid out until the County has approved the invoice for payment.
- B. To expedite the approval process, it is recommended that invoices be submitted simultaneously via email to the municipality and the Grant Monitor and Administrator for their review. If the County has not issued an approval for payment to the municipality within ten (10) days of electronic receipt, the municipality may proceed with payment. When invoices are submitted via United States Postal Service, the County shall have fifteen (15) days from the postmarked date to approve the invoice and notify the municipality of the approval for payment.
- C. For multi-municipal projects, invoices shall be submitted simultaneously to the County and the lead municipality and the County shall be responsible for payment of the invoice.
- D. Consultant invoices shall identify the specific work products completed during the billing cycle. The invoice shall include a listing of project work tasks to be completed, percentage of work completed on each task, fee per task to date, fee for that billing cycle, and outstanding fee per task.

- E. For cash grant awards, the municipality and the consultant shall agree to the retention of ten (10) percent of the total project fee until which time the final project, meeting the terms of the scope of work as determined through the final VPP Review, has been provided to the County and the Municipality.

7.3 Review of Completed Project (cash grant awards)

Upon completion of the project, but prior to adoption of the plan or ordinance or acceptance of a planning study, the municipality shall submit the complete product to the County Planning Commission for final VPP grant review according to the following procedures.

- A. **Projects Requiring Municipal Acceptance: Planning Studies.** For projects requiring acceptance by the municipality, the County Grant Monitor shall review the product for contract compliance, and implementation and consistency with *Landscapes2* within thirty (30) days of receipt, unless otherwise specified in the contract. The County Planning Commission shall forward a letter to the municipality stating its approval of the project, or listing necessary revisions to incorporate prior to acceptance by the municipality. Reimbursement shall not take place until identified required revisions are addressed. (See Section 7.3.C.)
- B. **Projects Requiring Municipal Adoption Under Act 247, the Municipalities Planning Code: Plans and Ordinances.** When the project requires an official County review under Act 247, this review shall be completed by the Grant Monitor simultaneously with the Final VPP Grant Review described in subsection A, above. In order to receive an official County review under the MPC, the project shall be submitted to the County Planning Commission, via the Grant Monitor, with an Act 247 referral form. The review timeframe for projects subject to Act 247 review shall be as required by the applicable section of the Municipalities Planning Code. If substantial revisions are required as a result of the Final VPP Grant Review, the project shall be required to undergo a second review prior to adoption under Act 247. Reimbursement cannot take place until identified required revisions are addressed. (See Section 7.3.C.)
- C. **Contents of Final VPP Review.** The final VPP review shall differentiate between comments that are required to be addressed to qualify for grant reimbursement and comments that are recommended to be addressed to improve the quality or usability of the product. The final VPP review shall consider three primary issues:
 1. Consistency with *Landscapes2*;
 2. Compliance with the VPP contract and scope of work; and
 3. Other planning issues, including MPC compliance in the case of plans or ordinances.

7.4 Project Adoption and Acceptance

- A. In the case of a plan or ordinance requiring adoption under the MPC, following the final VPP/Act 247 review, the municipality must adopt the final document to be eligible for reimbursement under this grant program. In the case of a multi-municipal project, each municipality shall adopt the final plan or ordinance and provide a copy of the resolution under which the plan or ordinance was adopted.
- B. In the case of a planning study that does not require adoption according to the MPC, the municipality shall formally accept the final document through a letter transmitted to the County. In the case of a multi-municipal or regional planning commission planning study, the

planning group shall accept the final document and provide letters of acceptance from each of the participating municipalities indicating their acceptance of the study.

- C. Upon adoption of a plan or ordinance, the County shall review the newly adopted municipal policies and determine whether the municipal action warrants a future amendment to the *Livable Landscapes* map.
- D. Following adoption or acceptance, the municipality may apply for reimbursement. See Section 9.0 for a full description of the grant reimbursement process.

7.5 Right to Use Product

The Chester County Planning Commission shall reserve the right to use and share the product(s) prepared under the VPP grant program with other Chester County departments, municipalities, and planning agencies.

7.6 Amendments to an Executed Grant Contract

- A. Amendments to executed grant contracts may be permitted to accommodate changes to the scope of work or time extensions:
 - 1. **Request for Revision to Scope of Work.** The municipality may request a revision to the scope of work using the following procedure.
 - a. The municipality shall submit a letter to the Grant Administrator requesting the contract revision and detailing the specific scope of work revisions requested. Requests shall be filed with the Planning Commission no less than sixty (60) days prior to the contract end date.
 - b. The Planning Commission shall review the request and forward the requested revision with their recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners for action if necessary. Revision shall only be considered when the municipality has demonstrated good faith in completing the approved scope of work and the work to date has demonstrated consistency with *Landscapes*².
 - 2. **Request for Time Extension.** The municipality may request an extension of time to the grant contract with no change to the scope of work using the following procedure.
 - a. The municipality shall submit a letter to the Grant Administrator requesting the contract extension and detailing the reasons why the contract extension is needed.
 - b. Requests for extensions shall be filed with the Planning Commission no less than sixty (60) days prior to the contract end date.
 - c. Each time extension shall not exceed six (6) months. Total contract extensions shall not exceed two (2) years beyond the end date of the original contract. Two (2) contract extensions may be processed internally through the Chester County Planning Commission. Any additional extensions require approval by the Chester County Board of Commissioners and will be placed on the Commissioners agenda by CCPC staff.
 - d. If the funded project cannot be completed and adopted or accepted within the time frame described in subsection c, the contract shall be terminated and the grant funds shall be forfeited.

- B. **Contents of Contract Amendment or Extension Requests.** The following items shall be included in the request for an amendment or extension to the grant contract:
1. A specific and detailed reason for the revision or delay to the contract;
 2. In the case of a revised work program, a specific and detailed scope of work and associated costs including an explanation of how it relates to *Landscapes2*; and
 3. Corrected project schedule showing when the remaining work elements will be completed.
- C. All parties shall sign the grant contract amendment.

7.7 Termination of Grant Contract

Upon written thirty (30) day notice, any party shall have the right to terminate the grant contract. The County shall not be responsible for any grant reimbursement in such an event. In the case of multi-municipal projects, the participating municipalities shall be responsible for reimbursing the County for invoice payments made by the County to the consultant. (See Section 9.3.D)

8.0 Project Funding

8.1 Funding Levels and Municipal Matching Requirements

- A. The Board of County Commissioners shall determine funding availability for each grant application round.
- B. Funding levels for eligible project and municipal matching requirements are shown in Table 8-1.

**Table 8-1
Funding Levels and Matching Requirements**

Type of Project	Adoption vs. Acceptance	Match County/Local	Level of Funding
Plans or Ordinances*	Adopt	75/25	\$50,000 plus \$10,000 for each additional municipality
Planning Studies**	Accept	75/25	\$30,000 plus \$5,000 for each additional municipality

*Includes comprehensive plans, revitalization plans, open space plans, and ordinances which are adopted under the provisions of the MPC.

**Eligible planning projects not adopted under the provisions of the MPC.

- C. The municipality or multi-municipal group may use one hundred (100) percent of the County grant as a match for any federal, state or private funds which may be available. Matching funds may not come from any other Chester County funded program.

- D. A minimum of ten (10) percent of the eligible project costs shall be provided directly by the municipality or multi-municipal group.
- E. The municipal matching requirement may not be met through in-kind municipal services.
- F. Financing Provisions Specific to Single Municipal Projects
 - 1. For cash grants awarded for single municipal projects, the municipality shall be responsible for payment of project invoices during the course of project development and completion.
 - 2. Reimbursement for the portion of the project funded by the grant does not occur until after the project has been adopted or accepted, as applicable, and a reimbursement application with required documentation has been submitted (See Section 9.0).
- G. Financing Provisions Specific to Multi-Municipal Projects
 - 1. Cash grants awarded for multi-municipal projects shall be administered directly by the Chester County Planning Commission, including payouts of invoices to the Consultant. The lead municipality shall be billed by the County for the twenty-five (25) percent portion of the multi-municipal matching grant when each Consultant invoice is paid. Consultant invoices shall not be paid more frequently than on a monthly basis.
 - 2. If a multi-municipal project is not adopted or accepted at the end of the contract term, the participating municipalities shall be required to reimburse the County for the grant money paid to the Consultant. This provision shall be included in the contract signed by the multi-municipal group.
 - 3. Multi-municipal contracts shall require the signature of the County, the Consultant, and the governing body chairman or president of each participating municipality. Time extensions to contracts may be signed by the governing body chairman or president of the lead municipality.

8.2 Eligible Costs

The following costs are considered eligible for reimbursement under the VPP grant program if they are included in the project scope of work and attached to the approved grant contract:

- A. Professional planning consultant fees directly relating to the approved scope of work.
- B. Data collection and analysis that leads to a planning recommendation.
- C. Mapping and graphics directly related to the approved project.
- D. Monthly duplicating costs associated with the project and deliverables.
- E. Review of draft materials by non-planning professionals, such as attorneys or engineers, provided such total review costs do not exceed ten (10) percent of the total eligible costs for the project (*applies to cash grants only*).
- F. Publication of the adopted document, up to thirty (30) copies (*applies to cash grants only*).

8.3 Ineligible Costs

The following costs shall not be eligible for reimbursement under this program:

- A. Costs associated with the preparation and submittal of the grant application.
- B. Administrative costs
- C. Rental of meeting facilities
- D. Advertising costs
- E. Land acquisition
- F. Food or refreshments
- G. Equipment and other capital costs
- H. Expenses incurred prior to the contract start date or after the end date of grant award.
- I. Other costs deemed ineligible by the County Planning Commission.

9.0 Grant Reimbursement Process

9.1 Timing of Reimbursement Requests

A municipality shall file for reimbursement within ninety (90) days of adoption or acceptance of the project.

9.2 Request for Reimbursement

The municipality shall provide the following information to the County Planning Commission prior to the reimbursement of funds under the VPP grant program: (See Section 9.3.D for provisions applying to multi-municipal projects.)

- A. **Completed Request for Reimbursement Form** (see Appendix B). Reimbursement forms may be obtained through the Planning Commission office or website at (www.chesco.org/planning).
- B. **Proof of Adoption or Acceptance**
 - 1. Single Municipal Project: A copy of the signed and certified municipal resolution adopting the project, or a letter transmitted to the County documenting the acceptance of the planning study by the governing body.
 - 2. Multi-municipal Project: A copy of the signed and certified resolution from each participating municipality adopting the project, or a letter from the governing body of each participating municipality documenting their acceptance of the planning study.
- C. **Completed Project.** Three (3) copies of the final adopted or accepted project, one (1) of which may be in digital format. Where GIS mapping has been created, one (1) copy of the digital GIS data used for the project shall be provided.
- D. **Consultant Invoicing.** A copy of all planning consultant invoices pertaining to the project. If the invoices contain items not related to the project, they shall not be reimbursed. In such cases, the project-related items eligible for reimbursement shall be specifically identified on the invoices.

- E. **Municipal Payment.** In the case of single municipal projects, a copy of all municipal canceled check(s) in payment of eligible project expenses shall be provided. (See Section 9.3.D for multi-municipal process.)
- F. **Additional Information.** The County reserves the right to request additional documentation prior to processing the municipal reimbursement request.

9.3 Grant Reimbursement

The following process shall govern the reimbursement of funds under the VPP grant program:

- A. The County shall review the final reimbursement request package, and upon verifying its completeness, send the qualifying funds by check to the municipality.
- B. Reimbursement shall be made only when the municipality formally adopts a plan or ordinance or accepts a planning study that promotes the policies of *Landscapes2*. In addition, the final project shall be consistent with the contract and attached scope of work and the requirements of the Vision Partnership Program as specified in the Grant Manual.
- C. Reimbursement shall only be made for eligible costs incurred within the contract term.
- D. **Multi-Municipal Reimbursement**
 - 1. In the case of multi-municipal projects, grant reimbursement has occurred through payments made by the County to the consultant during the course of the project. All applicable documentation required in Section 9.2 shall be provided.
 - 2. If the project is not adopted or accepted by the participating municipalities, the municipalities shall reimburse the County for the grant payments made to the consultant.
 - 3. In the event that one or more of the participating municipalities do not adopt or accept the project, the County shall be reimbursed for grant payments in proportion to the number of municipalities that did not adopt or accept the project.

9.4 Noncompliance

When a municipality has not complied with the terms of the VPP grant contract, scope of work, or the provisions of this manual, the County shall have the right to terminate the contract and deny grant reimbursement. Such determination shall be made in writing to the municipality.