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Changes to Coastal Program Grant Projects

As a Grantee, you have entered into a grant contract agreement with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). This agreement is a legally binding document that includes the terms and conditions of the award, the work plan (tasks and products), and the approved budget.

During the grant period, it may be necessary to make changes to the grant contract agreement. Generally, these modifications could include changes to the grant timeframe, to the scope of work, or to the budget categories. Should a situation arise that requires any changes to the project, it is the responsibility of the Grantee to communicate immediately with the Grants Specialist.

These instructions provide guidance to submit a change request for a Minnesota's Lake Superior Coastal Program grant funded project; however, it will not be able to address all issues and potential requests. For questions regarding the agreement, amendments, or change requests, contact the Grants Specialist.

Coastal Program Grants Specialist

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Step 1: Identify the Need

Contact the Grants Specialist before submitting a request to confirm if the request is necessary; to determine if the modification is a major or minor change; and identify what follow-up is required. Extensions or changes to the activities (scope) or budget are the most common types of requests.

Extensions

Grantees must complete project activities before the expiration date in the grant contract agreement. If this is not possible, the Grantee may request a no-cost extension. The length of the extension may vary but cannot extend beyond the federal award. Generally, requests are three to six months; however, a longer timeframe may be necessary to accommodate an additional field season.

Before extending the project, the DNR may have to request and receive an extension on the federal award that funds the project. Grantees should communicate with the Coastal Program well in advance of expiration if an extension is likely.

Change in Scope

The Grant Contract Agreement, Attachment B, contains the project description, tasks (activities), and the products that the Grantee must provide to the State after the project is complete. The Grantee must request a change in scope if the project will vary from the agreement. This includes changes to the project description, tasks (activities), or products, as well as changes to a data management plan or to construction methods.

Change in Budget

The approved budget includes grant and local match amounts distributed between predefined categories (e.g., salary, fringe, travel) as identified in Attachment B of the agreement. Each request for reimbursement draws down funds from each category individually.

The Grantee may move up to 10% of the total grant amount between categories without permission. Beyond this 10% threshold, the Grantee should communicate changes to the project budget to the Coastal Program. The program must approve all changes before they occur. Costs incurred by Grantees without approval may not be reimbursable and are at the risk of the Grantee.

Other possible budget changes

- **Addition of a budget category:** The Grantee may request to add a category not previously identified (e.g., unexpected travel expenses or moving contract costs to other.)
- **Out of State Travel:** The Grantee may request travel outside of Minnesota, if there is not out of state travel identified in Attachment B. Foreign travel is not allowed, even to Canada.
- **Change in local match funds:** The Grantee must provide and document local (non-federal) funds; the amount varies based on grant (see Section 4 of the agreement). The Grantee should communicate changes to the proposed match, including source, cost category, or amount.
- **Change in Indirect Cost Rate:** The Coastal Program will accept the federally negotiated indirect cost rate in effect at the time of the expense. If the indirect cost rate changes during the grant period, the Grantee should notify the Coastal Program.
- **Decrease in total grant funds:** If a Grantee does not anticipate expending the entire grant amount, notify the Coastal Program.
- **Increase in total grant funds:** Any change to the overall grant amount requires a written amendment to the original agreement and is at the discretion of the Coastal Program.

Step 2: Submit the request

Grantees must submit requests in writing to the Coastal Program. Grantees may submit requests by either mail or email. **Email is the preferred method** (mlscp.dnr@state.mn.us). Mail requests must be on organization letterhead and addressed to the DNR, Minnesota's Lake Superior Coastal Program, 1568 Highway 2, Two Harbors, MN 55616.

The Grantee may use their organizational process and format for the request. If one does not exist, there is a template on the last page.

The Grantee’s authorized representative should send the request or be copied on the email to ensure compliance with the grant agreement (Section 6).

For an extension

Include project accomplishments to date, explain reasons why the project has not adhered to the timeline or other justification for the extension request, and detail activities for project completion in the time requested. The Coastal Program will judge extension requests on individual merit; the DNR reserves the right to deny any request for extension.

The grantee should submit extension requests a minimum of 75 days prior to project expiration.

For a change in scope

Describe the change and any modifications to the budget and/or activities, including products.

Grantees should submit requests before the activities would occur, recommended 30 days. Grantees should not proceed with the work in the request until approved by the Coastal Program. Any work done without approval is at the Grantee’s risk and may not be reimbursable.

A major modification may require NOAA approval; during which time, work may be suspended. NOAA review may take 60-120 days. The Grantee should plan accordingly.

Depending on review and project changes, it may be difficult to complete the project within the federal award timeframes. Because of this, the Coastal Program may not approve major modifications to project activities.

For a budget change

Provide a brief narrative explanation of the changes proposed. Indicate the amount of funds reduced and the amount added to each budget category. Explain why each change is needed as it relates to the outcomes.

It is the Grantee’s responsibility to submit budget requests in writing, before approval is required.

Example

We are requesting funds be moved from the Supply Category to Personnel (Salary and Fringe).

We are requesting this change because we need more staff time to accomplish Outcome 1. To pay for these costs, we are able to borrow the supplies needed for Outcome 2 from XYZ rather than purchase them.

Category	Approved Budget	Proposed Budget (mm/dd/yyyy)	Amount Spent to Date
Salary	\$10,000	\$12,000	\$6,000
Fringe	\$2,000	\$2,500	\$1,250
Supplies	\$4,500	\$2,000	\$1,000

Step 3: Receive Approval

Minor Changes

Minor modifications generally involve changes to the budget categories or small changes to the project activities. The Coastal Program will approve minor modifications through email correspondence. The Grantee must save the email as a record, per the retention requirements. We will not mail a letter unless requested.

Major Changes

A major modification, such as an extension or significant change in scope, requires an amendment to the grant contract agreement. The Grantee and DNR will process an amendment to the original agreement upon the approval of the request. The Grantee will be required to sign the amendment. After the DNR signs the amendment and returns an executed amendment to the Grantee, the Grantee may proceed with project work.

Both the Grantee and DNR must sign the amendment prior to project expiration.

Changes not permitted

Grantees may not add dirt-moving activities to Task 306 or STAR projects.

Contact the Grants Specialist to determine eligibility.

Example Request

Project [number]

Project [name]

Dear Ms. Westbur,

The [Grantee name] requests a [change in scope, no cost extension] to the State of Minnesota Contract [number] with the DNR, Coastal Program.

[justification]

[budget information, note whether the change is within the current budget or provide detail if the budget must change.]

If you have questions about this request, please contact [project manager, principal investigator name with contact information].

Sincerely,

[authorized representative or designee]