

Maryland Efficient Grants Application Council Meeting Minutes

Date: 10/28/2025 4:05-4:50

Location Google Meet Video Conferencing:

youtube.com/watch?v=TQB4Rrty1E0&feature=youtu.be

Members Present:

Department of Budget and Management - Deputy Secretary, Marc Nicole

Comptroller's Office - Jasmine Clemons, Ben Seigel, Stefanos Ghebrehawariat

Department of Human Services - Gloria Brown Burnnet

Department of General Services- Yasin Mohammed

Department of Housing & Community Development - Bryan Holtzapple

Department of Natural Resources - Lauren Buckmaster,

Department of Agriculture - Bonnie Brady

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

Dept of Information Technology - Erik Lyon

Maryland State Department of Education - Nicole Obergon,

Maryland Energy Administration- Jenn Gallicchio

Department of Environment - Cia Cook

Department of General Services- Jamie Tomaszewski

Maryland Higher Education Commission - Geoff Newman

Office of the State Treasurer - Megan Schutz

Department of Budget and Management, Dana Phillips, Joan Peacock and Zaynah Rose

Representatives and Appointee Members Present:

Governor's Office of Appointments -Kendra Johnson

Governor's Office of Appointments- Diane Founche

Senate Appointee - Irene Tai

Additional Attendees:

Senator Kagan's Legislative Coordinator, Sharon Spir Kushner,

Guide House- Sreeram Suri

Department of Commerce Non-Profit Navigator- Jessica Dorian

Absent:

Call to Order/Opening Remarks: Marc Nicole (DBM), the new Chair of the MEGA Council, initiated the meeting by outlining procedural guidelines (using the hand-raise function and muting microphones) and letting everyone know the call would be recorded.

Old Business: Approval of the meeting minutes from the July 30th, 2025, meeting. Bonnie Brady moved to approve the minutes, and the motion was seconded and approved by the council.

New Business: The meeting focused on introducing the new Nonprofit Navigator, Jessica Doiron. Workgroups also gave an overview of the survey findings and the feedback received from agencies.

1. Presentation of State Agency Survey Findings: Application Workgroup

- Mary Abraham (**GOCPP**) (Application Workgroup Chair) presented findings from questions 5 through 10 of the state agency survey. The workgroup focused on agency authority to issue grants regardless of funding sources, subaward authority for federal awards, and the use of grants management systems or tools. Mary Abraham noted that while some agencies use comprehensive systems, many rely on spreadsheets and other tools for various grant lifecycle phases, highlighting a need for standardization.

2. Presentation of State Agency Survey Findings: General Feedback

- **Joan Peacock (DBM)** (Monitoring and Reporting Chair) presented general survey feedback, noting that most agencies are comfortable with Excel and about half are comfortable with SmartSheet. Findings indicated that while most grant-awarding agencies have dedicated resources, the nature of these resources varies, ranging from dedicated offices to individuals with grants management as one of many responsibilities. There is strong support for additional training for staff in managing grant programs, and agencies currently provide diverse forms of technical assistance to applicants, from workshops to one-on-one help.

3. **Presentation of State Agency Survey Findings: Challenges and Concerns by Agencies**

- Joan Peacock (Monitoring and Reporting Chair) highlighted key challenges applicants face, including misunderstandings of requirements, navigating complex applications, and issues with financial reporting tools. Small nonprofits and local governments often struggle with online systems, understanding requirements, and basic grant comprehension, indicating a need for simpler processes. Operational hurdles, such as classifying expenses and obtaining correct W9s, also present difficulties.
- Joan Peacock also addressed concerns about implementing standardized applications and monitoring, emphasizing the need to consider the diversity and specific requirements of various state grant programs and funding types. The survey found that most agencies require risk assessments, but these are often highly tailored to specific grant programs, with common elements including program eligibility, objectives, and evaluation criteria. Agencies largely have monitoring and reporting policies, but these are often grant-specific, indicating a potential need for a more standardized statewide approach that accommodates diverse grant types.

4. **Presentation of State Agency Survey Findings: Customer Service Workgroup**

- Dana Phillips (**DBM**) presented findings from the Customer Service Workgroup, noting that most agencies collect feedback from grantees informally or through formal processes such as annual surveys. Data storage varies, using shared drives, Excel, and grants management systems, with trend analysis conducted through methods such as geographic mapping. Employee feedback on grant manager experience is collected by about half of the agencies, with results used to improve internal processes, communication, efficiency, and overall grant systems.

Closing Discussion: Marc Nicole thanked the workgroups for their comprehensive survey efforts and expressed an intent to follow up with non-participating agencies to gather more complete data. Marc Nicole also informed the council about the Joint Chairman's Report requirement related to the timely processing of grant payments to nonprofits, which will include data on compliance and reasons for late submissions. An extension for this report has been made due to the State's financial system process and budget preparation timelines. This report will be submitted on February 15, 2026. Additionally, Marc Nicole announced new council meeting dates for January 28th, April 29th, and July 29th of next year. He encouraged new members to join a workgroup by contacting Dana Phillips and asked for volunteers to chair the customer service workgroup.

Adjournment: 4:40