

## **SHEPHERDSTOWN GRANT GUIDELINES**

### **OVERVIEW:**

Grant funds awarded to the Corporation of Shepherdstown support essential programs and services, allowing the Town to maintain existing services and fund new projects or purchase needed goods and services. Grant agreements are legal contracts. When a grant is awarded, the Town is obligated to carry out the activities associated with the funded project and to accomplish its objectives while adhering to all of the terms and conditions prescribed by the grantor.

These Grant Guidelines create a required protocol for application, approval, accounting, financial administration, and reporting for grant and other funding opportunities. This protocol will facilitate grant oversight and coordination, foster consistency with applications, and help ensure grant compliance. It will also foster good stewardship of the public trust. The goal of uniformity in the grant seeking process is to increase grant revenue, thereby elevating the impact of programs and services funded through grants.

### **SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES:**

1. Facilitate prioritized needs identification;
2. Create a standard approval process for projects and grant applications;
3. Establish a protocol for inter-departmental communication regarding the grant application process;
4. Promote transparency and public engagement with regard to planning and funding;
5. Ensure the Town's readiness to apply for funding opportunities as they arrive; and
6. Establish the sustainability of projects beyond grant periods.

### **SCOPE:**

These Guidelines recognize three types of approvals related to grant seeking:

1. Project approval;
2. Approval to apply for project funding; and
3. Approval of funding applications that have been completed.

All Town entities that seek to apply for federal, state, local, public, and private funding, except those listed below under EXCEPTIONS, must adhere to these Guidelines. Preliminary steps to grant proposals, such as initial letters of inquiry or pre-application submissions that do not require budgets, will not need Town Council approval. Grant renewal and/or grant continuation forms are considered applications.

### **INTERNALLY COMPETING APPLICATIONS:**

Generally, grantors will not consider multiple applications from the same entity during the same application period. Coordination is vital among all Town entities. It is not in the Town's best interest to compete against itself or to risk the possibility of duplicating a request for funds.

### **SIGNATORY AUTHORITY:**

Following the Town's approval process, applying entities will obtain the Mayor's approval and signature on all funding applications.

### **LETTERS OF SUPPORT:**

If the Town is requested to offer letters of support for grants submitted by entities outside of the Town, such letter shall not conflict with the Town's positions or policies.

### **NEEDS IDENTIFICATION:**

The Town will take a strategic approach to the grant seeking and application process to enhance the Town's ability to coordinate grant activity on a department-wide basis and to provide an overview of needs that could be met through grant funding. Town commissions, committees, and boards should work together when identifying and applying for grants. Having a list of pre-approved, prioritized projects that need funding will expedite Shepherdstown's grant-seeking efforts. It is recommended that at the end of each fiscal year, these Town entities file simple reports stating identified needs, what analysis the needs are based on, and costs for solutions to address those needs. Submitted reports should include 1) needs and impact assessment, 2) simplified budgets, 3) a description of any public input that was incorporated into planning, and 4) how the needs relate to the goals outlined in the Comprehensive Plan. These reports should be combined and tracked to form a working list of priorities. Grant opportunities should consider these needs.

### **GRANTS MANAGEMENT DATABASE AND DOCUMENT RETENTION:**

The Grants Committee will maintain a master database of grants, including both awarded and pending applications. Grant applications in process or pending as of the adoption of this policy will be added retroactively to the tracking list. It is recommended that this database also include projects that have been approved by the Town Council and are awaiting funding. This list shall be made available to the public via the website and to all Town entities. The creation of this list

will improve coordination, enhance oversight, and provide a snapshot of the Town's funding priorities. The Town Clerk shall keep a file of all submitted grant applications.

### **REQUIRED APPROVALS:**

**Project Approval:** All Town projects in need of funding shall obtain Project Approval from the Town Council. If new projects will require funding outside of the Town's budget, this Project Approval is necessary before seeking the Town Council's Approval to Apply for Funding. New Project Approvals are valid for twelve (12) months and must be renewed or updated thereafter.

**Approval to Apply for Funding:** Town Council's Approval to Apply for Funding requires prior Project Approval. Both Approvals may occur simultaneously. Approvals to Apply for Funding are valid for twelve (12) months so long as no project variables have changed.

**Grant Application Approval:** When Approval to Apply for Funding has been granted and preparation of the grant application is complete, the Town Council will review the grant application and vote to approve its provision to the Mayor for signature and submission.

### **EXCEPTIONS:**

Approval to Apply for Funding is not needed for the following:

1. Funding for the maintenance, upkeep, replacement, or ongoing operation of existing programs or projects where:
  - A. funding applied for does not exceed \$25,000.00, and
  - B. there are no significant changes in program goals, scope, or objectives, or any new requirements of continued local funding for the project; OR
2. The project's expenses were approved by Town Council and included in the Town's operating budget under "pending funding" within the year covered by the award; OR
3. Applications for recurring grants that ended in the immediately preceding grant period or with no funding lapse if they are for ongoing operation, improvement, or maintenance of existing and necessary Town resources, projects, or programs, and do not involve changes in scope or budget; OR
4. Applications determined by Town Council to be in the best interests of the Town and not in conflict with the Comprehensive Plan. If this exception is utilized, the Town Council must provide substantial justification for bypassing the procedures set forth herein and provide public notice in advance of application approval.

There are no other exceptions. Applications that are rushed or that aim to devise new projects to capture new funding opportunities rather than find funding for approved projects are to be avoided. If the funding opportunity is not excepted as outlined above, and the applying entity is

not made aware of the funding within adequate time to present to the Town Council at a regular meeting, a special Town Council meeting should be called.

### **STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:**

Project Approval and Approval to Apply for Funding are both contingent on satisfying the requirement for public engagement, meaning whether the public has had sufficient opportunity to review the project and to provide input that is incorporated into the planning process.

There are myriad ways to satisfy the requirement for public engagement such as sufficient public notice, public meetings and placards posted at project locations. Project managers are encouraged to consult national planning ethics standards and best practices regarding this. One helpful resource is the American Planning Association:

<https://www.planning.org/ethics/ethicalprinciples/>. The Town's goal in assessing needs and planning to meet those needs should be a cumulative process that provides the most comprehensive public engagement possible on a per project basis.

### **AWARD NOTIFICATION AND REVIEW:**

Grant award notifications will come in various forms and are often sent to the signing representative. Such award letters and grant contracts must be routed to the applicant body for processing, with documentation sent to the Grants Committee for filing. The applicant body shall:

- Save award letters electronically;
- Share copy of award with responsible department(s) and Finance Committee;
- Obtain legal review of grant award contract as indicated or needed;
- Review grant contracts for terms and conditions and prepare a list of requirements in an easy-to-follow format for the responsible department(s);
- Obtain signatures for a fully executed contract as required;
- Set up timelines for reports and other tasks.

### **TOWN COUNCIL AWARD APPROVAL:**

In some cases, if required by the Grantor, the Town Council will need to vote to approve grant *awards*. The Town Council may decline to accept any grant award. The Town Council will be notified when any funding is awarded. The Town Council will review grant *awards* when: it did not approve the grant *application*; any specifications in the grant/project activities or requirements have changed since the application was submitted; or for any other reason deemed valid by the Town Council, Mayor or applying entity.

**REVIEW AND REVISIONS:**

These Guidelines will be reviewed and revised as necessary to ensure that they are following existing rules and regulations and that they serve the public effectively. Any such revisions will be made only after soliciting public input.

**(FINAL VERSION APPROVED BY TOWN COUNCIL JUNE 11, 2023.)**