



Capital Development Board Merit Based Review Policy

Merit-Based Review is required for all competitive grants in Illinois including those funded fully or partially with Federal funds, Federal-Pass Through grants, and State funded grants. Those grants shall comply with the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA), 30 ILCS 708, and 2 CFR 200 Uniform Requirements.

A. Receipt of Grant Applications

All applications should be submitted using the State Grant Management System, Amplifund. Amplifund records the date and time of each submission, along with the submitting applicant and the title of the grant proposal. If electronic submission is not possible, paper applications may be submitted. CDB will record each paper application received in a spreadsheet that will be combined with the Amplifund report once the application period closes.

- a. Applications received via Amplifund cannot be submitted unless deemed complete.
- b. Applications received on paper will be reviewed for completeness and compliance with statutory requirements found at <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/GATA/Pages/default.aspx>. Any applications found to be incomplete, with the exception of a signature, or non-compliant will be deemed ineligible and the applicant will be informed of such by email.
 - If a paper application is missing a required signature, the applicant will be notified by email and will be given 2 business days from the time of notification to resubmit its application with the required signatures.
 - The resubmission must be post marked within 2 business days and received no later than 7 business days after notification and mailed at the applicant's expense. The applicant may not change any part of the application during that time, except to add required signatures. In the event, that the applicant changes any part of the application other than for signature purposes, the application will be deemed ineligible.

B. Grant Record

CDB shall keep a file of the grant award process that includes the written determination of award, grant application, and requirements. The Grant Award file shall be available to Federal and State audit organizations, the Office of the Auditor General, and the Executive Inspector General.

C. Competitive Grant Evaluation

Evaluation criteria for competitive grant programs will include at a minimum:

- a. Need: Identification of stakeholders, facts and evidence that demonstrate the proposal supports the grant program purpose.
- b. Capacity: The ability of an entity to execute the grant project according to project requirements.
- c. Quality: The totality of features and characteristics of a service, project or product that indicates its ability to satisfy the requirements of the grant program.

The program Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) will detail all evaluation criteria, and the relative importance of each, as it relates to assessment and scoring of applications.

D. Merit Based Review

The evaluation process for competitive grants shall include:

- a. A statement of evaluation criteria in the NOFO. The NOFO shall state all criteria and their relative importance, including preferences, technical assistance options, and tie breakers, if necessary.
- b. A statement in the NOFO identifying whether there are multiple phases of evaluation, which may include a description of the evaluation phases.
- c. Review based solely on criteria identified in the NOFO. In the event of a required change to the evaluation criteria prior to submission the grant applications, applicants shall be informed by publication of the change on the CDB website and other accessible locations, as determined by CDB.
- d. Cost sharing when applicable. Cost sharing must be specifically defined as to how it will be considered, such as to assign a certain number of additional points to applicants who offer cost sharing or to break ties among applications with equivalent scores after evaluation of all other factors. Cost sharing as an evaluation factor must include any restrictions on the types of costs that are acceptable (e.g. in-kind contributions).
- e. Evaluation shall be conducted by a committee. Evaluation Committee members shall be determined by CDB, tailored to the particular grant application, and include technical or other personnel with appropriate expertise to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of applicants.
 - Evaluation Committee members must not have any conflicts of interest or apparent conflicts of interest.
 - Persons shall not be evaluation committee members for programs for which they have submitted an application or if they represent an entity which has submitted an application. Exceptions may be made when required by statute.
 - Evaluation Committee members must sign a Confidentiality Agreement and Conflict of Interest Disclosure to participate in the evaluation process.
 - Evaluation Committee members shall be assigned a code for identification of their evaluation process. Evaluator names will only be available for audit or litigation purposes.
 - The Evaluation Committee members may be removed by CDB's director or designee for cause, such as failure to comply with directions of the grant application and/or evaluation process, or to ensure the integrity of the grant program. CDB's director or designee shall state in writing his or her reasons for removing a Committee member.
- f. Evaluation shall be based on numerical rating, unless another scoring methodology is more appropriate given the unique circumstances of the grant program. At a minimum, the scoring methodology must contain:
 - A scoring tool that reflects the evaluation criteria and ranking set forth in the NOFO
 - Individual scoring will be completed for each Evaluation Committee member, independent of the whole committee.
 - A summary score report that shows the comparative scores and resulting finalists for award. Competitive grant applications shall be ranked from high score to low score.
 - Any significant or substantial variance between evaluator scores shall be reviewed and documented, including any revisions for individual scores.
- g. If an award decision is made after the Merit Based Review is performed, CDB shall verify that the entity has completed the following pre-award requirements:
 - Grantee pre-qualification,
 - Conflict of Interest and Mandatory Disclosures, and
 - Fiscal and Administrative Risk Assessment (ICQ).

E. Award

- a. An award shall be made pursuant to a written determination based on the evaluation criteria set forth in the NOFO and successful completion of any finalist requirements.
- b. A Notice of State Award (NOSA) will be issued to the Merit Based finalists that have successfully completed all grant award requirements. The NOSA provides the Merit Based finalist with information to make an informed decision on accepting the grant award. The NOSA shall include:

- The terms and conditions of the award.
 - Specific conditions assigned to the grantee based on the fiscal, administrative, and programmatic risk assessments and the merit-based review.
- c. Upon acceptance of the grant award, announcement of the grant award shall be published by the awarding agency to Grants.Illinois.gov.
- d. A written Notice of Denial shall be sent to the applicants not receiving awards.
- F. Merit-Based Evaluation Appeal Process
- a. Competitive grant appeals are limited to the evaluation process. Evaluation scores may not be protested. Only the evaluation process is subject to appeal.
- b. Appeals Review Officer – CDB’s director or designee may appoint one or more Appeal Review Officers (ARO) to consider the grant-related appeals and make a recommendation to the director or designee for resolution.
- c. Submission of Appeal
- An appeal must be submitted in writing in accordance with the NOFO.
 - An appeal must be received within 14 calendar days after the date that the grant award notice has been published.
 - The written appeal shall include at a minimum the following:
 - the name and address of the appealing party,
 - identification of the grant, and
 - a statement of reasons for the appeal.
- d. Response to Appeal
- CDB must acknowledge receipt of an appeal within fourteen (14) calendar days from the date the appeal is received.
 - CDB should respond to the appeal within 60 calendar days or supply a written explanation to the appealing party as to why additional time is required.
 - The appealing party must supply any additional information requested by CDB within the time period set forth in the request.
- e. Stay of Grant Agreement/Contract Execution
- When an appeal is received, the execution of the grant agreement/contract shall be stayed until the appeal is resolved; or
 - The director or designee determines the needs of the State require moving forward with the grant execution.
 - The state need determination and rationale shall be documented in writing.
- f. Resolution
- The ARO shall make a recommendation to the director or designee as expeditiously as possible after receiving all relevant, requested information.
 - In determining the appropriate recommendation, the ARO shall consider the integrity of the grant process and the impact of the recommendation on CDB.
 - CDB will resolve the appeal by means of written determination.
 - The determination shall include, but not be limited to:
 - review of the appeal,
 - appeal determination, and
 - rationale for the determination.
- g. Effect of Judicial Proceedings. If an action concerning the appeal has commenced in a court or administrative body, the director or designee may defer resolution of the appeal pending the judicial or administrative

determination.