



Chester County
Vision Partnership Program
Cash Grant Manual

January 2025



Vision Partnership Program Cash Grant Manual

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VISION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

CASH GRANT MANUAL

1.0 Program Overview

The Vision Partnership Program (VPP) is a grant available to Chester County municipalities and multi-municipal groups seeking to improve their planning programs while achieving consistency with and implementation of the goals, objectives, recommendations, and map of *Landscapes3*.

There are two (2) VPP cash grant application rounds per year, funding permitting, in the spring and again in the fall, with notification to municipalities approximately two (2) months in advance of the application deadline. Rounds are announced via the Chester County Planning Commission website (www.chescoplanning.org) and an email to all municipalities.

This manual provides the guidelines and procedures for successfully applying for, obtaining, and completing a VPP cash grant. If the municipality, multi-municipal group, or their consultant fail to adhere to the provisions of this manual the County reserves the right to deny an application, rescind a grant, or deny reimbursement.

2.0 Program Purpose

Recognizing the benefits of grant awards to municipal planning projects, the Chester County Board of Commissioners established VPP in 1996 to promote cooperation between local governments and the County while implementing *Landscapes*, the County's Comprehensive Plan. The program was revised in 2010 to reflect *Landscapes2* and revised again in 2019 to reflect *Landscapes3*.

The purpose of VPP is to advance consistency with and implementation of the county comprehensive plan while accomplishing impactful, lasting, and positive benefits for municipalities through innovative municipal planning; multi-municipal planning; and new and revised municipal plans, ordinances, and planning studies that address opportunities and issues of community concern.

3.0 Eligibility

Meeting eligibility requirements is not a guarantee of grant funding under the Vision Partnership Program.

3.1 Eligible Applicants

- A. The VPP cash grant program is open to all Chester County municipalities which have endorsed or acknowledged *Landscapes3*. Eligible applicants include a single municipality or a multi-municipal group, which may consist of two (2) or more contiguous municipalities or two (2) or more municipalities when located in the same school district. The application shall identify and be submitted by a lead municipality in the case of a multi-municipal group application.

- B. To ensure proper grant administration and promote successful completion of projects, municipalities are encouraged to complete VPP projects funded under previous rounds before applying for additional VPP funding. However, the Chester County Planning Commission may consider approving municipalities to undertake more than one VPP funded project at a time on a case-by-case basis.
- C. Municipalities involved in a multi-municipal comprehensive plan shall not be eligible for VPP funding to undertake a full comprehensive plan update at the same time as the contract term of the multi-municipal plan. Partial updates to a specific comprehensive plan section, such as the historic resources plan, may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

3.2 General Project Eligibility

- A. The project shall advance one or more of the *Landscapes3* goals and objectives and implement one or more of the *Landscapes3* recommendations at the municipal or multi-municipal level.
- B. Projects enabled by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), Act 247, as amended, such as comprehensive plans (or elements thereof) or ordinances, shall demonstrate compliance with the requirements of the MPC. Projects not adopted under the provisions of the MPC are defined as “Planning Studies” for the purposes of VPP.
- C. General project types that may be eligible include plans, ordinances, ordinance amendments, and planning studies.
- D. Projects shall be supported by a municipal or multi-municipal comprehensive plan that was adopted within the prior ten (10) years, unless the municipality has undergone the formal review process as outlined in Section 301(c) of the MPC or the applicant provides documentation identifying why the urgency of the proposed project supersedes the need for an update of their comprehensive plan.

3.3 Eligible Projects

Table 3-1 identifies projects that are eligible for funding under VPP. Projects not specifically listed will be considered for funding based on their consistency with and implementation of *Landscapes3*.

| Table 3-1 Eligible Projects |
|---|
| Comprehensive Plan |
| Open Space, Park, and Recreation Plan (to include a greenway plan) |
| Zoning Ordinance and Amendments (to include amendments specific to topic areas such as agriculture, historic resources, natural resources, housing, traditional neighborhood development, form-based code, transfer of development rights, and establishing mixed-use, diverse, walkable communities) |
| Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance and Amendments (to include amendments specific to topic areas such as bicyclist/pedestrian circulation)) |
| Official Map and Ordinance |
| Urban Center Revitalization Plan |
| Resource Protection/Stewardship Plan (addressing topics such as open space, natural resources (including woodland inventories and forestation/woodland management), parks, scenic resources, and historic and cultural resources |
| Environmental and Community Sustainability/Resilience Plan/Study (to include energy conservation, clean energy transition) |
| Community Design Guide (addressing topics such as housing, historic resources, and villages) |
| Village Master Plan |
| Heritage Interpretation Plan (in accordance with <i>Preserving Our Places</i> , CCPC, 1998) |
| Historic Resource Survey in accordance with Pennsylvania Historic & Museum Commission (PHMC) standards |
| Housing Plan/Study |
| Economic Development Study |
| Transportation Corridor Plan/Study |
| Streetscape Master Plan |
| Multimodal Plan/Study |
| Trail Feasibility Study |
| Plans/Ordinances that support transition to renewable or alternative energy |
| Agricultural Economic Development Plan |
| <p><i>Note:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Projects not adopted under the provisions of the MPC are defined as “Planning Studies” for the purposes of VPP.</i> - <i>Project types not specifically identified in this table may be considered on a case-by-case basis.</i> |

3.4 Ineligible Projects

Funding through VPP is not intended for land acquisition, equipment, projects undertaken by municipal staff, or capital expenses. The following list provides additional examples of projects that are **not** eligible:

- A. Plans, ordinances and studies that are inconsistent with the goals, objectives, recommendations, or map of *Landscapes3*;
- B. Act 537 Sewage Facilities plans and updates;
- C. Park master plans (state funding is available from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources);
- D. Capital improvement plans;
- E. Engineering;
- F. Road maintenance plans;
- G. Building codes and similar products;
- H. Building feasibility studies/designs;
- I. Geographic Information System hardware or software purchases;
- J. Capital improvements;
- K. Land acquisitions;
- L. Those portions of otherwise eligible projects commenced prior to a VPP cash grant contract; and
- M. Projects that have received funding under another Chester County grant program (projects eligible for more than one County grant program will be directed to the most appropriate program).

4.0 Grant Criteria

- 4.1 Applications shall be reviewed and scored by Chester County Planning Commission staff. Funding recommendations shall be made by the Chester County Planning Commission, and contracts shall be forwarded to the Board of County Commissioners for final approval.
- 4.2 The County reserves the right to offer a grant of a lesser amount than requested.
- 4.3 Municipalities not receiving an award may contact the VPP Grant Administrator at the Chester County Planning Commission for feedback as to how their grant application was scored and how future applications could be improved.

4.4 Applications shall be reviewed and scored based on the criteria in Table 4-1. The weight indicates the maximum number of points that can be awarded in each category.

| Table 4-1 Project Evaluation Criteria | | | Weight |
|--|---|---|---------------|
| 1 | Consistency and advancement of Landscapes3 | Address the proposed project’s primary consistency with and/or advancement of each of the following Landscapes3 elements: 1 - goals (Preserve, Protect, Appreciate, Live, Proper, Connect); 2 - map designations (such as Urban Center, Suburban Center, etc.); 3 - recommendations; focusing on the specific goals, map designation/s, and recommendations that are most appropriate to the proposed project | 20 |
| 2 | What achievements and impacts | Address what the project will achieve , including the degree and extent of positive impact the project will accomplish for the community, noting the populations served, community goals advanced (such as those identified in a comprehensive plan or other plan/study), and anticipated future conditions | 20 |
| 3 | Why needed now | Address why the project is needed now , including the reasons that create urgency in undertaking a planning project at this point in time | 10 |
| 4 | How implemented | Address how the project will be implemented after completion, including timing and specific methods to advance implementation | 10 |
| 5 | Multi-municipal | Address whether the project is being proposed by a multi-municipal group, the geographic extent that the project will serve and/or benefit, and coordination with any non-applicant municipality | 10 |
| 6 | Outreach and engagement process | Describe the outreach and engagement process for municipal officials (elected and appointed), the public, and partners for development of the plan/ordinance/study | 10 |
| 7 | Tasks, deliverables, and schedule | Describe the primary project tasks to achieve the project, the key deliverables to be developed, reviewed, and finalized, and the overall schedule , including key milestones (tasks and deliverables shall be described in the criteria response; schedule only may be uploaded as a separate document) | 10 |
| 8 | Cost-effectiveness and economic factors | Describe the cost-effectiveness and economic factors of the project, including a comparison of the impact/return of the project relative to the overall cost, the impact/return relative to the county funding sought (including information on any municipal match contribution above the required minimum and any funding other than county or municipal contributions), and the economic need of the municipality | 10 |
| | | Total | 100 |

5.0 Funding

5.1 Funding and Match Requirements

- A. The Board of County Commissioners shall determine funding availability for each grant application round.
- B. Maximum funding levels for eligible projects by type of project are noted in Table 5-1.

| Table 5-1 Funding Levels | | |
|--|-------------------------|---|
| Type of Project | Adoption vs. Acceptance | Total Possible Funding Award |
| Plans or Ordinances* | Adopt | \$50,000 plus \$10,000 for each additional municipality |
| Planning Studies** | Accept | \$30,000 plus \$5,000 for each additional municipality |
| <p><i>Notes:</i> *Eligible projects such as comprehensive plans, revitalization plans, open space plans, and ordinances adopted under the provisions of the MPC. **Eligible projects that are not adopted under the provisions of the MPC.</p> | | |

C. Matching Funds

1. The minimum required local match shall be forty (40) percent of the total eligible project cost for single or multi-municipal group projects.
2. Non-municipal funds are permitted to be part of the overall local match, provided that a minimum of ten (10) percent of the total eligible project costs shall be provided directly by the municipality or multi-municipal group.
3. The municipality or multi-municipal group may use one hundred (100) percent of a VPP grant as a match for any federal, state, regional or private funds if the proposed project meets the requirements listed under Section 3.0 of this Grant Manual. Matching funds may not come from any other Chester County funded program. Any VPP award intended to be used as such a match can be held for nine (9) months from the date of the VPP award notification. If VPP funds are to be used as matching funds for another grant program, the municipal sponsor shall provide proof of grant award within nine (9) months of the VPP award, otherwise the VPP program administrator must be contacted for consultation.
4. The municipal match requirement may NOT be met through in-kind municipal services.
5. Matching funds shall be secured at the time of application.

D. Financing

1. The municipality, or municipalities in the event of a multi-municipal project, shall be responsible for payment of project invoices during project development and completion.

2. Reimbursement for the portion of the project funded by the VPP grant occurs after the project has been adopted or accepted, as applicable, and a reimbursement application with required documentation has been submitted. (See Section 8.o.)
3. The municipality, or municipalities as applicable, shall retain ten (10) percent of the total project fee until which time the final project has met the terms of the contract and scope of work as determined through the Final VPP Review.

5.2 Eligible Costs

The following costs are considered eligible for reimbursement if they are included in and directly related to the project scope of work attached to the executed grant contract:

- A. Professional planning consultant fees;
- B. Data collection and analysis;
- C. Mapping and graphics;
- D. Monthly duplicating costs of deliverables;
- E. Mailing costs, such as for mailings to municipal residents, not to exceed five (5) percent of the total eligible costs for the project;
- E. Review of draft materials by non-planning professionals, such as attorneys or engineers, not to exceed ten (10) percent of the total eligible costs for the project (note: this must be described specifically in the project scope of work);
- F. Travel costs, such as mileage for required meetings, not to exceed two (2) percent of the total eligible costs for the project; and
- G. Publication of the adopted document, up to thirty (30) copies.

5.3 Ineligible Costs

The following costs shall not be eligible for reimbursement:

- A. Costs associated with the preparation and submittal of the grant application;
- B. Rental of meeting facilities;
- C. Advertising costs;
- D. Land acquisition;
- E. Food or refreshments;
- F. Equipment and other capital costs;
- G. Expenses incurred prior to the contract start date or after the contract end date; and

- H. Other costs deemed ineligible by the Chester County Planning Commission.

6.0 Grant Application

6.1 Application Requirements

Municipalities shall comply with the following requirements when preparing an application:

- A. The municipality shall submit an application through the Chester County Planning Commission’s website: www.chescoplanning.org
- B. Only one (1) project per municipality may be submitted per grant round.
- C. Individual Pre-Application Meetings: Applicants are encouraged to schedule a pre-application meeting with the Grant Administrator to discuss their proposed project, including questions regarding consultant selection, project eligibility, or the application process. Deadlines to request pre-application meetings will be established for individual grant cycles and distributed via the Planning Commission website.
- D. A municipality may select a qualified project consultant prior to applying for VPP funding or receiving a VPP award. However, the municipality **shall not** enter into a formal agreement with a consulting firm for planning services directly tied to the grant application project during the application process. If a grant is awarded, the County will prepare a contract for all parties to review and sign.

6.2 Multi-Municipal Applications

In addition to the requirements noted in Section 6.1, a multi-municipal group applicant shall designate a single municipality as the lead municipality and file only one (1) application. The lead municipality shall be responsible for administration of the contract, and all communications and transactions shall be directed through the lead municipality.

6.3 Application Contents

The online application process consists of five primary components, four of which are mandatory:

- Applicant Contact Information, Project Type and Description, and Funding
- Evaluation Criteria Responses
- Letters of Commitment
- Consultant Qualifications (if applicable)
- Designated Official

Appendix A notes the full information required through the online application but is not intended for submission by an applicant. **All applications must be submitted through the online application portal**, available at www.chescoplanning.org.

- A. Applicant Contact Information, Project Type and Description, and Funding:

This portion of the application is completed online, identifying the applicant's name, municipal contact, consultant contact (if applicable), project type (plan, ordinance, or planning study), brief project description, and funding breakdown (request for county funding and proposed municipal match in dollars and percent of overall project cost). Projects that will be adopted under the MPC require the applicant to verify that the project will comply with the MPC.

B. Evaluation Criteria Responses:

This portion of the application is completed online, providing individual responses to the eight (8) criteria identified in Table 4-1.

C. Letters of Commitment:

Letters of commitment shall be uploaded as part of the application process. Applications submitted without letters of commitment shall be considered incomplete.

1. **Municipal:** For a single municipality project, one letter is required, and shall be signed by a member of the governing body. Municipal letters of commitment shall include:
 - a. A commitment to forming a project task force (see section 8.2.B.5 for recommended VPP task force composition);
 - b. A commitment to the funding details of the project, to include identification of the proposed municipal share of the cost and notation of the understanding that the grant program reimburses after adoption or acceptance (as applicable) of the project; and
 - c. Identification of the individual officially designated to submit the application (see Section 6.3.E).
2. **Multi-municipal:** For multi-municipal projects, each municipality shall submit a letter signed by a member of the governing body. Such letter shall include those items identified in Section 6.3.C.1.a – c, as well as acknowledgement of which municipality is acting as the lead for the application and the individual municipality share of the overall cost.
3. **Other Funding Sources:** Should non-municipal funds be proposed as part of the local match, documentation of the financial commitment from the entity providing the funds shall be provided.

D. Consultant Qualifications:

If a consultant has been selected prior to the application, information in accordance with Section 7.2.D shall be uploaded as part of the application. Applicants that intend to select a consultant after receipt of an award are exempt from this requirement and should refer to Section 7.2.E for requirements.

E. Designated Official Submission:

An individual designated by the municipality or municipalities in the case of a multi-municipal application (and identified on the municipal letter of commitment) shall date and submit the application to complete the application process.

7.0 Consultant Selection and Qualifications

7.1 Consultant Selection

- A. A qualified professional consulting firm shall be retained to complete projects eligible under the cash grant program.
- B. Municipalities may wish to obtain multiple proposals. While not required, the request for proposal (RFP) process provides the municipality an opportunity to select the best consultant, scope, and cost.
- C. The municipality may select a qualified consulting firm prior to the submission of an application or after a grant is awarded.
- D. In all cases, whether chosen prior to or after the grant award, the municipality **shall not** enter into a formal agreement (in accordance with Section 6.1.D) with the consultant until the consultant is approved by the Grant Administrator. (See Section 8.1 regarding Contract Development)
- E. Selection Timeline
 - 1. **If the applicant chooses to select a consultant after the grant is awarded, the consultant shall be selected within one hundred twenty (120) days of the date of the grant award notification for a single municipality project, and within one hundred eighty (180) days of the date of the grant award notification for a multi-municipal project.** Extensions to these time frames may be provided at the discretion of the Planning Commission upon receipt of a written request by the municipality or lead municipality in the case of a multi-municipal group. Such written request shall provide information on the need for the extension and details on the schedule to select a consultant.
 - 2. If the VPP grant is to be used as a match for another grant program, additional flexibility in the consultant selection timing may be permitted in accordance with Section 5.1.C.3.
- F. A grant award shall be denied or rescinded if the selected consulting firm(s) is not qualified to undertake the proposed project. **The Grant Administrator should be contacted for a determination on qualifications prior to final consultant selection.**
- G. Failure to adhere to requirements regarding consultant selection may result in the loss of the grant award.

7.2 Consultant Qualifications

- A. Consultant qualification requirements are intended to ensure that the final product will be comprehensive; accurate; consistent with the MPC where applicable; consistent with the goals, objectives, recommendations, and map of *Landscapes3*; and tailored to the municipality's needs and character. **Failure to adhere to requirements regarding consultant qualifications will result in the loss of the grant award.**
- B. The County will review qualifications to determine if the consultant(s) is qualified for the proposed project. The County will make the final determination of consulting firm and lead planner eligibility.
- C. Consultants shall qualify on a project-by-project basis.
- D. Consultant Selection Prior to Application: If the consultant has been chosen by the applicant in advance of the grant award, the following information shall be provided with the application.
 - 1. Project Profiles: A summary of the consulting firm's experience on projects of similar scope and size and with municipalities of similar character, size and structure. The consulting firm may also submit a summary of projects not directly related to the proposed project, but which demonstrate successful project management including product delivery and municipal client satisfaction. Not to exceed six (6) pages.
 - 2. References: A minimum of two (2) and a maximum of four (4) references and contact numbers.
 - 3. Project Organizational Chart and Staff Resumes: A description of staff resources, including brief resumes, identification of the lead planner, (see 7.2.D.4) and primary team members to be assigned to the proposed project. Not to exceed six (6) pages.
 - 4. Lead Planner Qualifications: A resume and other relevant description of the lead planner shall be included, not to exceed three (3) pages. The lead planner shall be primarily responsible for the execution of the scope of work, act as the principle contact with the various stakeholders, and attend the majority of work sessions, public meetings, and public hearings as outlined in the scope of work. The minimum qualifications of the lead planner are as follows.
 - a. Bachelor's or Master's Degree in Planning, Landscape Architecture, or related field, from an accredited college or university. Membership in the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) is preferred.
 - b. A minimum of five (5) years of professional planning experience, at least two (2) of which have been in Pennsylvania. This experience shall include primary responsibility for major planning projects, experience in municipalities of similar size and character, and proficiency in the primary tasks of the proposed project.

- c. Proven experience in:
 - i. Project management;
 - ii. Working with municipal officials to establish public policies and programs;
 - iii. Analyzing the consequences of recommended actions; and
 - iv. Applying elements of the planning process, including problem identification, goal setting, identifying alternatives, implementation, and evaluation.

- E. Consultant Selection after Award: If the consultant will be chosen after the grant award has been made, information in accordance with Section 7.2.D.1 – 7.2.D.4 shall be provided to the Grant Administrator during the municipality’s or multi-municipal group’s consultant selection process, and prior to final selection and entering a formal agreement with the consultant (in accordance with Section 6.1.D).

8.0 Awarded Projects – Contractual Requirements

8.1 Contract Development

- A. Following review and action of the Chester County Planning Commission Board, all applicants will be notified of the status of their application.

- B. Grant recipients will coordinate with the Grant Administrator to select a consultant, if necessary, and develop a full scope of work for attachment to a contract. See Section 7.2.E for details on selection of a consultant after a grant award.

- C. The scope of work may be revised during contract development. The Grant Administrator shall have final approval of the scope of work. The scope of work shall include the following:
 - 1. Project Tasks:
Project tasks shall include a detailed description of the specific services to be performed and the various section, articles, or chapters of the document. Deliverables by task should be noted.

 - 2. Public Participation, Meetings, and Hearings:
This section shall indicate the number, purpose, and expected outcomes of:
 - Work sessions;
 - MPC mandated public meetings and hearings; and
 - Plan for involvement of municipal officials, the public, and partners/stakeholders.

Involvement of municipal officials (including elected, appointed, and staff), the public, partners, and other stakeholders should be accomplished through a combination of methods that facilitates input and feedback throughout the project, including opportunities early in the process and diverse options that are accessible to the various audiences.

- 3. **Products:**
Summary of task deliverables and final products.
- 4. **Schedule:**
A schedule depicting the completion of each major task, deliverables, and other key project components is required, and shall include the adoption or acceptance process. The proposed schedule shall be accommodated within the minimum contract timeframes, which shall be as follows.

Plans

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Municipal Comprehensive Plan Update | Twenty-four (24) months |
| Multi-municipal Comprehensive Plan | Thirty-six (36) months |

Ordinances

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Full Ordinance Update | Twenty-four (24) months |
| Ordinance Amendments | Twelve (12) to Twenty-four (24) months |
| Official Map | Twelve (12) months |

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Planning Studies/Guides | Twelve (12) to Eighteen (18) months |
| Multi-municipal Planning Studies | Eighteen (18) to Twenty-four (24) months |

- 5. Cost Summary
An itemized budget, including the fee for each major task by section, article, or chapter, including work products and all deliverables is required. The timing of invoice submittal to the municipality (monthly, quarterly, etc.) should be noted. Should the project cost be proposed to include review by municipal consultants such as attorneys or engineers (in accordance with Section 5.2.E), it shall be noted within the cost summary of the scope of work.

- D. After a full scope of work is provided to the Grant Administrator and approved, a contract will be developed by the Grant Administrator and forwarded to the grant recipient for signature by the municipality (or municipalities in the case of a multi-municipal group) and consultant via DocuSign to be signed electronically.
- E. Following signature of the contracts by the municipality (or municipalities in the case of a multi-municipal group) and their consultant, all copies shall be returned to the County Planning Commission for placement on the next available Board of County Commissioners' agenda for final approval.
- F. The Grant Administrator reserves the right to change the Contract Term (start and end dates of the project) if necessary, before the contract is executed by the Chester County Board of Commissioners. Changing the Contract Term may be done administratively and does not require approval from the municipality (or municipalities in the case of a multi-municipal group) and their consultant.
- G. Upon final execution of the contract, the Grant Administrator shall send an executed contract to the municipality (or municipalities in the case of a multi-municipal group) and to the Consultant electronically through DocuSign.
- H. The County Planning Commission reserves the right to use and share the products prepared under VPP with other municipalities, planning agencies, and the public.

8.2 Project Management

- A. County Monitoring: The County Planning Commission shall assign a County Planning Commission staff member as a Grant Monitor.
1. Grant monitors provide review and oversight to facilitate compliance with the VPP contract, scope of work, and grant manual provision and shall provide feedback to the municipality regarding any issues as they arise. The Grant Monitor shall notify the municipality of observed non-compliance with grant requirements.
 2. The Grant Monitor shall be a non-voting task force member and shall be provided draft materials, work session agendas, and other correspondence as it is provided to the municipal task force members by the municipality or consultant.
 3. The Grant Monitor shall review all draft materials, comment as necessary, and attend work sessions in which discussions of substantive material are anticipated.
 4. The municipality (or lead municipality in the case of a multi-municipal project) and consultant shall coordinate with the Grant Monitor to ensure project meetings are scheduled such that the Grant Monitor is able to attend and that the Grant Monitor is aware of any changes to the time or location of scheduled meetings.
- B. Project Correspondence and Coordination:
1. To provide for adequate review by the task force, **it is strongly recommended that materials be provided by the municipality or consultant to all task force members no less than one week prior to the scheduled work session at which the material will be discussed.** Failure to follow this recommendation may jeopardize the ability of the project to be completed on schedule. Draft materials, including maps, shall be dated.
 2. An Initial Briefing Meeting shall be held at the kick-off of the project with the Grant Monitor in attendance. The purpose of the initial briefing meeting is to ensure that all parties, including the project task force, are fully aware of the project scope, VPP administrative procedures, and project benchmarks. The initial briefing meeting may be held concurrent with the first task force meeting. The meeting participants shall include, but need not be limited to:
 - a. Municipal representatives, including task force members, municipal administrative/financial officer, and the manager or secretary;
 - b. The lead planner from the consulting firm; and
 - c. The Grant Monitor.
 3. Representatives of the municipality, the lead planner, and County Planning Commission may call for an Interim Briefing Meeting as necessary to assess the progress of the work program, resolve any contract compliance issues, review the product-to-billing ratio, ensure consistency with *Landscapes3*, and determine any revisions to the scope of work or the project timeframe. Attendance of all parties is required at such meetings.
 4. Municipalities and the consultant may be contacted during the project regarding updates and reminders concerning VPP procedures and requirements. The Grant Monitor and Grant Administrator are available throughout the process to answer questions regarding VPP procedures and requirements.

VPP Task Force Composition –The municipal planning commission should take primary responsibility for the preparation of comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances, subdivision and land development ordinances, and official maps. Section 209.1 of the PA Municipalities Planning Code assigns responsibility to the appointed municipal planning commissions for preparing and presenting to the governing body, the municipal comprehensive plan, zoning ordinance, and subdivision and land development ordinances and for making recommendations on official maps. The Chester County Planning Commission will provide guidance regarding task force composition on a case-by-case basis including participation of other stakeholders and steps to ensure regular communication with members of the governing body.

C. Invoice Review and Approval

1. The consultant shall submit a copy of each invoice to the Grant Monitor at the same time they are submitted to the municipality. It is recommended that invoices be submitted simultaneously via email to the municipality and the Grant Monitor.
2. Consultant invoices shall identify the billing cycle and the specific work products completed during the billing cycle. The invoice shall include a listing of project tasks, percentage of work completed per task, fee per task to date, fee for that billing cycle, and outstanding fee per task. This detail allows the County to review the invoice against work product delivered to date. **Approval of invoices will not be provided until full invoice information is provided.**
3. **Invoices shall not be paid out until the County has approved the invoice for payment.** If full invoice information has been provided, the County has ten (10) days from the date of electronic receipt to review and approve payment, otherwise the municipality may proceed with payment. When invoices are submitted via United States Postal Service, the County shall have fifteen (15) days from the postmarked date to review the invoice.
4. For multi-municipal projects, invoices shall be submitted simultaneously to the County and the lead municipality.
5. The municipality shall retain ten (10) percent of the total project fee until which time the final project, meeting the terms of the scope of work as determined through the Final VPP Review, has been provided to the County and the municipality.

8.3 Amendments to an Executed Grant Contract

- A. Amendments to executed grant contracts may be permitted to accommodate time extensions or revisions to the scope of work or consultant. Amendments shall only be considered when the municipality has demonstrated good faith in completing the approved scope of work and the work to date has demonstrated consistency with *Landscapes*³.
1. Time Extension: The municipality may request an extension of time to the grant contract with no change to the scope of work as follows:

- a. The municipality shall submit a letter to the Grant Administrator requesting the contract extension, detailing the reasons why the contract extension is needed, and detailing the revised schedule;
 - b. Requests for extensions shall be filed with the Planning Commission no less than sixty (60) days prior to the contract end date; and
 - c. Each time extension shall not exceed six (6) months. Total contract extensions shall not exceed two (2) years beyond the end date of the original contract. Two (2) contract extensions may be processed internally through the Chester County Planning Commission. Any additional extensions require approval by the Chester County Board of Commissioners and will be placed on the Commissioners' agenda by Planning Commission staff
 - d. If the funded project cannot be completed and adopted or accepted within the time frame described in Section 8.3.A.1.c, the contract shall be terminated, and the grant funds shall be forfeited.
2. Revision to Scope of Work or Consultant: The municipality or lead municipality may request a revision to the scope or work or change to the consultant as follows.
 - a. The municipality shall submit a letter to the Grant Administrator requesting the contract revision. Requests shall be filed with the Planning Commission no less than sixty (60) days prior to the contract end date.
 - b. The request shall provide the following:
 - i. A specific and detailed scope of work with any revisions from the original scope of work identified, including detail on the associated costs and an explanation of how the revisions relate to *Landscapes*;
 - ii. An updated project schedule; and
 - iii. New consultant name and contact information, if applicable. (Note: A new lead planner change from the same consultant will not require a contract amendment but does require the approval of the contract administrator.)
 - c. Requests for additional funding based on a change in the scope of work may be considered on a case-by-case basis. A scope of work change does not guarantee additional grant funding will be made available.
 - d. The Planning Commission shall review the request and forward the requested revision with their recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners for action.
- B. All parties shall sign the grant contract amendment in accordance with the following.
 1. Should the amendment include a change of consultant, the county, municipality (or municipalities in the case of a multi-municipal group), and new consultant shall sign the amendment.

2. Time extensions to multi-municipal contracts may be signed by the governing body chairman or president of the lead municipality. Scope of work or consultant amendments to multi-municipal contracts shall require the signature of the County, the consultant, and the governing body chairman or president of **each** participating municipality.

8.4 Termination of Grant Contract

Upon written thirty (30) day notice, any party shall have the right to terminate the grant contract. The County shall not be responsible for any grant reimbursement in such an event.

8.5 Review of Completed Project

Upon completion of the project but prior to adoption or acceptance, all projects shall be submitted by the municipality or lead municipality for a **Final VPP Review** and shall subsequently appropriately address any deficiencies to advance to adoption or acceptance and to be eligible to request reimbursement. The Grant Administrator makes the final determination of whether a project has appropriately responded to identified deficiencies.

- A. The **Final VPP Review** shall differentiate between deficiencies that are required to be addressed to qualify for reimbursement and other comments that are recommended to be addressed to improve the quality or usability of the product. The final VPP review shall consider two primary issues:
 1. Consistency with *Landscapes*; and
 2. Compliance with the VPP contract and scope of work (including MPC compliance).
- B. Projects Requiring Municipal Adoption under the MPC: Following submission of the project to the County Planning Commission with an Act 247 referral form, a simultaneous MPC review and Final VPP Review shall be completed by the Grant Monitor and Grant Administrator. The County Planning Commission shall provide the MPC Review/Final VPP Review letter to the municipality or municipalities within the timeframe required by the applicable section of the MPC. If deficiencies are identified in the Final VPP Review, the project shall be required to undergo a second MPC review prior to adoption. The municipality, or municipalities if applicable, shall appropriately address identified deficiencies prior to adoption and request for reimbursement.
- C. Projects Requiring Municipal Acceptance (Planning Studies): Following submission of the planning study and a written request for review by the municipality or lead municipality to the County Planning Commission, the Grant Monitor and Grant Administrator shall complete a Final VPP Review. The County Planning Commission shall provide the Final VPP Review letter to the municipality or municipalities within thirty (30) days of receipt of the study and request for review. If deficiencies are identified in the Final VPP Review, the municipality, or municipalities if applicable, shall appropriately address identified deficiencies prior to project acceptance and request for reimbursement.

8.6 Project Adoption and Acceptance

- A. Following issuance of a **Final VPP Review** letter that finds the project to be consistent with *Landscapes3* and to have fulfilled the VPP contract (including compliance with the MPC), or a determination from the Grant Administrator that any deficiencies identified in the **Final VPP Review** have been appropriately addressed, the municipal (or municipalities in the case of a multi-municipal project) can move to adoption or acceptance.
- B. Projects Requiring Municipal Adoption under the MPC: The municipality shall adopt the final plan or ordinance by resolution. In the case of a multi-municipal project, each municipality shall adopt the final plan or ordinance by resolution.
- C. Projects Requiring Municipal Acceptance (Planning Studies): The municipality or multi-municipal group shall accept the study as having fulfilled the contract and scope of work by action of the governing body. Such action shall be by motion at a public meeting or by resolution. In the case of a multi-municipal planning study, action of the governing body from each of the participating municipalities is required.

8.7 Grant Reimbursement

- A. Timing of Reimbursement Requests: A municipality shall file for reimbursement within one hundred twenty (120) days of adoption or acceptance of the project or risk loss of reimbursement.
- B. Request for Reimbursement: The municipality shall provide the following information to the County Planning Commission prior to the reimbursement of funds:
 - 1. Completed Request for Reimbursement Form (see Appendix B): Reimbursement forms may be obtained through the County Planning Commission office or website at: www.chescoplanning.org
 - 2. Proof of Adoption or Acceptance:
 - a. Single Municipal Project: A copy of the signed and certified municipal resolution adopting the project, or a letter signed by a member of the governing body or municipal manager or secretary with supporting documentation of the acceptance of the planning study by the governing body (such as a resolution or meeting minutes).
 - b. Multi-municipal Project: A copy of the signed and certified resolution from each participating municipality adopting the project, or a letter from each participating municipality signed by a member of the governing body or municipal manager or secretary with supporting documentation of the acceptance of the planning study by the governing body (such as a resolution or meeting minutes).
 - 3. Completed Project:
 - a. Plans or Ordinances: Two (2) paper copies and one (1) digital format of final plans or ordinances adopted under the MPC shall be forwarded to the Grant Administrator.

- b. Planning Studies: One (1) paper copy and one (1) digital format of final planning studies shall be forwarded to the Grant Administrator.
 - c. All projects: When GIS shapefiles have been created as part of the project, a functional digital version of that GIS data shall be provided to the County Planning Commission upon request.
4. Consultant Invoicing: A copy of all consultant invoices pertaining to the project. If the invoices contain items not related to the project, they shall not be reimbursed. In such cases, the project-related items eligible for reimbursement shall be specifically identified on the invoices.
 5. Municipal Payment: A copy of municipal canceled check(s) in payment of eligible project expenses shall be provided. In-lieu of canceled checks, bank statements or other documentation which clearly indicate proof of payment related to the project may be submitted.
 6. Additional Information: The County reserves the right to request additional documentation prior to processing the municipal reimbursement request.

C. Grant Reimbursement

The following shall govern the reimbursement of funds:

1. Issuance of a Final VPP Review that finds the project to be consistent with *Landscapes3* and to have fulfilled the VPP contract;
2. Only eligible costs incurred within the contract term shall be eligible for reimbursement;
3. The County shall review the final reimbursement request package, and upon verifying its completeness, send the qualifying funds to the municipality;
4. In the case of multi-municipal contracts, if fewer than the total number of municipalities adopt or accept the product, the County reimbursement shall be equal to the proportional share of all municipalities that adopt or accept the product: and
5. Maximum reimbursement shall be the lesser of the percent of total costs eligible per the VPP Grant Contract or the grant dollars awarded per the VPP Grant Contract. Maximum reimbursement for projects that are completed under budget shall be based on the percent of total costs eligible per the VPP Grant Contract.

D. Noncompliance

When a municipality has not complied with the terms of the VPP grant contract, scope of work, or the provisions of this manual, the County shall have the right to terminate the contract and deny grant reimbursement. Such determination shall be made in writing to the municipality.