

VISION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM PLANNING GRANT MANUAL

1.0 Program Overview and Eligibility Requirements

1.1 Background

The Chester County Board of Commissioners established the Vision Partnership Program to promote cooperation between local governments and the County to implement *Landscapes*, the County's Comprehensive Policy Plan. The Vision Partnership Program (referred to as VPP throughout this manual) is a planning grant program available to local municipalities who seek to improve their planning programs and achieve consistency with the goals of *Landscapes*.

Chester County recognizes that successful implementation of *Landscapes* can only be accomplished through the action of local governments. While the diversity of land patterns and local government policies is what makes the County unique from other counties in the Commonwealth, a common and coordinated strategy is needed to guide growth in the County during the 21st century.

This manual provides the guidelines and procedures for successfully applying for, obtaining and completing a VPP planning grant (whether the grant be a cash grant using a private consultant or an in-kind grant when using the County Planning Commission staff) and the municipal and consultant responsibilities that arise under the provisions of the grant program.

1.2 Program Eligibility

To become a member of and to be eligible for the VPP program, a municipality shall complete the following steps:

A. Memorandum of Understanding

The municipality must endorse *Landscapes* and agree to work with the County toward its implementation by signing a Memorandum of Understanding.

The Memorandum of Understanding serves several purposes. First, it demonstrates local government support for *Landscapes* and its goals, objectives, policies, and actions. Second, it acknowledges both local and County interest to work together on implementing *Landscapes*. Finally, it authorizes the County, through the County Planning Commission, to prepare a detailed review of municipal plans and ordinances to analytically determine consistency with *Landscapes*.

B. County Consistency Review Report

After receiving an endorsed Memorandum of Understanding from a municipality, the County Planning Commission completes a detailed review of municipal plans and ordinances to determine consistency with *Landscapes*. The municipality provides the County Planning Commission with a complete list of adopted municipal planning documents and ordinances to serve as a checklist and reference. The County Consistency Review Report analyzes the municipal comprehensive plan; open space, recreation, and environmental resources plan; zoning ordinance; subdivision and land development ordinance; Act 537 plan; and other

documents deemed appropriate. The County Consistency Review Report is provided at no cost to the municipality.

The County Consistency Review Report includes, where applicable, a recommendation on the use of growth areas in the municipality. The report also identifies items in the County's *Community Planning Handbook: A Toolbox for Managing Change* (1999) that may assist the municipality in addressing issues identified in the report.

2.0 Program Purpose

The County Board of Commissioners, recognizing the fiduciary responsibility of the County to allocate grant awards to planning projects that most effectively implement *Landscapes*, established the VPP grant program to achieve the following purposes:

- 2.1 Encourage revision to municipal plans and ordinances to achieve consistency with the principles of *Landscapes*;
- 2.2 Encourage innovation in municipal ordinances to effectively manage growth in a manner consistent with *Landscapes*;
- 2.3 Foster multi-municipal planning efforts to effectively address planning issues facing Chester County municipalities; and
- 2.4 Promote the use of professional planning expertise to address growth management and other planning issues at the municipal and multi-municipal level.

3.0 Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants include a single municipality, a group of two (2) or more contiguous municipalities, a group of two (2) or more municipalities when located in the same school district, and regional planning groups and commissions. In all cases, to be eligible for a planning grant, each participating municipality shall meet the following conditions:

- 3.1 The municipality(ies) shall be members of the VPP and have completed the eligibility requirements outlined in subsection 1.2 above.
- 3.2 The municipality(ies) shall have an adopted comprehensive plan that has either:
 - A. Received a "Consistent" or "Somewhat Consistent" rating with *Landscapes*, as determined by the County; or
 - B. Been brought into consistency with *Landscapes* where a plan initially received an "Inconsistent" rating by the County. This process of bringing an inconsistent comprehensive plan into consistency is fundable through the VPP, and it shall be done before the municipality(ies) files a VPP application for commencing any other planning project.
- 3.3 Once a municipal comprehensive plan achieves a "Consistent" or "Somewhat Consistent" determination with *Landscapes* for policy, the applicant may apply for any planning project deemed eligible under Section 5.0, herein.

4.0 Consultant Eligibility and Selection for VPP Cash Grants

4.1 Initial Consultant Eligibility

The County shall initially qualify all planning consulting firms (including firms that are partnering with or are subcontracted by a primary firm), to ensure that they are eligible for performing municipal planning work under the VPP grant program. This initial VPP eligibility allows consulting firms to demonstrate competency in a variety of planning areas, thus making them eligible to produce such products if selected by a municipality. In addition, once planning consulting firms demonstrate that they meet the minimum requirements listed below, they will be added to a list of eligible consultants that the County will provide to participating municipalities as a way to begin consultant selection. Municipalities shall be required to use only planning consultants that are qualified according to this section for VPP cash grant projects. This qualification process shall recognize that the firm has met minimum requirements but is not an endorsement of any consultant over another.

- A. To become qualified for VPP grant eligibility a planning consulting firm shall provide the following information:
1. Qualifications and experience in municipal planning within Pennsylvania in the following specific areas (a consultant need not qualify in all areas):
 - a. Municipal comprehensive planning;
 - b. Zoning ordinance preparation;
 - c. Subdivision and land development ordinance preparation;
 - d. Environmental and resource protection planning;
 - e. Open space planning;
 - f. Recreation planning;
 - g. Historic preservation planning;
 - h. Transportation planning;
 - i. Housing planning;
 - j. Community facilities and services planning;
 - k. Rural planning; and
 - l. Urban planning, including neo-traditional development and revitalization.
 2. A list of municipal references and contact information from a minimum of three (3) client municipalities within Pennsylvania;
 3. Authorization for the County to contact said references to complete a consultant satisfaction survey; and
 4. A description in writing demonstrating an understanding of both the principles of *Landscapes* and the administrative process of the VPP grant program.
- B. A planning consulting firm may apply for initial qualification at any time. However, planning consulting firms must confirm or update annually any additional experience and staff to maintain their eligibility. Updates must be submitted by January 31st of every calendar year.

4.2 Consultant Selection for Specific Projects

- A. A professional planning consulting firm, qualified through the process stated in subsection 4.1 above, or in the case of an in-kind grant the County Planning Commission, shall be retained to complete the projects eligible under the grant program, see Section 5.0 below. 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. Municipalities are encouraged to obtain multiple proposals when seeking professional planning services under the VPP grant program. This provides the municipality(ies) an opportunity to select the best consultant, scope and cost for a given project. A sample consultant evaluation matrix can be found in Appendix G.
- C. The municipality(ies) shall preliminarily select the planning consulting firm prior to the submission of a formal VPP grant application but shall not enter into a formal agreement prior to a VPP grant award. The grant award will be approved or denied, in part, depending on the qualification of the selected planning consulting firm(s).

4.3 Consultant Qualifications for Specific Projects

The consulting firm(s) and its lead planner preliminarily selected by a municipality to work on a project 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 submitted as part of their Request for Proposal (RFP).

The prospective firm(s) and lead planner shall submit their qualifications to both the municipality(ies) and the County for review *prior* to the municipality submitting a formal VPP grant application. Consultant qualifications shall be submitted in association with a pre-application meeting with the County. The municipality(ies) 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(s) and lead planner eligibility.

Planning consultants must qualify on a project-by-project basis. The qualification of a planning consultant on a given project does not guarantee qualification for future planning 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.

These requirements are intended to ensure that the final product will be comprehensive; accurate; consistent with the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), Act 247 as amended where applicable; consistent with the goals, objectives, and policies of *Landscapes*; and tailored to the municipality's(ies) 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.

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. To avoid such a decision by the County, 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(ies) proceeds with an unqualified consultant.

A. Planning consulting firms shall include the following information in writing:

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. References and contact numbers must be included;
2. A summary of projects where the consulting firm demonstrated successful management that can be applied to the proposed project, including product delivery, invoicing and municipal client satisfaction;
3. A description of staff resources, including brief resumes and an identification of the lead planner and all team members to be assigned to the proposed project; and
4. An understanding of the principles of *Landscapes* and how it is applicable to the project under consideration, and, where applicable, a demonstration of successful implementation of principles under previous VPP grant awards.

B. 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. Making recommendations to municipal officials regarding public policies and programs;
 - c. Analyzing the consequences of recommended actions; and
 - d. Applying elements of the planning process, including problem identification, goal setting, identifying alternatives, implementation, and evaluation; and
4. Membership in the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) is preferred.

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:

- A. The project shall implement one or more of the policies of *Landscapes* at the municipal level. Each grant application shall identify the specific policies, goals, and objectives of *Landscapes* that will be addressed by the project and how each will be achieved. A narrative with *Landscapes* citations which relate to the project shall be included in the application.
- B. Projects governed by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), Act 247, as amended shall involve a complete and comprehensive update to a plan or ordinance. An exception may be granted by the County under the following conditions:
 - 1. The project will focus on correcting the “inconsistent” aspects of the municipal plan or ordinances as outlined in the County’s *Consistency Review Report*;
 - 2. The project will implement specific recommendations of the municipal comprehensive plan; or
 - 3. The project will promote a specific principle of *Landscapes* (e.g. transferable development rights program, comprehensive resource protection package, village protection standards, etc.).
- C. The municipal comprehensive plan must:
 - 1. Satisfy subsection 5.1.B above;
 - 2. Be rated as “Consistent” or “Somewhat Consistent” by the County; and
 - 3. Be less than ten (10) years old in order for the municipality to pursue other planning grants for other documents.
- D. The proposed project scope promotes the land pattern appropriate for the applicable landscape as designated by the *Livable Landscapes* map (e.g. grid pattern in an Urban Landscape, effective agricultural zoning in a Rural Landscape, etc.).
- E. Eligible expenses as described in subsection 8.2 below.

5.2 Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), Act 247 Documents

Planning documents enabled under the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), Act 247, as amended, may be eligible for funding under this grant program.

A. Comprehensive Plan Updates

- 1. **Purpose.** Grants may be awarded for the purpose of updating municipal comprehensive plans to achieve greater consistency with *Landscapes*. The product must involve either a

complete review of the entire document or it must address an entire chapter that the County deems vital to the implementation of *Landscapes* as noted below.

2. **Content.** Comprehensive plan updates shall be in accordance with Appendix C and considered an eligible project provided such plans include or achieve the following:
 - a. **MPC Compliant.** The project must be compliant with the applicable required element(s) of a comprehensive plan as established under the MPC Article III, as amended.
 - b. **Consistency Achieved.** Specific implementation of *Landscapes* policies shall be identified. The proposed scope of work shall result in a plan that achieves consistency between the municipal land use plan map and the *Livable Landscapes* map (2004).
 - c. **Plan of Action.** An action plan that summarizes all recommendations, with a set of priorities, responsibilities, and references to the applicable plan chapter.
 - d. **Historic and Cultural Resource Protection.** A historic and cultural resource protection plan element that is consistent with the County's *Preserving Our Places* planning manual (1998).
 - e. **Natural Resource Protection.** A natural resource protection plan element that is consistent with the County's *Linking Landscapes* (2002) and *Watersheds* (2002) functional plan elements.
 - f. **Water Supply.** A water supply plan element that is consistent with the principles of the County's water plan *Watersheds* (2002).
 - g. **Open Space and Recreation Plan Element.** An open space and recreation plan element that is consistent with the principles of the County's open space plan, *Linking Landscapes* (2002). This element may serve as an update to existing municipal plan, provided that the end product is consistent with the principles of *Linking Landscapes* and is adopted as part of the municipal comprehensive plan. Said plan shall address applicable plan preparation guidelines in the County's *Open Space Planning – A Guide for Municipalities* (2005).
 - h. **Supplemental Elements.** The following additional elements may be included when made an integral part of the comprehensive plan update process and not a stand-alone planning activity. Supplemental elements shall not exceed ten (10) percent of the total project cost.
 - 1) **Municipal "Build-out" studies.** These studies are eligible for funding when performed in conjunction with a comprehensive plan update and provided the land use plan densities are applied to the land to demonstrate the potential development yield should all eligible parcels be developed.
 - 2) **Municipal design charettes.** Charettes are eligible for funding provided they occur early in the comprehensive plan update process and are designed for the purpose of defining community character and a prerequisite to updating plans and ordinances.

- 3) **Municipal opinion surveys.** Surveys are an eligible element when performed in conjunction with a comprehensive plan update and used to refine goals and objectives and plan recommendations. Surveys shall not be single topic in nature (except for historic resource surveys described below).
- 4) **Historic resource surveys.** Historic resource surveys are an eligible element when performed in conjunction with a comprehensive plan update including an historic preservation plan element. Said survey shall be prepared in accordance with the County’s planning manual *Preserving Our Places* (1998).

B. Zoning Ordinance Updates

1. **Purpose.** Grants may be awarded for the purpose of updating municipal zoning ordinances to achieve greater consistency with the municipal comprehensive plan and the policies of *Landscapes*, and the applicable recommendations of its functional elements *Linking Landscapes* (2002) and *Watersheds* (2002).
2. **Content.** Zoning updates shall involve a review of the entire ordinance unless one or more of the provisions of subsection 5.1.B above, can be met. To be eligible for funding, a zoning update shall establish growth management controls consistent with *Landscapes* that:
 - a. Establish or refine an effective way to concentrate development in appropriate places as designated by the municipal comprehensive plan and *Landscapes*;
 - b. Establish or refine alternatives to large lot sprawl-type development patterns; and
 - c. Establish a comprehensive set of resource protection standards. Revisions shall be in compliance with the applicable provisions of the MPC.

C. Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance Updates

1. **Purpose.** Grants may be awarded for the purpose of updating municipal subdivision and land development ordinances to achieve greater consistency with the municipal comprehensive plan and consistency with the municipal zoning ordinance where it can be demonstrated that such revision clearly implements the policies of *Landscapes* and the applicable recommendations of its functional elements including *Linking Landscapes* (2002) and *Watersheds* (2002).
2. **Content.** Subdivision and land development ordinance updates shall address the entire ordinance unless one or more of the provisions of subsection 5.1.B above, can be met. All revisions shall be in compliance with the applicable provisions of Article V of the MPC.

D. Official Map and Ordinance

1. **Purpose.** Grants may be awarded for the purpose of creating or updating a municipal official map and ordinance per Article IV of the MPC where it can be demonstrated that such map and ordinance are consistent with the policies of the municipal comprehensive plan and specific policies of *Landscapes*, and applicable recommendations of its functional elements including *Linking Landscapes* (2002) and *Watersheds* (2002).

2. **Content.** The map and ordinance shall be required to comply with the applicable provisions of Article IV of the MPC and be tailored to the specific needs of the municipality.

E. **Traditional Neighborhood Development.**

Grants may be awarded for the purpose of creating a traditional neighborhood development district, in accordance with Article VII-A of the MPC, when such ordinance shall implement policies of the municipal comprehensive plan and specific policies of *Landscapes*.

5.3 Urban Center Revitalization Plans

A. **Purpose.** The Urban Center Revitalization Plan (UCRP) assists urban municipalities with planning and prioritizing their revitalization efforts. The UCRP grant program is limited to the fifteen (15) boroughs and the City of Coatesville. The specific purposes of the UCRP are:

1. To implement the goals and vision statement of *Landscapes* by directing reinvestment to urban centers;
2. To enhance the quality of life within the city and boroughs of the County and to make them attractive for residential and commercial development;
3. To facilitate the master planning needed for successful implementation of revitalization programs;
4. To establish public policy devoted to revitalization efforts; and
5. To provide the basis for future revitalization grants associated with implementation of the plan.

B. **Content.** The UCRP shall include the elements listed in Appendix D.

5.4 Community Center Development Plans

A. **Purpose.** The Community Centers Development Plan (CCDP) assists municipalities that contain Suburban Centers, Rural Centers, or Urban Landscapes (other than the City or boroughs) as depicted on the *Livable Landscapes* map, with preparing plans that develop a clear and specific strategy for community revitalization and economic development. The specific purposes of the CCDP are:

1. To implement the goals and vision statement of *Landscapes* by directing growth to and promoting higher density development in suburban centers, rural centers, and other urban landscapes;
2. To ensure that the urban landscapes surrounding and adjoining the urban centers are fully integrated with those centers in both form and function;
3. To enhance the quality of life within suburban centers, rural centers, and other urban landscapes, and to make them attractive for residential and business development;

4. To establish public policy devoted to revitalization and economic development efforts; and
5. To provide the basis for future revitalization grants associated with implementation of the plan.

B. **Content.** The CCDP shall include the elements listed in Appendix E.

5.5 Municipal Transportation Improvement Plans

A. **Purpose.** The Municipal Transportation Improvement Plan (MTIP) assists municipalities with developing transportation plans and improvement programs based on a quantitative assessment of existing and future needs. The MTIP shall consider all relevant modes of travel and focus on a specific corridor, an area within a municipality, or a larger region.

1. The MTIP should enable the municipality to qualify for various state and federal capital funding programs. In addition, these plans and improvement programs can serve as an integral part of the transportation element of the municipal comprehensive plan and provide the foundation for the development of traffic impact fee ordinances.
2. The MTIP grant program is available to any municipality or group of contiguous municipalities, regardless of their *Livable Landscapes* map designation.

B. **Content.** The MTIP shall include the elements listed in Appendix F.

5.6 Special Projects

A. **Purpose.** The Special Projects program assists municipalities with developing innovative plans, studies, and improvement programs, including pre-engineering work that will lead to direct implementation of *Landscapes*. All projects must have an implementation component that includes specific actions the municipality will undertake. Depending on the level of detail involved, Special Projects may require the consultation of an engineer or landscape architect. Special Projects may be eligible when the municipality can successfully show that the project has a direct link towards implementing a specific item within *Landscapes*.

B. **Type of Projects.** Special projects include studies, plans and ordinances that are not specifically defined by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), Act 247, as amended.

The *Community Planning Handbook: A Toolbox for Managing Change*, prepared by the Chester County Planning Commission, summarizes a wide variety of planning tools that may be used. Planning expenses associated with preparing a qualifying Special Project are eligible, provided they achieve the goals of *Landscapes*, and the project does not qualify for funding under another aspect of the VPP or other Chester County grant programs.

Examples of potentially eligible special projects include:

1. Village plans and studies
2. Transportation or greenway corridor plans
3. Community design guides
4. Earth disturbance ordinances

5. Comprehensive historic resource survey and map in accordance with PHMC standards
6. Act 167 of 1961 historic district ordinances
7. Trail master plans
8. Streetscape master plans
9. Capital improvement plans
10. Parking management plans
11. Central business district plans

5.7 Ineligible Projects

Funding within the VPP grant program is established solely to support the implementation of *Landscapes* at the 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 to be performed 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 *Landscapes*;
- B. Act 537 plans and updates (state funding is available from the Department of Environmental Protection);
- C. Site-specific impact studies or master plans;
- D. Park master plans (state funding is available from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources);
- E. Inventories and surveys not part of an eligible plan or special project;
- F. Building codes and similar products;
- G. Geographic Information System development, including digitizing data;
- H. Road maintenance plans;
- I. Those portions of otherwise eligible projects that have commenced prior to the awarding of a VPP grant award; and
- J. 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 and Award Requirements

6.1 Requirements for All Applications

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

- A. The municipality shall be a member of the Vision Partnership Program (see subsection 1.2 above);
- B. 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 consultant's agreement. Such conditions shall be incorporated into the agreement between the planning consultant and the municipality before the VPP grant is awarded.

- C. 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.)
- D. Only one (1) project may be submitted per application.
- E. 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.

6.2 Requirements for Multi-Municipal/Regional Planning Commission Applications

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

- A. Each participating municipality shall be a member of the Vision Partnership Program (see subsection 1.2 above);
- B. 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;
- C. A single, unified application shall be filed and a single municipality shall be designated to administer the contract. All communications and transactions, as well as reimbursement, shall be directed through the lead municipality;
- D. Each member municipality shall agree to actively participate in the work program by designating representatives from the governing body and the planning commission; and
- E. Municipalities involved in a multi-municipal or regional comprehensive plan will not be eligible for VPP funding to undertake a municipal comprehensive plan update at the same time as the term of the multi-municipal plan.

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 governing body.
- B. **Project Description.**
 - 1. A general description including the overall goal sought, and nature of the project;
 - 2. A narrative that describes how the proposed planning project is consistent with the goals, objectives, and policies of *Landscapes*. The narrative will include specific citations of goals and policies within *Landscapes*, *Watersheds* and *Linking Landscapes* that are applicable to the project; and

3. 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. An itemized budget, including the fee for each major task by section, article, or chapter, including work products and all deliverables;
 - c. An invoice schedule; and
 - d. The distribution of time and products per team member.

C. Letters of Commitment

For all projects, two (2) letters of commitment shall be required as part of the application package. These letters shall commit the municipality(ies) to:

1. Forming a taskforce. The awarding of a grant shall require a chairperson to be elected to guide the task force through the process. For multi-municipal projects, each member municipality shall actively participate in the work program by designating representatives from the governing body and the planning commission to serve on the task force.
2. Financing the project. All applications shall include a letter signed by the governing body that states that the municipality has committed the necessary funds to finance the proposed work program. 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, individual letters of support for the project from each participating municipality shall be attached to the grant application.

6.4 Grant Application Review (cash grant applications)

- A. The County shall review the proposed scope of work for compliance with the requirements of the VPP grant program and forward any suggested or required revisions to the municipality. The County may request additional documentation from the municipality or an expanded scope prior to considering a grant award in order to better implement the principles of *Landscapes*.
- B. Funding recommendations will be made by the County Planning Commission and forwarded to the Board of County Commissioners for final approval. Recommendations will be based on the following criteria:
 1. Extent to which the proposed scope of work addresses specific goals, objectives and policies of *Landscapes*;
 2. Extent to which the proposed project will address a planning or regulatory need in the municipality;

3. Extent to which the proposed scope of work addresses the recommendations in the Consistency Review Report prepared by the County Planning Commission;
4. Financial feasibility of the proposed project in terms of identifying and accurately estimating eligible project costs;
5. Availability of the necessary matching funds, including the cash portion required of the municipality; and
6. Extent to which the proposed project can be implemented upon completion.

6.5 Grant Award and Agreement

- A. The final decision of the grant award rests with the Board of County Commissioners. If approved, the County will send an award announcement and a grant agreement (contract).
- B. The County may specify conditions in the grant agreement to ensure that the process and the final product will support *Landscapes* and that the work program will function in an efficient and productive manner. All parties must sign the grant agreement to confirm acceptance of the grant conditions.
- C. Once the municipality(ies) and planning consultant have signed the grant agreement, all copies shall be returned to the County Planning Commission for the Board of County Commissioners' signatures. An original copy of the fully executed grant agreement will be returned to the municipality(ies) and the planning consultant.
- D. Contract timeframes take into account work program, the adoption process and the reimbursement process. Minimum contract timeframes shall be as follows:

Plans

1. Municipal Comprehensive Plan Update	Twenty-four (24) months
2. Regional Comprehensive Plan	Thirty (30) 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

- E. Grant agreements shall not have an end-date in the last quarter of the calendar year so that the County and the municipality will not be encumbered with additional responsibilities during customary year-end financial obligations.

- F. The municipality and planning consultant shall agree to the retention of ten (10) percent of the total project fee until which time the municipality and the County receive the final, adopted or accepted deliverable.

6.6 Amendments to an Executed Grant Agreement

- A. Amendments to executed grant agreements may be permitted to accommodate changes to the scope of work or time extensions:
 - 1. **Request for Revision to Scope of Work.** The municipality(ies) shall submit a letter to the County Planning Commission requesting the revision. All requests shall be filed with the Planning Commission no less than sixty (60) days prior to the grant expiration date. The Planning Commission will review the request and forward 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 in the case of a cash grant, the County Project Monitor assigned to oversee the grant agreement has observed consistency with *Landscapes* (see subsection 7.1.D).
 - 2. **Request for Time Extension.** The municipality(ies) may request an extension of time to the grant agreement with no change to scope of work or fee. Such requests shall occur a minimum of three (3) months prior to the end of the contract term. The time extension shall not exceed six (6) months. Only one (1) time extension may be granted per grant agreement.
- B. **Contents of Amendment Requests.** The following items shall be included in the request for amendment to the grant agreement:
 - 1. A specific and detailed reason for the revision or delay to the agreement;
 - 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 *Landscapes*; and
 - 3. Corrected project schedule for the six (6) month extension showing when the remaining work elements will be completed.
- C. All parties must sign the amended grant agreement.

7.0 Administrative and Adoption/Acceptance Procedures

7.1 Project Management (cash grant awards)

The municipality and consultant shall adhere to the following process in order to qualify for grant reimbursement:

- A. **Documentation.** Within forty-five (45) days of the Board of County Commissioners' approval of the grant award announcement, the municipality shall submit the following documentation:
 - 1. All copies of the fully executed grant agreement;

2. A detailed project schedule showing dates on a month-by-month basis when project tasks are to be initiated, completed, and delivered;
 3. A list of work session meeting dates and topics to be discussed; and
 4. An itemized cost schedule for major tasks, work products, and deliverables on a month-by-month basis for the duration of the grant term.
- B. **Initial Briefing Meeting.** The initial briefing meeting shall ensure that all parties are fully aware of the project scope and administrative procedures. While the initial briefing meeting may be held concurrent with the first task force meeting, a separate meeting is encouraged. The project schedule, including product milestones, deliverables, and County review periods will be finalized at this meeting. The meeting participants shall include, but not be limited to:
1. Municipal representatives, including the taskforce and taskforce 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.
- C. **Interim Briefing Meeting.** Representatives of the municipality, the lead planner, and County Planning Commission may 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 *Landscapes*, and determine any revisions to the scope of work or the project timeframe.
- D. **County Monitoring.** The County Planning Commission shall assign a County Project Monitor to facilitate the progress of the work. The 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 *Landscapes*.
- E. **Draft products.** Draft materials and work session agendas shall be submitted to the County Project Monitor and Municipal Taskforce no less than one (1) week prior to scheduled work sessions in order to provide adequate opportunity for review and comment.

7.2 Review of Consultant Invoices (cash grant awards)

The consultant or municipality shall submit a copy of invoices to the County for review *prior* to payout by the municipality. Consultant invoices shall identify the specific work products completed during the billing cycle. This shall include a work history and percent completed on each task and fee per task. All subsequent invoices shall have the same degree of detail as the first invoice. At the request of any party, the County reserves the right to review subsequent consultant invoices prior to pay-out by the municipality in order to verify a direct link to completed work products.

7.3 Review of Completed Project (cash grant awards)

All projects completed under the VPP cash grant program are required to undergo the VPP grant review as a condition of the grant award. If the MPC also requires an official County Act 247 review of the project, the VPP grant review shall be completed prior and in addition to the Act 247 review. Failure to follow this procedure shall delay project review and jeopardize reimbursement.

- A. **Final VPP Grant Review.** Upon completion of the project, but prior to adoption of the plan or ordinance, or acceptance of a special project, the municipality shall submit the complete product to the County Planning Commission for final VPP grant review. The County Project Monitor shall review the product for contract compliance, and implementation and consistency with *Landscapes* within thirty (30) business 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 Act 247 Review and municipal adoption. The VPP grant review shall *not* satisfy the County review requirements of the MPC.
- B. **Act 247 Official Review.** When the MPC requires an official County review of the project, this review shall occur *after* the Final VPP Grant Review and the municipality has incorporated all applicable revisions. In order to receive an official County review under the MPC, the project shall be submitted to the County Planning Commission with an Act 247 referral form.

7.4 Project Adoption and Acceptance

- A. In the case of an MPC document, the municipality shall adopt the final document to be eligible for reimbursement under this grant program. In the case of a multi-municipal or regional planning commission project, each municipality shall adopt the final plan or ordinance. Full reimbursement shall not be made unless every municipality adopts the final product.
- B. In the case of a Special Project that does not require adoption according to the MPC, the municipality shall formally accept the recommendations contained in the final document through a letter transmitted to the County. In the case of a multi-municipal or regional planning commission Special Project, the planning group shall accept the recommendations and transmit this acceptance through a single letter to the County, indicating the voting results of the individual member municipalities. Full reimbursement shall not be made unless every municipality accepts the recommendations contained in the final document.
- C. Upon adoption of a plan or ordinance, the County shall re-evaluate the municipality(ies) in terms of consistency with *Landscapes*, and whether the municipal action warrants an amendment to the *Livable Landscapes* map.

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 Termination of Grant Agreement

Upon written thirty (30) day notice, any party shall have the right to terminate the grant agreement. The County shall not be responsible for any grant reimbursement in such events.

8.0 Project Finances

The Board of County Commissioners will determine funding availability.

8.1 Matching Requirements

A. Municipal Projects

1. The County may make grants of up to seventy-five (75) percent of the eligible project costs, not to exceed \$50,000 per application, for planning documents as described in subsections 5.2 through 5.5 above.
2. For all eligible Special Projects (subsection 5.6 above), the County may make grants up to fifty (50) percent of the eligible project costs, not to exceed \$20,000 per application.
3. The municipality 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.
4. A minimum of ten (10) percent of the eligible project costs shall be provided directly by the municipality.

B. Multi-Municipal or Regional Projects

1. The County may make grants of up to ninety (90) percent of the eligible project costs, not to exceed \$80,000 per application, for planning documents described in subsections 5.2 through 5.5 above. The maximum grant amount may be increased at the County's discretion for projects involving three (3) or more municipalities.
2. For all eligible Special Projects (subsection 5.6 above), the County may make grants up to seventy-five (75) percent of the eligible project costs, not to exceed \$30,000 per application. The maximum grant amount may be increased at the County's discretion for projects involving three (3) or more municipalities.
3. The municipalities 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.
4. The municipalities involved in multi-municipal or regional projects shall provide a total of ten (10) percent of the total project costs, not ten (10) percent per municipality.

8.2 Eligible Costs

The following costs incurred by a municipality that has been awarded a grant under the VPP grant program are considered eligible for reimbursement, however only if they are included in the approved project scope attached to the approved grant agreement:

- A. Professional planning consultant fees directly relating to the approved scope of work;
- B. Supplemental elements as part of a comprehensive plan (subsection 5.2 A. above) shall not exceed ten (10) percent of the total project cost;

- C. Data collection and analysis that leads to a planning recommendation;
- D. Mapping and graphics directly related to the approved project;
- E. Monthly duplicating costs associated with the project and deliverables;
- F. 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*); and
- G. 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. Administrative costs;
- B. Mailings and postage;
- C. Rental of meeting facilities;
- D. Advertising costs;
- E. Land acquisition;
- F. Food or refreshments;
- G. Equipment and other capital costs;
- H. Expenses incurred by the municipality prior to the start date or after the end date of grant award; or
- I. Other costs deemed ineligible by the County Planning Commission.

9.0 Grant Reimbursement Process

9.1 Timing of Reimbursement Requests

A municipality(ies) shall file for reimbursement within ninety (90) days of adoption or acceptance of the project, and no later than the last day of the calendar year. Encumbered funds shall not be carried into a subsequent County budget year without a grant agreement amendment approved and signed by all parties.

9.2 Request for Reimbursement

The municipality shall complete the following provisions prior to the reimbursement of funds under the VPP grant program:

- A. Municipalities shall submit the following documentation:
 - 1. **An original Request for Reimbursement Form** (see Appendix B). Reimbursement forms may be obtained through the Planning Commission office or website (www.chesco.org/planning);

2. **Single Municipality:** A copy of the signed and certified municipal resolution adopting the project in the case of an MPC project, or a letter transmitted to the County documenting formal acceptance of the recommendations contained in the Special Project;
 3. **Multi-municipal or Regional Planning Group:** A copy of the signed and certified resolution from each participating municipality adopting the project in the case of an MPC project, or a single letter accepting the recommendations contained in the Special Project, including the voting results of the individual member municipalities;
 4. **Project.** Three (3) copies of the final adopted or accepted project;
 5. **Consultant Invoicing.** A copy of all planning consultant invoices pertaining to the project. If the invoices contain items not related to the project, they will not be reimbursed. In such cases, the project-related items shall be specifically identified; and
 6. **Municipal Payment.** A copy of all municipal canceled check(s) in payment of eligible project expenses.
- B. 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, or designated municipality in the case of multi-municipal or regional planning group or commission projects.
- B. Reimbursement shall be made only when the municipality formally adopts an MPC document or accepts a Special Project that promotes the policies of *Landscapes*.
- C. In the case of multi-municipal or regional planning group or commission projects, reimbursement will also be based on adoption of an MPC document or acceptance of a Special Project that promotes the policies of *Landscapes*. In the event that fewer than the total number of municipalities adopt or accept the product, the County reimbursement shall be equal to the proportional share of all municipalities that adopt or accept the product.
- D. Reimbursement shall only be made for costs incurred within the contract term.

9.4 Noncompliance

When a municipality has not complied with the terms of the VPP grant agreement 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(ies).