Maryland Efficient Grants Application Council Meeting Minutes

Date: 4/30/2025, 4:00 pm - 5:22
Location: Google Meet Video Conferencing: [Maryland Efficient Grants Application Council Meeting 4/30/2025](#)

Link to Presentations: Meeting Agenda, Meeting Presentation

Members Present:
Secretary Helene Grady
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 General Service*s- Yasin Mohammed
Department of Housing & Community Development - Bryan Holtzapple and Brenne McKee
Department of Natural Resources - Lauren Buckmaster, Kamil Williams
Department of Agriculture - Bonnie Brady
Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy - Mary Abraham
Dept of Information Technology* - Erik Lyon
Office of the State Treasurer - Megan Schutz
Maryland State Department of Education - Nicole Obergon
Maryland State Department of Education - Donna Gunning
Maryland Energy Administration- Jenn Gallicchio
Department of Budget and Management- Mike Morello, Raquel Coombs, Dana Phillips.Joan Peacock and Zaynah Rose

Representatives and Appointee Members Present:
Maryland Municipal League - Jesse Buggs
Governor Nonprofit Representative Appointees - Nancy Easterling
Senate Appointee - Irene Tai
Governor's Office of Appointments, Kendra Johnson

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 Ghebrehawariat
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Absent:
Maryland Energy Administration - Emily Soontornsaratool
Department of General Services, Jasmine Tomaszewski
Maryland Higher Education Commission - Geoff Newman
Department of Natural Resources- Kamila Williams
Department of Environment - Cia Cook
Department of General Services - Linda Dangerfield

Call to Order/Opening Remarks: Secretary Grady called the Maryland Efficient Grants Council meeting to order at 4:07 pm via Google Meet. The staff noted that the meeting was being recorded.

Old Business: Approve meeting minutes from the January 30th, 2025, meeting.

New Business: The Secretary thanked all workgroups for their continued work between meetings and noted that the focus of today's meeting would be on workgroup progress reports and discussions.

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 Workgroup** Chair: Mary Abraham, Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy
   a. Mary reported on the Applications Work Group's progress on Priority 1: Standardized Definitions/Data Elements. The group has focused on designing solutions that accommodate both small and large entities as applicants and grantees.
   b. They have developed a framework for applicants to document pre-eligibility requirements (pre-award) set by Maryland's grantors through Request for Proposals, Notice of Funding Availability, and Intent to Apply processes. Key data elements being standardized include: organizational structure establishment, budget capacity documentation, tax ID status verification, debarment/exclusion list checks, authorized officials listings, project information, proposal summaries, and grants/financial assistance specifications for both State and Federal funding sources.

   c. Gloria Brown raised questions about organizations with legislative earmarks in the budget and the due diligence requirements for those awards.

d. The group requested the development of a prototype system beyond Excel spreadsheets to enable more comprehensive recommendations and progress tracking.

e. Discussion emphasized the need for a more robust system to support the Applications group's work.

2. **Budget Workgroup** Chair: Lauren Buckmaster, Department of Natural Resources

   a. Lauren talked about the Budget Work Group's activities and progress. The group has been working on several key definitional areas, including: indirect costs versus administrative (direct costs), administrative costs versus programmatic costs, and allowable and unallowable costs classifications.The group is determining standard data elements needed in a budget template and has considered the SF-424A (Standard budget form for Federal Grants) as a starting point for their work. They identified the need to define budget periods and are discussing the training and guidance that will be needed to support implementation. The group is establishing questions for which feedback is needed from the Council, State grant-making agencies, and grantees to assist with recommendation development. They emphasized that finalization will require collaboration with other workgroups and feedback from State agencies.

   b. Jenn Gallicchio inquired about indirect costs and how they compare to those of the federal government.

   c. Erik Lyon shared that a shared grants management system document is available with DBM and will be provided to the Budget workgroup for review.

3. **Monitoring and Reporting Workgroup** Chair: Joan Peacock, Department of Budget and Management

   a. Joan explained that the work group has determined the need for a three-phase risk assessment process: Phase 1: Eligibility Documentation - The group will discuss key elements and documents needed to verify eligibility, with a goal to finalize this phase by the July meeting. They emphasized the need to consider different types and sizes of organizations, as well as the type and amount of grant funding. This phase will include annual documentation upload and information update requirements . Phase 2: Fiscal and Administrative Organization Assessment - This will be a standardized assessment that can be used by multiple State agencies, with finalization targeted for the July meeting. The assessment will determine grantee fiscal health to help determine the appropriate level of guidance and

oversight needed. The group is also developing requirements for periodic updates to this assessment.

Phase 3: Programmatic Focus Assessment - This assessment will be grant-specific and conducted once during the pre-award period. The group is working to determine guidelines for key elements to be included in this assessment.

b. The Secretary raised a question about programmatic assessments, and Bryan Holtzapple provided practical examples of returned grantees and how to determine if they were good stewards of funding, with additional commentary from Mary Abraham. The group's expanded focus on risk assessment extends beyond just pre-award considerations to encompass ongoing monitoring and reporting needs. Joan also acknowledged that there is collaboration among the workgroups as the Council develops a survey.

4. **Ombudsperson Workgroup** Chair: Jasmine Clemens, Comptroller's Office
   a. Jasmine shared that the group has developed three key functional areas for the ombudsperson role:
      i. Information Dissemination Coordinator - This function focuses on ensuring consistent messaging and maintaining up-to-date information across all grant-related communications and resources.
      ii. Agency Liaison - This role would establish and maintain strong partnerships with agency grant managers and Chief Accountability Officers to resolve complex cross-agency issues while advocating for process improvements throughout the grant management system.
      iii. Nonprofit Organization Support. This function would create a comprehensive support system for nonprofit organizations by providing dedicated assistance, developing specialized resources, identifying common barriers, and recommending targeted solutions to improve their access to grant funding.

   The group continues to work on the feasibility assessment, implementation planning, and resource requirements for establishing this position.

5. **Customer Service Workgroup Chair**: Mike Morello, Department of Budget and Management
   a. Mike reported on the Customer Service Work Group's progress on Priority 1: Central Place to Advertise State Grants. He noted that the group has completed

their research on solutions, including analysis of the state's InfoPortal and Federal grants.gov, to establish a comprehensive list of features and benefits the council wants in a solution.

b. The group's next steps include finalizing the list of desired features for the new central place to advertise grants and preparing a written proposal for the Council. This proposal will include requirements, level of effort estimates, cost estimates, implementation timeline, and ROI analysis, with a target completion date before the July MEGA Council meeting. Additionally, the group will draft a standard operating procedure (Version 1) for ensuring the universe of grants is maintained in the central advertising platform.

General Discussion from Council Members: Henry Bogdan from Maryland Nonprofits addressed the council regarding the new financial system being implemented by the Comptroller's Office. He emphasized that financial tracking capabilities should serve as a management tool to help agencies manage payments more effectively. He stressed the importance of creating systems that nonprofits can use to ensure timely payments to their members. Bogdan advocated for comprehensive tools that would assist agencies while reducing tedious oversight requirements and promoting consistency across the system. He mentioned discussing this topic with Erik Lyon, who indicated he would investigate the matter further and potentially facilitate connections between the Governor's Office and the Comptroller's Office.

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

- Wednesday, July 30th at 4:00 pm
- October 30th at 4:00 pm

Closing Discussion:

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 5:22