SUBJECT: Peer Grant Program Policy

EFFECTIVE DATE: 7/10/2015

REVISED DATE: 04/13/2017, 8/4/2017, 1/3/2018

BACKGROUND: This document explains DCNR’s Peer Grant Program. The information provided is intended to help determine if your organization has a realistic and viable Peer Grant application or if your planning needs would be better met under another Community Conservation Partnerships Program project type. After reviewing this information and before completing a grant application, please discuss your project with your BRC Regional Advisor.

POLICY:

1. **Peer Grant Project Objectives**
   A Peer project is a non-competitive technical assistance consulting service coordinated by BRC staff. Peer consultants are typically park and recreation practitioners or conservation professionals who help communities study a specific issue or improve services in a defined area.

   These services provides the grantee with an experienced professional who has extensive training, knowledge and experience in the project issues. When the consultation/Peer Project is completed, the grantee will be provided with an analysis of the issue(s), a set of recommendations and a course of action. The final product typically includes a written report approved by BRC, the grantee and other identified stakeholders.

2. **Eligible Applicants and Projects**
   **Eligible Applicants:** A municipality (county, city, borough, township, or home rule municipality) or a municipal agency (authority, council of government, or intergovernmental commission).

   **Eligible Projects:** BRC has not specifically defined all eligible Peer project types. If you have a pressing issue in your agency or municipality that does not fit into one of the noted categories, you are encouraged to contact your BRC Regional Advisor to discuss your needs. Examples of potential projects include:

   a) Exploring the possibility of developing a regional recreation and park authority/commission.

   b) Evaluating a recreation and park board’s efforts and providing board training.
c) Evaluating the management of a major facility like a community center, a sports complex, an ice rink, or a swimming pool.

d) Undertaking conservation activities like establishing a conservancy or land trust.

e) Developing a revenue source management plan.

f) Developing a regional trail maintenance and management plan.

g) Advancing initiatives such as river town, trail town, green/sustainable practices, nature based place and/or bikeable/walkable communities through activities like conducting community audits.

h) Completing small scale design work like developing conceptual or preliminary plans.

i) Exploring the possibility of developing a new facility to accommodate an emerging park and recreation trend.

3. **Project Development and Selection**

BRC accepts and considers Peer grant applications at any time. The development and selection process is outlined below:

a) Potential applicants should contact their BRC Regional Advisor to discuss the proposed Peer project.

b) Typically, the Regional Advisor meets with the interested parties to discuss project goals, identify potential partners and offer overall technical assistance. Subsequently, the Regional Advisor will interface with the appropriate BRC Central Office personnel to discuss the potential project. If BRC determines that a Peer project is appropriate, the local agency can proceed with submitting a Peer grant application through DCNR’s electronic grants portal.

c) The grant application must include a basic scope of work that describes what the applicant would like the Peer Consultant to study, identify any current issues/challenges, detail what is hoped to be achieved and provide a general cost estimate. Further application needs include an executed grant resolution page and partner support/matching funds.

d) BRC reserves grant funds for Peer grant requests and typically these funds are available when requested. If funds are available and BRC has received an acceptable application, the Bureau will notify the applicant that Peer funding has been approved. BRC will then process a grant agreement. It may take up to four (4) to eight (8) weeks to receive a fully executed grant agreement. No Peer work should commence until the grantee receives the fully executed DCNR grant agreement.
4. **Role of BRC Staff**

BRC staff will provide technical assistance and support throughout a Peer project. Typical roles are outlined below:

a) Once a Peer project is approved for funding, the BRC Project Manager contacts potential peer consultants to find an individual(s) who is both qualified and available to provide consulting services. BRC will work with the grantee to select an appropriate peer consultant.

b) The BRC Project Manager arranges and facilitates a meeting between the grantee and the proposed consultant or consulting team. The purpose of this meeting is to introduce the Peer and the grantee, and to reach consensus on the best course of action to address the grantee’s issues and concerns. The group will confirm roles, responsibilities, the scope of work, expected final products, and a project timetable.

c) Following the grantee’s approval of the proposed peer consultant, the grantee must enter into a contract with the consultant.

d) BRC will review and approve the contract between the grantee and consultant before it is executed. When BRC approves the contract, it will also issue the grantee an official approval to proceed with Peer project activities.

5. **Expectations of Peers and Local Project Coordinators**

a) BRC expects the planning process to include: substantial public participation using a variety of techniques; a thorough examination and analysis of the issues under study; and a series of recommended actions to address studied issues.

b) The Local Project Coordinator is expected to assist the Peer with the public participation process, data gathering needs, provide guidance, etc.

c) The Local Project Coordinator must submit project progress reports as specified in the grant agreement.

d) Throughout the duration of the peer grant, it is important for both central office and regional staff to provide technical assistance to both the peer consultant and the local community officials by maintaining contact through periodic emails and telephone calls in order to ensure that momentum continues.

e) Approximately halfway through the peer grant project, a formal meeting shall be conducted between all parties involved in the process in effort to check into the project and provide any needed technical assistance.

6. **Eligible Costs**

a) A grant amount up to $10,000 is available for Peer projects. The grantee must provide at least a 10% cash match. The total project costs are not to exceed $11,000. Applicants are encouraged to request the maximum amount and, if selected, funds will be used as
needed or returned if there is an underrun. In the rare event of an overrun, BRC may consider an amendment to the grant agreement to supply additional funding.

b) Eligible costs include BRC-approved consultant fees, travel expenses, subsistence costs, clerical support and printing.

c) Solicitor fees to review draft intergovernmental agreements are an eligible expense.

7. **Grant Payments**
Upon full execution of the grant agreement, grantees are eligible for and strongly encouraged to complete the Partial Payment Request form requesting 50% of the total grant amount and return to the bureau’s Fiscal Unit within two weeks of receiving the fully executed grant agreement. Once the Peer contract is approved and executed, the grantee can use the Partial Payment Request form to draw down up to an additional 40% of the grant amount. The final 10% is held until all closeout documents are received and approved by BRC. Payment forms can be downloaded from the BRC’s [Partnerships Forms and Guidance Documents website](#).

8. **Project Closeout Requirements**
The BRC Project Manager must review and approve the final report before final payment is made to the Peer Consultant.

The BRC Project Manager will provide closeout instructions once the final peer study has been approved. Closeout requirements and final products typically include:

a) An acceptable implementation plan written by the Peer Consultant that outlines study findings; identifies next steps and responsible parties; and contains any other agreed upon project deliverables such as intergovernmental agreements, job descriptions, financial projections, programming guides, etc.

b) A statement from the Peer Consultant certifying that payment in full has been received.

c) A [signed DCNR Planning Project Closeout resolution](#) stating that the grantee accepts the peer consultant’s final report.

d) A completed peer evaluation form.

e) Three (3) bound hard copies and one (1) electronic copy of the final report suitable for posting on the Internet.

f) A final payment request form, properly completed by the grantee (to be submitted [electronically to the BRC fiscal unit](#)).

This policy remains in effect until revised or rescinded.