

GRANT MANAGEMENT PROJECT EVALUATION

Included with Corporate Services Quarterly Report, April 2024

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INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

In 2023, the Corporate Services Team along with the Senior Management Team (SMT) undertook a project aimed at increasing grant funding available for use for Municipal projects. The project charter is attached. The deliverable was to create an efficient and transparent procedure and system to support grant applications, reporting, and tracking.

The system was intended to support the following functions:

- a. Identify funding needs that could be supported in whole or in part by grant funding
- b. Identify sources of available grant funding that could meet our needs
- c. Support the completion and submission of grant applications for identified projects
- d. Document management of forms and other related documents for grant applications
- e. Track whether grants are approved, the amount of funding, and receipt of funds
- f. Track reports due, send reminders and ensure they are completed and submitted on time

Follow an initial kick-off meeting with the Senior Management Team, a list of system requirements and success criteria was created and agreed upon. The success criteria were:

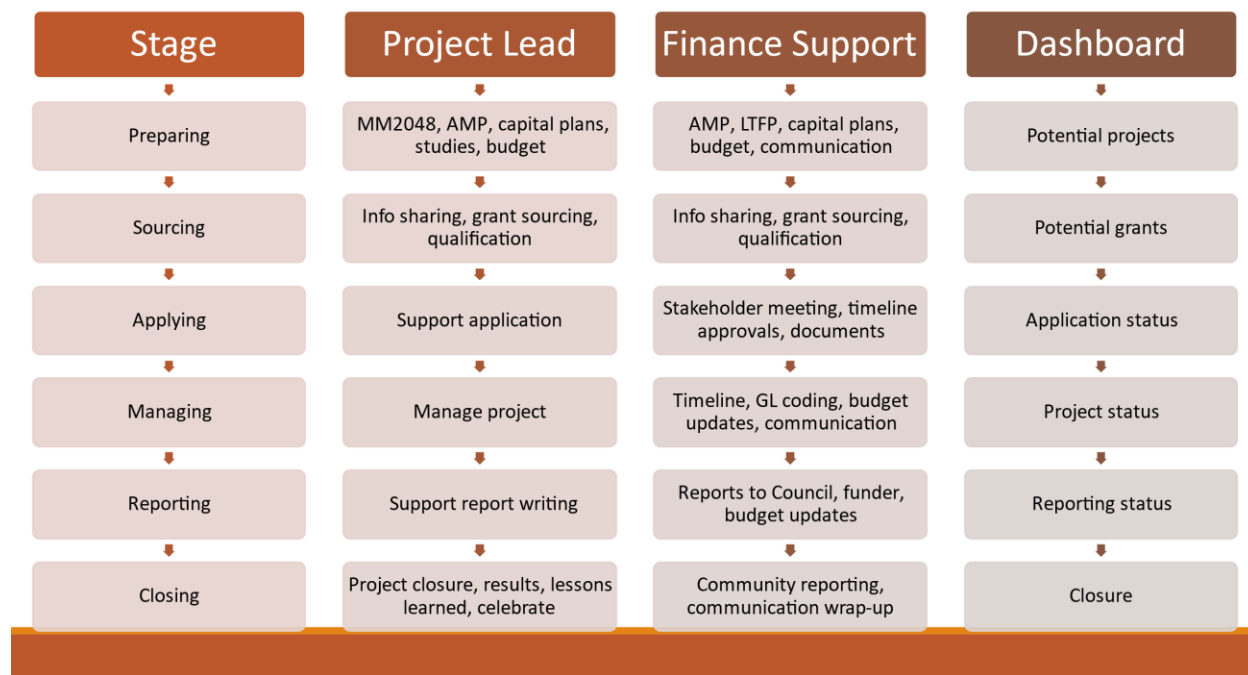
- Queue of shovel-ready / application-ready projects
- At-a-glance reporting / dashboard showing applications in progress, success rates, funding
- MM2048, asset management plan, long term financial plan are aligned and planned projects are noted and on the list for grant applications and we can report back against them
- Grant story doesn't have to be re-told - it's easily accessible
- Everyone who needs to know, knows
- Lessons learned documented and incorporated
- Annual increase in grant funding year over year
- We don't forego or miss grant opportunities that would be beneficial to the community
- All stakeholders involved in inaugural meeting where a realistic timeline and communication plan are clarified

- Central point of contact so everyone knows who to go to and responsibilities and deadlines are clear
- Funders recognized
- Council informed

A tracking mechanism was drafted and a procedure established to ensure that open communication related to projects, grant opportunities, application status, and reporting would be facilitated in an ongoing manner. Grants were made a standing agenda item at SMT meetings to ensure that the team is always aware of opportunities and can share information with the whole group.

PROCEDURE

Following the kick-off meeting and a subsequent presentation at SMT, a procedure was developed to support a work flow for all grants. For each grant opportunity, a project lead and finance support person are designated to ensure that the application and if approved, any subsequent reporting, are completed accurately and in a timely manner.



SOLUTION

Staff agreed that the new Sharepoint system would be the best place to house all documentation, and that the system did not need to be complicated but rather simple and accessible for everyone. While work was being done to convert all document storage to Sharepoint, the project was put on hold for a short time. When document conversion had been completed, the consultants built in two Grant related libraries that were meant to facilitate the process and deliverables.

One Library, called “Grants – Administration”, houses a grant continuity schedule (live, maintained as information is available) which details all funding received and/or expected through grant funders. The information includes the date of receipt, the project and grant to which the funds apply, the account number the deposit is coded to, and whether more funds are expected. This sheet can be used in the Municipality’s annual audit to provide detail related to all grant funding to the auditor. This library also contains all project documentation and procedural information for reference purposes.

The second library, called “Grants”, houses all documentation kept on file for each grant. It is sorted into categories such as Grant Opportunities, Applications in Progress, Approved and Current Grants, and Closed Grants. As a grant progresses through the different stages the file is moved to the appropriate category. This means that at any given point in time, a current record of all applications in progress and approved and current grants can be accessed.

The tracking mechanism that was developed is an Excel sheet with tabs for each stage of the grant process, including shovel-ready projects, grant opportunities, grant applications, approved grants, and closed grants. A dashboard on the first tab links to the information in the workbook, and provides at-a-glance updates (table below is from March 13, 2024):

A.	Application-Ready Projects	3
B.	Grant Opportunities	14
C.	Applications	7
C. 1	Value of Applications	\$ 10,365,636
D.	Approved Applications	5
D.1	Value of Approvals	\$ 1,932,488
E.	Reports Submitted	0
F.	Completed Projects	0
F. 1	Total Funding Received	0

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The project’s objective was to generate more funding to support projects that benefit the community and align with strategic directions. Over time, the data collected will help us see if there is an upward trend in approved applications and funding. At the time of the writing of this report, staff worked on applications for 50% of the grant opportunities that were presented. 71% of the applications were approved, but only 19% of the funding applied for was approved. This indicates that at the time of writing this evaluation, smaller dollar value applications are more likely to be approved. There is a very small time sample at the time of this report, and we expect the data will change over time.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Following the first months after implementation, a number of concerns were identified:

- Tracking the receipt of the grants and the coding/ recording of the funds in the General Ledger was not aligned with the process
- Staff who had received funding were having difficulty knowing where the funds were recorded or how the expenditures were tracked
- Some grants were being referred to by multiple names (funder / project / grant name, etc). which made communication challenging
- Not everyone was familiar with or using the tracking sheet or referring to the continuity schedule

Measures to ensure that information and communication was transparent and easily accessed to address these concerns include:

1. Every grant, upon approval, is entered into the Grant Tracker and the Grant Continuity Schedule, with all known and applicable data as well as the project lead (manager assigned to the grant).
2. Each grant is assigned a specific ID # at the time the application is approved. All staff should reference the ID number in correspondence to ensure that the correct funding is being tracked, reported, and applied to the applicable expenditures. The grant ID #s are recorded in the Grant Continuity Schedule AND in the Grant tracker. The Grant ID #s have also been added to the file name in Sharepoint.
3. Upon receipt of grant funding, the A/R clerk will check the Grant tracker to determine which account to deposit the funds to. The A/R clerk will also update the Grant Continuity schedule with the amount received and the applicable account number.
4. A refresher video was prepared showing staff where the information is stored, what is in each sheet, and how and when to update them.
5. The procedure document was updated to reflect these new steps.

After the grant management procedure has been in place for a year, it is recommended that it be re-evaluated to consider the following questions:

- Is the procedure working? What changes would make it more effective?
- Are the identified roles applicable and supportive of streamlining the grant administration process within the Municipality?
- Does the technological solution (excel spreadsheet) work for the data capture we would like to see?
- Does the data tell us anything to help with future grant applications or administration?
- Is the document storage mechanism accessible and easy to maintain?
- Have we been successful at obtaining more grant funding?
- Has the amount of staff time invested in grant applications and administration had a positive return on investment?

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

In an effort to increase the amount of grant funds available for use, staff have designed a procedure, document management process, and tracking mechanism for grants. The flow of information from

shovel-ready projects to grant opportunities to applications to approvals to reporting and closure are all considered in the procedure an accompanying tools. The procedure emphasizes the necessary collaboration and communication among staff to ensure that all grant opportunities are followed up.

The tracking mechanism facilitates consolidated data gathering for the Municipality, and the data can be prepared and reported to Council and management on a regular basis. It is suggested that this be presented quarterly for Council's information and review.

Because the life span of grants vary, opportunities are not always consistent, and approvals depend on many different factors, it is recommended that the procedure, document management, and tracking mechanism and reporting frequency be revisited in a year to evaluate and make changes and updates.

The objective of the project was to generate more funding to support projects that benefit the community and align with strategic directions. Over time, the procedure and tools put in place should help us evaluate and improve our approach and increase grant funding available.