

**Minnesota Department of Administration  
Office of Grants Management  
Operating Policy and Procedure  
Issue Date: 7/15/08  
Policy Number: 08-02**

**Policy on Rating Criteria for Competitive Grant Review**

**Statutory Reference**

**Minn. Stat. 16B.97 Grants Management**

**Policy**

Minnesota Statutes 16B.97 subd. 4(a)(1) provides that the Commissioner of Administration shall “create general grants management policies and procedures that are applicable to all executive agencies.”

It is the policy of the State of Minnesota to ensure fairness, precision and consistency in competitive grant awards. State competitive grant review processes shall be conducted using review criteria that are identified in the notice of grant opportunity or request for proposal and a standardized scoring system to rate each application against the chosen criteria.

**Scope of Coverage**

This policy applies to all executive branch grant-making agencies, boards, committees, councils, authorities and task forces.

This policy applies only to competitive grant review processes. Legislatively-named, formula and sole/single source grants processes are not subject to this policy.

This policy supersedes other state agency policies that concern competitive grant awards except when the existing state agency policy is stricter.

Grant programs that seek an exemption to this policy must complete a Grants Policy Exception Request and submit it to the Office of Grants Management for the approval of the Commissioner of Administration.

**Definitions**

Competitive Grant:

A competitive grant is a grant that is awarded through an application process in which multiple grant applications are reviewed and grants are awarded to those applicants that most closely meet the selection criteria identified by the granting agency. Procedurally, in a competitive grants process, a state agency issues a grant opportunity notice or request for proposal and eligible grant-seekers submit a grant application. Grants are awarded to the applicants that are rated the highest against the selection criteria, based on the availability of grant funds.

#### Review Criteria:

The review criteria for a competitive grant process are the standards by which the grant applications will be evaluated. Typically, review criteria are based both on the programmatic requirements and on an applicant's ability to carry out the grant.

Review criteria may include, but are not limited to the following: project need, project sustainability, soundness of approach, probability of achieving results, financial management capacity (accounting, timekeeping, and funds management), project funds raised to-date, geographic coverage, and knowledge of the community being served. The applicant's past performance as a grantee of that state agency should also be considered when evaluating a grant application.

#### Notice of Grant Opportunity/RFP:

A notice of grant opportunity or request for proposal is a document that notifies grant seekers of a competitive grant opportunity and includes information on grant requirements, selection criteria, timelines and process.

#### Standardized Scoring System:

A standardized scoring system is a rating system that assesses how well each grant application conforms to each of the selected criterion. Grant applications are assigned a score for each criterion, based upon the extent to which they meet the standard. Scores for each criterion are tallied to arrive at a cumulative score for each application. The most important criteria to the success of the grant program should have the highest potential score.

### **Procedures**

1. Grant review criteria are selected and ranked according to their importance to the purpose of the grant program before the grant request for proposal/notice is written and circulated.
2. The notice of grant opportunity/RFP describes the selection criteria and their relative weight in the ranking system.
3. Agency staff develop a grant application scoring sheet that facilitates the scoring process and the scoring sheet is used by all reviewers. To score grant applications with the highest degree of precision, it is recommended though not required, that agencies use a numeric (quantitative) scoring system rather than qualitative rating or ranking systems.
4. Grant review teams conduct a review meeting or conference call to discuss each application and its score.
5. After the grant review team has met and the scores have been finalized, state agency staff may incorporate the scores into final funding recommendations that

may also be based on geographic distribution, services to special populations, and the applicant's history as a state grantee and capacity to perform the work.