Internal Grants Management System Quick Reference Guide

Designed by Members of NACCHO's Local Public Health Finance Community of Practice

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Local Health Department Internal Grants Management System
Quick Reference Guide

Introduction

Grants management staff must navigate complex systems, processes, and requirements, and an internal guide can help improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their work. **This resource provides a structure and suggested content for local health departments to develop their own Grants Management Quick Reference Guide**. It includes recommended internal and external policies, tracking and reporting templates, and process flows.

How to Use this Guide

Reference this as a detailed template to develop a quick reference guide for your staff that describes your organization's grants management system. There are four areas of recommended information to include in your own Quick Reference Guide:

Section	Description
1. Grants Management Policies and Procedures	Policies guiding your grants management structure, roles and responsibilities, and accompanying procedures.
2. Internal Grants Management Toolbox	Tools and templates to help staff operationalize guidance from Section 1.
3. Financial Oversight and Compliance	Tips and practices to ensure compliance with funder requirements.
4. Resource Maintenance and Contacts	Contact information for staff to answer questions about the Guide and a version history and update plan.

Each section in this resource includes:

- **Description:** A description of the purpose of the section within your Guide
- **Information:** Suggested details to include in the section specific to your organization
- **Tips:** Tips for developing the section, highlighted in orange

Supporting Tools in the Grants Management Tool Repository

The Grants Management Tool Repository is an online library of tools, templates, and examples submitted by local health departments, and is intended to complement the information in this Guide. It is organized according to seven steps of the grants management process, from establishing systems and identifying funding opportunities through closeout and audit. This

Guide may help you identify tools that you would like to provide for staff, and you can reference the Repository for examples from the field.

Instructions:

To access the Repository:

- Join the [Local Public Health Finance Virtual Community]
    - Click the link above to visit the Virtual Community page
    - Click "Log in" at the top right
    - Log-in with your MyNACCHO account, or create one for free
    - Navigate back to the Local Public Health Finance Virtual Community page above and click the green "Join Community" button
- Click "Library" from the menu bar
- In the navigation bar on the left in the Library, click "Grants Management Tool Repository"
    - Click the "+" sign to open sub-folders

To add to the Repository:

- Navigate to the sub-folder to which you would like to add a resource
- Click "Create Entry" to upload a file to that folder
- Follow the prompts to upload and describe your tool, including:
    - Descriptive title
    - Description of the tool's purpose
    - Your health department name, city, and state

Please remove sensitive or proprietary information before submitting a tool.

Whether you are developing this guide to onboard new staff, streamline internal processes, or prepare for audits and reporting, this resource is intended to strengthen your local grants infrastructure while promoting consistency, accountability, and ease of use.

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Grants Management Quick Reference Guide Template

I. Intended Audience and Purpose

The information within your Quick Reference Guide will vary depending on the intended user's role, responsibilities, and familiarity with grants management processes.

Describe the intended audience for your Quick Reference guide (e.g., specific teams, divisions, or roles).

II. Grants Management Policies and Procedures

This section is designed to help LHDs establish clear, consistent, and compliant approaches to managing grant-funded activities. By dividing content into the **policies** (the standards and guidelines) and **procedures** (the way those standards are achieved) of your grants management process, this section equips users with a strong foundation to support both strategic decision-making and day-to-day operations.

Policy/Policies

A policy is a set of guidelines and standards, such as for your organization's grants management structure. It should describe what the standard is and why it exists. A well-defined grants management policy ensures that grant management practices align with organizational goals, funder expectations, and regulatory requirements. It clarifies roles, responsibilities, and expectations across teams, creating a shared understanding of how grants should be managed across the lifecycle.

The Policy section of your Quick Reference Guide will outline important components to include in a Grants Management Policy, including:

- Purpose & Scope of the policy
- Roles & Responsibilities for each role that is relevant to that policy
- Key Grant Compliance Expectations that apply to all grants
- Timeline Alignment: Periods, Deliverables and Budgets to provide a framework for how deliverables align to official timelines

Procedures

The accompanying **procedures** provide the actionable steps and internal workflows needed to implement those policies effectively. These may vary depending on your organization's structure, funding sources, and reporting obligations.

Keep in mind who will be using this section as you complete or customize it – needs may vary depending on the position or department.

A. Grants Management Policy

Purpose & Scope

Describe the intent of your grants management policy and what types of funding it covers (e.g., federal, state, local, private, etc.).

Note: You might have one general Grants Management Policy to include here, or you might outline multiple policies, or link to others that are important to have on hand.

Roles & Responsibilities

Detailed implementation roles are in the RACI matrix in the Procedures section

Role	Responsibilities
Outline key roles involved in grant activities, one role per row (e.g., program director, grants manager)	*Describe what the role is accountable for*

[Include a simplified organizational chart or summary table here]

Key Grant Compliance Expectations

Summarize essential compliance expectations that apply to all grants. Link to any templates that support compliance. Examples:

- **Clear documentation and timely reporting**: Outline expectations around documenting grant-related activities and submitting accurate and timely financial and programmatic reports time.
- **Tracking cost-sharing and overhead requirements:** Explain how your organization will monitor and report any required cost sharing (match) or administrative/overhead costs (indirect) that are part of a grant agreement.
- **Being ready for funder reviews or audits**: Describe the basic expectations your organization has for maintaining organized records and supporting materials in case of monitoring visits, financial reviews, or formal audits.

Timeline Alignment: Periods, Deliverables & Budgets

Describe how grant timeframes (e.g., performance periods, budget cycles, reporting deadlines) align with required deliverables and financial planning. This supports coordination and timely reporting.

Optionally, align with the standard lifecycle of a grant, from pre-award to closeout:

1. *Identify Needs and Stakeholders*

2. *Funding Research*
3. *Develop the Grant Proposal*
4. *Apply/Submit for Funding*
5. *Award Acceptance and Setup*
6. *Implement, Track and Monitor*
7. *Reporting and Communication*
8. *Closeout and Audit Prep*

Tip: Repeat this section if more policies should be included, or link to them.

B. Procedure

Responsible – Accountable – Consulted – Informed (RACI) Matrix

Create a RACI matrix for each major grant activity (e.g., writing proposals, submitting reports, monitoring expenditures) using the table below. Optionally, align with the 8 steps of the grants management cycle (steps 1-3 are provided).

Grant Activity	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed
1. Identify Needs and Stakeholders				
[Activity]	*[Name/Team]*	*[Name/Team]*	*[Name/Team]*	*[Name/Team]*
[Activity]	*[Name/Team]*	*[Name/Team]*	*[Name/Team]*	*[Name/Team]*
2. Funding Research				
[Activity]	*[Name/Team]*	*[Name/Team]*	*[Name/Team]*	*[Name/Team]*
[Activity]	*[Name/Team]*	*[Name/Team]*	*[Name/Team]*	*[Name/Team]*
3. Develop the Grant Proposal				
[Activity]	*[Name/Team]*	*[Name/Team]*	*[Name/Team]*	*[Name/Team]*
[Activity]	*[Name/Team]*	*[Name/Team]*	*[Name/Team]*	*[Name/Team]*

Reporting & Documentation

Define procedures for internal review, approval, and submission of reports, including:

- **Financial reporting:** Outline how financial data is collected, reviewed, and submitted in alignment with funder requirements.
- **Programmatic updates:** Clarify expectations for progress/narrative reporting to ensure alignment between program activities and fiscal reporting.
- **Review and sign-off process:** Describe internal workflows to review and approve reports before submission.

Internal Grants Management Toolbox

This section outlines tools and templates to support day-to-day management of grants. While policies and procedures lay the foundation, the toolbox helps staff operationalize that guidance with resources for planning, communication, data tracking, and collaboration.

The tools you include here should reflect your LHD's internal systems, workflows, and file-sharing practices. This section may be especially useful to program staff and grant managers responsible for implementation and coordination. Use this section to create a workspace that supports continuity across teams and staff transitions. This section may include:

- **Project Management Tools**: The most critical project management tools used by the team/organization that staff should be aware of.
- **Internal Communication Guidance: Ex**pectations to promote strong coordination between departments and across grant teams.
- **Data Collection & Tracking Tools:** Support accurate documentation and monitoring of both programmatic and financial grant activities.
- **File Organization & Documentation Practices:** Establish internal standards for digital file management to improve access and audit readiness.

Project Management Tools

Highlight your organization's preferred project management systems including:

- **Task trackers, calendars, or digital project management platforms** to assign and monitor deadlines, deliverables, and reporting timelines.
- **Shared project plans** that are current and outline requirements and deliverables
- **Project timeline templates** to help staff plan activities and anticipate upcoming requirements by phase or funding period
- **Entrance/exit checklist for staff transitions** to ensure continuity by outlining what knowledge or files must be transferred.

Internal Communication Guidance

Tailor the following guidance for internal communication to your organization:

- **Tips for cross-functional communication:** Offer basic guidance on best practices for communicating across program, finance, and administrative roles.
- **Designated points of contact by role:** Identify who is responsible for different aspects of the grant (e.g., budget, deliverables, compliance), so staff know whom to contact for specific needs.

- **Outline of meeting cadences or collaboration expectations:** Suggest regular check-ins or review meetings to align on status, clarify questions, and ensure accountability.
- **Clarify who interacts with which partners (internal and external):** Help staff understand who is responsible for communicating with funders or contractors.

Data Collection & Tracking Tools

Link to templates and shared documents for data collection and tracking, including:

- **Data collection templates with frequency schedules:** Offer structured formats for gathering consistent data on outcomes, activities, or outputs, along with guidance on how often they should be completed.
- **Internal reporting trackers:** Allow teams to monitor upcoming and completed reports, track due dates, and record submission statuses.
- **Compliance/audit preparation resources:** Help staff document key compliance information throughout the grant period so it is easily accessible for audits or site visits.
- **Grant tracking spreadsheets:** Consolidate grant details such as award dates, contacts, deliverables, and reporting requirements in one place for quick reference.

File Organization & Documentation Practices

Outline the organization's structure for organizing files and documentation, including:

- **Suggested folder structure:** Provide a sample directory layout that standardizes where key documents (e.g., proposals, reports, communications) should be stored.
- **File naming conventions:** Recommend a consistent way to name documents so they are easy to search and identify across teams.
- **Version control guidance:** Offer tips for managing document drafts and final versions to avoid confusion or duplication of efforts.

Financial Oversight and Compliance

This section supports transparency, accuracy, and accountability in the financial management of grants. It outlines key tools and practices to ensure compliance with funder requirements, prevent misuse of funds, and maintain readiness for audits or financial reviews. By using standardized documentation, oversight tools, and reporting protocols, LHDs can strengthen internal controls, streamline communication between finance and program teams, and reduce risk throughout the grant lifecycle.

This section might include:

- **Internal Cost Controls Checklist**: A checklist or summary of internal financial controls used to track, verify, and reconcile grant expenditures
- **Financial Reporting Overview:** Clarify reporting timelines, metrics and responsibilities for external reporting to funders and internal stakeholders.
- **Risk Management Practices:** Outline how your department identifies and mitigates financial risk in grant implementation.
- **Budget Review & Reconciliation Tools:** Provide tools or guidance to support accurate budgeting and regular reconciliation.
- TIP: This section is particularly helpful for finance staff, program leads, and grants managers responsible for budget integrity and reporting.

Internal Cost Control Checklist

Include a link to your Internal Cost Control Checklist and the following instructions:

- **Time and effort documentation:** Ensure that personnel paid by the grant accurately track and certify the time spent on grant-related activities.
- **Invoice approval workflows:** Standardize the review and approval process for purchases or invoices charged to grants.
- **Tracking allowable vs. unallowable costs:** Help staff understand which expenses are eligible under the grant terms and how to document them correctly.

Financial Reporting Overview

Provide guidance around the following related to financial reporting:

- **Frequency of reports (e.g., monthly, quarterly):** Specify the timing of required financial reports based on funder requirements or internal policies.
- **Required financial metrics:** Outline the data points (e.g., expenditures, encumbrances, budget variances) that must be tracked and reported.

- **Sign-off process before submission:** Describe internal steps for reviewing and approving financial reports before sending them to funders.
- **Reporting to local government or boards:** Include procedures or expectations for sharing financial updates with local governing bodies or leadership.

Risk Management Practices

Provide the following resources for risk management:

- **Risk checklists or assessments:** Offer templates or guidelines to help staff assess financial or operational risk areas at various stages of the grant.
- **Internal reviews of grant budgets and expenditures:** Encourage regular reviews to catch inconsistencies, identify issues early and maintain compliance.
- **Monitoring for compliance issues:** Help staff track indicators that could signal non-compliance with federal, state, or grantor regulations, such as missed deadlines or spending outside the approved budget.

Budget Review & Reconciliation Tools

Link to the following templates and resources for budget review and reconciliation:

- **Budget templates for proposal and monitoring:** Provide standardized formats for preparing grant budgets and comparing projected vs. actual expenditures.
- **Salary projection tools:** Help estimate personnel costs over the grant period and adjust for changes in staffing or time allocation.
- **Amendment tracking templates:** Document changes to the approved budget and ensure they are submitted and approved as required.
- **Processes for updating budgets after staffing changes:** Clarify how salary or role shifts should be reflected in the grant budget and internal documentation.

Resource Maintenance & Contacts

> Ensure your Grants Management Quick Reference Guide remains accurate, relevant, and responsive to user needs over time by outlining a process for updating the Guide.

Contact for Questions or Updates

List the individual or team responsible for maintaining this resource and addressing questions:

Primary Contact Name	*[Name]*
Title/Role	*[Title/Role]*
Email/Phone	*[Email/Phone]*

Version History & Update Plan

Describe how frequently the guide is to be updated and the approval process. For example: This Quick Reference Guide is to be updated *[frequency of updates, e.g., "annually", "semi-annually", "as needed"]* and approved by *[approver team, division, or office].*

Version	Date Updated	Updated By	Summary of Changes
[e.g., "V 1.0"]	*[MM/DD/YYYY]*	*[Name, Title]*	*[e.g., "Initial version"]*

Feedback Process

Provide a method for staff to offer feedback to the Quick Reference Guide. For example:

> "Have any ideas to improve this guide? We'd love your input! To provide feedback, suggest improvements, or flag outdated content, please contact *[name and contact information]*. Feedback will be reviewed *[method/timeline of review, e.g., "at quarterly team meetings".]*"

Thank you!

Thank you for reviewing this resource. If you have suggestions for improvements, or would like to recommend additional resources, please contact NACCHO's Performance Improvement team at pi@naccho.org.