

Gilliam County Court
Work Session
2/20/2019

Judge Farrar opened a special work session of the Gilliam County Court at 9 a.m. at the Gilliam County Courthouse in Condon, Oregon. Present were Judge Elizabeth Farrar, Commissioner Leslie Wetherell, Commissioner Sherrie Wilkins, Court Administrator Sandy McKay, Treasurer Nathan Hammer, and Deputy Treasurer Kelly Smith.

IN THE MATTER OF RESTRUCTURE OF ANNUAL COUNTY GRANT PROGRAM

Judge Farrar noted that this is the second work session to address the restructure of the county grant program. Sandy McKay explained that significant changes have been made to the original SIP Grant Program Guide based on the Feb. 6 work session. Most notably, the grants have been split into two separate programs, summarized as follows:

Operational Support Grants are designed to provide financial support to the county's vital organizations. The grants are limited to one grant cycle per year, held in spring to coincide with the annual budget cycle. The budget committee makes final decisions, and sustainability plans will be required.

Strategic Investment Program Grants (later changed to "Capital Investment Grants"), are designed for strategic investments in projects and events that benefit the county, with decisions made in spring and fall. The budget committee will determine the funding cap, and the court will make final funding decisions.

OPERATIONAL SUPPORT GRANTS

Question: The first question addressed in today's work session involved possible institution of a grandfather clause that limits which organizations can apply for operational support grants.

Option 1: Grants limited to organizations that received support in FY 2018-19.

Option 2: Allowance of a one-year "open" cycle providing a one-time opportunity for organizations that haven't had the option to apply in previous grant cycles.

Judge Farrar urged the court to be careful about a "come one, come all" approach, and reminded that the goal is to encourage organizations to develop plans for sustainability.

- The Court agreed to accept Option 2, noting that in FY 2020-21, operational support grants will be limited to organizations that have previously received funding.

County Chamber of Commerce Executive Director K'Lynn Kennedy inquired about funding for new organizations. Judge Farrar responded that the court can consider different ways of supporting those organizations. She noted that funds will no longer be available after about five years, but funding guidelines can be readdressed if more funding comes into the county.

In response to a question from Sandy McKay regarding how the changes will be publicized, Judge Farrar said that in addition posting in the Times-Journal and on the county's website, organizations will receive written communication about changes to this year's grant cycle. She also suggested that court members attend meetings to provide information and answer questions.

The court also agreed that organizations will be provided with education and tools for making long-term sustainability plans. Commissioner Wetherell expressed concern about using rigid language that imposes too many restrictions and doesn't allow for flexibility. Sandy McKay agreed that certain wording can be used, but that the document must have some "teeth" and Nathan Hammer agreed. Kelly Smith suggested that the guidelines could allow some flexibility, but contracts can be tighter. The court agreed that the guidelines could be more general, with more specific language used in contracts.

Question: What can operational support funding be used for? What can funding NOT be used for?

- The court agreed on guidelines stating that operational funding can be used for employee salaries and benefits, operational expenses, and supplies and materials. It cannot be used for building capital reserves, capital improvements, or large equipment purchases.

Question: General guidelines?

The court agreed on the following general guidelines:

- The county is a funding source of last resort. Organizations that attain additional revenue will be scored higher in merit rankings.
- Match funding is expected at a minimum of 10 percent. The minimum percentage may be increased in future years.
- The court reserves the right to reduce awards amounts.
- A sustainability plan will be required in coming years.
- Funds must be claimed and expended in the fiscal year in which they are awarded.

Question: What is the role of the budget committee?

- The court agreed that staff will conduct the initial review of applications and submit a report and recommendation to the budget committee. The budget committee will then review and make funding decisions on operational support grant applications as they have in the past.

Question: Review process?

The Court agreed on the following review process:

- Staff reviews applications and checks against eligibility criteria. Eligible applications are moved forward for staff merit criteria review.
- Staff provides a recommendation to the budget committee upon completion of initial merit review.
- Budget committee reviews the applications, utilizing the staff report and merit criteria to reach a final funding decision.
- Budget committee adopts the budget, which includes grant funding levels.

Question: Who will be responsible for completion of FY 2019-20 staff reports?

- The court agreed that the treasurer, court administrator and a second elected official (not on the county court), will be responsible for completion of FY 2019-20 staff reports.

Question: Merit review criteria?

The court agreed on the following merit review criteria:

- Benefit to the county (i.e., economic development, cultural and historical preservation, community and essential services, etc.). 60% of score
- Matching funds leveraged with preference to applicants showing financial support from other sources. 20% of score
- Necessity of Funding: (Will the program be able to continue without county support?). 20% of score
- The criteria is a starting point. Changes will be made in the future to reflect a sustainability plan requirement to take effect in FY 2020-21.

Question: 2019-2020 timeline?

- The court agreed on the following timeline for 2019:

February 27 - Applications available

March 20 - Applications due 5 p.m.

April 3 - Staff reports due

April 3, 10, 11 - Budget committee meetings and budget approval

June 28 - Last possible day to adopt the budget

Final report: to be determined

July - Contracting

August- Grant funds available for disbursement

Progress reporting/reimbursement funding as laid out in grant agreements

Question: Application

The court agreed that applications will consist of the following sections:

- General information (“treasurer” as main point of contact will be clarified throughout).
- Program narrative
- Program information
- Budget (including organization’s budget and most recent financial statement).
- Match funding form (authorized signatures for pending match funding will not be required).

Other questions/clarifications:

- The Operational Support Grant Guide will be distributed to the public via the county’s website, etc., and will also be attached to applications.
- A sentence will be added to the “Agreement” section of the Grant Guide stating that additional stipulations may be imposed.
- Clarified an error in due dates (Applications will be available February 27, not April 27).
- Agreed to simplify the Grant Guide Foreword section, removing specifics regarding the origination of grant program funding.

STRATEGIC INVESTMENT GRANTS (CAPITAL INVESTMENT GRANTS)

Question: What can Strategic Investment funding be used for?

- The court agreed that strategic investment funding should be used for capital construction, i.e., certain equipment purchases, supplies and materials and

contractor costs associated with capital construction. Events will be funded by Special Project Grants.

- Sheriff Gary Bettencourt asked if organizations requesting capital funding will be required to provide an operating plan. The court agreed that the application will ask how the organization intends to operate after project construction is completed.

Question: What can Capital Investment funds NOT be used for?

- The court agreed that Strategic Investment funds will not be used for employee salaries, capital reserves, and normal operational expenses.

Question: General guidelines?

The court discussed expected minimum match percentages. Judge Farrar noted that private funders generally require a 50 percent match and commented that it's largely a matter of deciding how much return taxpayers should expect to get back for their investment.

Arlington Port Director Peter Mitchell commented that there are different types of grant programs, noting that Connect Oregon has recently increased the required match from 15 to 30 percent. He urged the county not to "tighten so much that projects may not get done," and to make final decisions based on the merits of each project.

Judge Farrar explained that she hopes to prevent organizations from bringing good ideas to the court without making an effort to look for other available funding. She said that part of the match requires a little legwork on the organizers' part, and that the county should be a partner, not a sole funder. The more funding is matched, the more money is available to fund more projects. She also noted that matches can be in-kind.

The court decided on the following general guidelines:

- Match funding is set at a minimum of 35 percent. (May include in-kind contributions). Preference will be given to applications that show a greater financial contribution from other sources.
- The county is a funding source of last resort
- The county reserves the right to reduce award amounts.
- Funds must be claimed/expended in the fiscal year in which they are awarded.

- Requirements for lump-sum vs. reimbursable grants will be determined on a case-by-case basis at the court's discretion.

Question: What is the role of the budget committee?

The court agreed that the budget committee will set annual Strategic Investment grant funding caps. Funds for the fall grant cycle will be based on funds remaining after the spring grant cycle is completed.

Question: Review process?

The Court agreed on the following review process:

- Staff reviews applications and checks against eligibility criteria. Eligible applications are moved forward for merit criteria review.
- Staff provides a recommendation to the County Court upon completion of the initial merit review.
- County Court reviews the applications, utilizing the staff report and merit criteria to reach a final funding decision.
- Budget committee adopts the budget, which includes grant funding levels. Funds for the fall grant cycle will be based on funds remaining after the spring grant cycle is completed.

Question: Who will be responsible for completing FY 2019-20 staff reports?

- The court agreed that the treasurer, court administrator and a second elected official (not on the county court), will be responsible for completion of FY 2019-20 staff reports.

Question: Merit review criteria?

The court agreed on the following merit review criteria.

- Benefit to the county (i.e., economic development, cultural and historical preservation, community and essential services, etc.): 60 percent of score.
- Matching funds leveraged with preference to applicants showing financial support from other sources: 25 percent of score.
- Timeliness/Necessity of Funding: (Why does this project need to happen this year? Would the project be able to continue without county support? 15 percent of score.

Question: 2019-20 timelines?

The court agreed on the following timeline for 2019:

Spring cycle:

February 27 - Applications available

March 20 - Applications due 5 p.m.

April 3 - Staff reports due

April 3, 10, 11 - Budget committee meetings and budget approval

June 28 - Last possible day to adopt the budget

July 31 - Final report due

July - Contracting

August- Grant funds available for disbursement

Fall cycle:

September 3 – Application period opens

September 25 - Applications due 5 p.m.

October 9 - Staff reports due

October 16 - Court meeting/grant approval

November - Contracting/grand funds available for disbursement

November 2019 – June 2020 - Progress reporting/reimbursement funding

Final report - to be determined.

Question: Application?

The court agreed that applications will consist of the following sections:

- General information (“treasurer” as main point of contact will be clarified throughout).
- Program narrative
- Program information
- Budget (including project budget, business plan, and most recent financial statement).
- Match funding form (authorized signatures for pending match funding will not be required).

SPECIAL PROJECTS GRANTS

Question: Do you want to leave room for smaller capital projects? (i.e., lawnmower for Little League, bleachers for Rodeo Association, senior meal site improvements, etc.?)

- The court agreed to establish a \$20,000 cap for smaller capital project requests. Larger requests will be funneled into the Capital Investment program. The amount may be revisited each year and adjusted depending on available funds.
- The Strategic Investment grant program will be changed to “Capital Investment” grant program.

Question: Eligibility criteria

The court agreed on the following eligibility criteria:

- Eligible entities include non-profits, community service providers, government agencies, and special districts operating within Gilliam County.
- The proposed project must occur within Gilliam County.
- For-profit businesses and faith-based organizations are ineligible.
- Applications must show a minimum of 25 percent match from other funding sources.
- Applications must be for specific projects and not for normal operational activities.

Question: General guidelines?

The court agreed on the following general guidelines:

- The county is a funding source of last resort
- Minimum of 25 percent matching funds required.
- The county reserves the right to reduce award amounts from the requested level.
- Funds must be claimed/expended in the fiscal year in which they were awarded.
- Funds remaining after each cycle roll over into the next year.
- Unused funds that come back to the county will also be rolled over into the next year.

Question: Map

The court agreed that a map is unnecessary and that staff will have the flexibility to base geographic pool decisions on benefits and other factors.

Question: Review process?

The Court agreed on the following review process:

- The budget committee adopts a budget that includes Special Projects grant funding levels based on the Economic Enhancement Fund Ordinance.
- Applications are reviewed by staff and checked against eligibility criteria. At this point, eligible applications are moved forward to initial staff merit criteria review.
- Staff completes an initial merit review and develops a recommendation for submission to the county court
- The county court reviews the applications, utilizing the staff report and merit criteria to reach a final decision.

Question: What can Special Projects funding be used for? What can funding NOT be used for?

- The court agreed that general guidelines will be established.

Question: Who will be responsible for completing FY 2019-20 staff reports?

- The court agreed that the community development director, court administrator and an elected official (not on the county court), will be responsible for completion of FY 2019-20 staff reports.

Question: Merit review criteria?

The court agreed on the following merit review criteria.

- Benefit to the county (i.e., economic development, cultural and historic preservation, community and essential services, etc.): 60 percent of score.
- Matching funds leveraged with preference to applicants showing financial support from other sources: 25 percent of score.
- Timeliness/Necessity of Funding: (Why does this project need to happen this year? Would the project be able to continue without county support?) 15 percent of score.

Question: 2019-2020 timeline?

The court agreed on the following timeline for FY 2019-20:

April 15 - Applications available
 May 14 - Applications due
 May 29 - Staff report due
 June 5 and 19 - Court review/award

July - Contracting

August - Funds available, progress reporting/reimbursement funding begins as laid out in grant agreements

Final report due - to be determined

Question: Applications?

- To be determined.

Question: Work session schedule?

The next work session is scheduled for March 6 at 9 a.m. at the Gilliam County Courthouse in Condon, followed by a regular meeting at 1 p.m. Other work sessions will be scheduled if needed.

Judge Farrar announced that a regular meeting of the Gilliam County Court will begin today at 1 p.m.

IN THE MATTER OF ADJOURNMENT

Judge Farrar adjourned the work session at 12:05 p.m.

GILLIAM COUNTY COURT

By _____

Elizabeth Farrar, Judge

By _____

Leslie Wetherell, Commissioner

By _____

Sherrie Wilkins, Commissioner

Mary H. Dyer/Recorder _____