

Maryland Efficient Grants Application Council Meeting Minutes

Date: 1/29/2025, 4:00 pm - 4:48 pm

Location: Google Meet Video Conferencing

Meeting Recording Link Presentation link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gK3qVUxy1_E

Link to Presentations

chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgclefindmkaj/<https://dbm.maryland.gov/employees/Documents/MEGA-Presentation-1-29-25.pdf>

Members Present:

Chair - Deputy Secretary Marc Nicole, *Dept. of Budget & Management* - Raquel Coombs, Dana Phillips, Mike Morello, Joan Peacock

Department of General Services/Chief Procurement - Chichi Nyagah-Nash, Yasin Mohammed

Comptroller's Office - Jasmine Clemons, Ben Seigel

Department of Health - Amalie Brandenburg

Department of Human Services - Gloria Brown

Department of Housing & Community Development - Bryan Holtzapple

Department of Natural Resources - Lauren Buckmaster, Kamil Williams

Department of Agriculture - Bonnie Brady

Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy - Mary Abraham

Maryland Higher Education Commission - Geoff Newman

*Dept of Information Technology** - Erik Lyon

Office of the State Treasurer - Megan Schutz

Department of Environment - Cia Cook

Representatives and Appointee Members Present:

Maryland Municipal League - Jesse Buggs

Governor Nonprofit Representative Appointees - Nancy Easterling

Senate Appointee - Irene Tai

House Appointee - John Brothers

Additional Attendees:

Senator Kagan's Legislative Coordinator Sharon Spir Kushner,

Policy Director, Maryland Nonprofits Henry Bogdan,

Executive Director, Lifestyles of Maryland Sandy Washington,

Department of Housing and Community Development Brena McKee

Office of the Comptroller Stefanos G.

Members Absent:

Department of Budget and Management - Secretary Helene Grady

Attorney General's Office - Beverly Pivec,

Maryland State Department of Education - Donna Gunning

Maryland Energy Administration - Emily Soontornsaratool

Call to Order/Opening Remarks: Deputy Secretary Marc Nicole called the Maryland Efficient Grants Council meeting to order at 4:00 pm via Google Meet. The staff noted that the meeting was being recorded. The Chair welcomed the Council members and facilitated member introductions.

Old Business: A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes from the October 30th meeting. Hearing no opposition, the minutes were approved unanimously.

New Business: The Chair thanked all subcommittees for their work between meetings and noted that the bulk of today's work would be for the workgroups to report and discuss the priorities established in their respective meetings.

Council Workgroup Presentations: Mary Abraham (Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy), Lauren Buckmaster (Department of Natural Resources), Joan Peacock (Department of Budget and Management), John Brothers, Mike Morello (Department of Budget and Management) and Jasmine Clemens (Comptroller's Office)

1. Applications Work Group:

Mary Abraham from the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy presented as chair of the Applications Work Group. She reported that their first meeting was held on January 10th with 100% participation from group members, including Irene, Emily, Bonnie, Chichi, Joan, and Dana. The group was tasked with three priorities:

Priority 1: Standardized Definition and Data Elements. The group discussed aligning definitions with the Code of Federal Regulations (Part 200) and grants-related regulations. For data elements, the group considered the need to accommodate both small and large entities as stakeholders and applicants. They recommended a multi-part application process: Part 1 focusing on standard state certifications (EIN number, SAM number, etc.) and Part 2 focusing on implementation specifics for the particular state entity. The goal is to streamline data elements and data collection to avoid redundancy.

Priority 2: Terms and Conditions The group reviewed several samples already available in the work group files and will continue this review in future meetings. They aim to ensure consistency with state and federal requirements. The plan is to meet monthly to review these terms and conditions and develop data elements, preferably working in adaptable formats such as Excel spreadsheets to facilitate future implementation.

Priority 3: Review of Successful Applications The group discussed platform selection, building on work already done on the Maryland Grants Portal. They emphasized the importance of not losing information from previous efforts and suggested integrating existing platforms with potential hosting at DBM or DoIT. They also proposed creating a repository of successful applications (with personal information redacted) and developing a standard Maryland website to maintain previous resources, including best practices and conference information.

Mary Abraham reported that the group has scheduled meetings for the second Friday of each month from 1:00 to 2:00 PM.

2. Budget Work Group:

Lauren Buckmaster presented as chair of the Budget Work Group. She reported that the group met once before this meeting and had initially identified seven items of concern, which they narrowed down to four achievable priorities:

Priority 1: Indirect Cost Guidance and State Approval Timeline The group plans to expand on the indirect cost guidance, establish a statewide definition, review and compare it to federal guidance, and obtain information and feedback from stakeholders. They noted the importance of reaching out to other agency grant contacts and nonprofits to ensure all challenges are addressed. The group will work in conjunction with the Application Work Group on this priority.

Priority 2: Allowable and Unallowable Cost Definitions The group will review existing guidance and set up training programs to ensure statewide awareness of standards. They will determine current practices and evaluate whether they should be part of the Notice of Funding Opportunity. They will also review indirect cost guidance and consider it for adoption.

Priority 3: Standardized Budget Template Mike Morello will lead this effort to create a standardized budget template. The group will reach out to agency counterparts to ensure all key elements and agency-specific nuances are included, with the goal of creating a template usable by all agencies.

Priority 4: Uniform Guidance The group will review all guidance and work with other work groups to provide the best possible recommendations.

Lauren noted that for their next meeting, they plan to establish short-term, measurable goals for each priority, starting with Priority 1. Their next meeting is scheduled for March 4th.

3. Monitoring and Reporting Work Group:

Joan Peacock from the Department of Budget and Management presented as chair of the Monitoring and Reporting Work Group. She acknowledged Bonnie, Mike, and Dana for their participation and invited other council members to join this work group. She noted that while the goals for this work group are extensive, they narrowed them down to three priorities:

Priority 1: Pre-Award Risk Assessment Tool The group plans to review an existing risk assessment tool developed by the governor's grants office several years ago. They will seek input from agency grant contacts and consider a two-phase process: a generic assessment for non-profits and potential grantees, followed by a tailored piece for specific grant programs. The risk assessment would generate ratings to inform reporting and monitoring needs. The group also discussed establishing a periodic review/update process for risk assessments and coordinating with the Applications Work Group.

Priority 2: State Grant Reporting. The group will determine expectations for both financial and program/progress reporting and identify key elements for standardization statewide. They plan to develop training and guidance documents for both state agencies and nonprofits/grantees. The group will also consider reporting metrics, strategies, and goals. Bonnie raised important considerations about resources and timelines for all stakeholders, including the time and effort required for grantees to prepare reports and for agencies to review them.

Priority 3: Grant Monitoring This priority will be linked to the risk assessment process. The group will gather feedback from various stakeholders, including different types of grant programs and different sizes of grantees (small, medium, large). They plan to develop a comprehensive list of state grant agency contacts and nonprofits to ensure good representation for feedback. The group will also consider the available state capacity to conduct required monitoring.

Joan reported that their next meeting is scheduled for Friday.

4. Customer Service Work Group:

John Brothers presented as chair of the Customer Service Work Group, with support from Mike Morello. The group identified four priorities:

Priority 1: Centralizing Grant Advertisements The group learned that the Department of Planning has an "Info Portal" solution that is required by both federal and state statute to centralize grant advertisements. The group will have the Planning Department demo this solution

on February 13th to conduct a gap analysis between the council's needs and current capabilities. They expect to provide a written analysis by the end of February.

Priority 2: Directory of Grant Contacts The group will assess the Info Portal's current directory capabilities. They will identify a chief accountability officer for every participating agency in the council, as required by the MEGA Council statute, and determine if additional customer service liaison responsibilities should be established.

Priority 3: Grant Payment and Pre-Award Transparency The group will collaborate with the Monitoring/Reporting and Applications work groups, with a focus on pre-award risk assessment transparency.

Priority 4: Customer Experience Measurement The group plans to develop a survey for grantees to provide feedback on their experiences. They will survey existing and past grantees to establish a baseline and create a centralized surveying capability that can be shared across agencies.

5. Ombudsperson Work Group:

Jasmine Clemens from the Controller's Office presented as chair of the Ombudsperson Work Group. She reported that no members had volunteered for this work group at the last meeting but that Dana and Joan had identified potential members whom she had contacted. Once membership is confirmed, the group plans to schedule meetings for February, March, and early April. She outlined four priority areas:

Priority 1: Feasibility Assessment The group will assess the feasibility of creating an ombudsperson position, determine where it should be located within state government, and identify required resources, including staffing and technology.

Priority 2: Role Definition The group will define specific tasks for the ombudsperson, determine how technical assistance should be provided, establish processes for coordinating with agencies, and ensure support for nonprofit partners.

Priority 3: Implementation Planning The group will develop steps for implementation, create a realistic timeline, and establish a framework for success.

Jasmine noted that this work group is particularly important as they need to provide a report to the General Assembly in July.

General Discussion from Council Members:

The Chair introduced two new council members: Brena McKee from DHCD and Stefanos from the Comptroller's Office.

Dana reminded council members who had not yet selected a work group to do so, emphasizing the importance of the Ombudsperson Work Group due to its upcoming report to the General Assembly.

Sharon Kushner from Senator Kagan's office provided information about two pieces of legislation relevant to the council:

1. SB127 and HB300, State Government - Grants and Contracts - Reimbursement of Indirect Costs sponsored by Senator Kagan, would align the indirect cost rate with the federal OMB (15% or higher).
2. SB365 Department of Commerce – Nonprofit Organizations Navigator – Established proposes creating a "Nonprofit Navigator" position in the Commerce Department. The bill has been assigned to a committee but has not yet been given a hearing date.

Next Virtual Meeting Dates: Dana shared the upcoming Council meeting dates:

- Wednesday, April 30th, 2025, 4pm
- Wednesday, July 30th at 4:00 pm

Closing Discussion: The Deputy Secretary reminded people to volunteer for workgroups.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 4:48