

**261—221.4(88GA,SF608) Program eligibility, application scoring, and funding decisions.**

**221.4(1) Program eligibility.** An applicant must meet the following eligibility criteria to qualify for financial assistance under this program:

- a. The applicant must meet the definition of “applicant” in rule 261—221.2(88GA,SF608).
- b. If the applicant is not a local government entity, the applicant must demonstrate support from the local government entity as evidenced by a letter of support.
- c. The applicant must serve a city that has a population of 20,000 or less and that is not contiguous to a city with a population of 40,000 or greater.
- d. The applicant must demonstrate the capacity for administering a grant.
- e. The applicant must provide a cash match of at least 50 cents for every dollar awarded as a grant under this program.
- f. The applicant must demonstrate that the project does not consist of ongoing expenses for existing projects or programs.

**221.4(2) Application scoring criteria.** All completed applications will be reviewed and scored. Each application will be scored using criteria set forth by the authority, which may include the following:

- a. Alignment with program purpose. The application should demonstrate that the project aligns with the program purpose by developing a nontraditional, concrete solution to increase rural community vibrancy.
- b. Solution-oriented. The application should demonstrate that the project will address rural challenges through exceptional and creative solutions.
- c. Replicability. The application should demonstrate a clear opportunity for successful replication in rural communities across the state.
- d. Roles defined. The application should identify and describe the roles of all partners involved in the project.
- e. Project goals and timeline. The application should demonstrate clearly defined, measurable goals and a timeline for execution of the project.
- f. Project budget and financing. The application should include a complete budget that provides clear justification for all costs. The application should also demonstrate secured financing and that the cash match requirement has been met.

**221.4(3) Funding decisions.** Funding decisions will be made using the following process:

- a. Staff review. Each application will be reviewed by staff for eligibility and completeness. Complete applications meeting all eligibility requirements will be sent to a grant committee.
- b. Grant committee review and recommendation. Following staff review, a grant committee will review and score applications using the criteria set forth by the authority pursuant to subrule 221.4(2) and will make funding recommendations. The committee may utilize an outside technical panel if the committee determines additional expertise is necessary to review and score the application. The application and score will be referred to the director with a recommendation as to whether to fund the project and, if funding is recommended, a recommendation as to the amount of the grant.
- c. Director’s decision. The director will make the final funding decision on each application, taking into consideration the amount of available funding and the grant committee’s recommendation. The director may approve, deny, or defer funding for any application.
- d. Notification. Each applicant will be notified in writing of the funding decision within 15 days of the director’s decision.

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