



MEASURE A GRANT WRITING HANDBOOK



Los Angeles County
Regional Park and Open Space District

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MEASURE A GRANT WRITING HANDBOOK

This handbook provides information about the Measure A Grant Writing process, including details about applying to different grant programs and information about accessing technical assistance. After reviewing this handbook, you will have a better understanding of which grant programs your projects qualify for, how to apply to different grant programs, and how to write a compelling application.

This handbook assumes that you already have a project in mind that needs Measure A funding. If you need assistance planning a project, refer to the Measure A Park Planning Handbook or contact your Grants Officer for assistance.

For more information regarding Measure A funding opportunities, programs and procedures, please refer to the Measure A Basics Handbook or visit RPOSD.LACounty.gov.





MEASURE A GRANT PROGRAMS

Measure A offers three types of grant programs: Annual Allocation Grant Programs; Competitive Grant Programs, and Other Programs.

Annual Allocation Grant Programs provide formula-based annual allocations of grant funds to identified public agencies in Los Angeles County. The funds in these programs are not competitive and provide flexibility for eligible project types.

Competitive Grant Programs allow public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and schools that meet Measure A's eligibility requirements to compete for funding. Each competitive grant program has distinct requirements for applying and is offered on a cycle ranging from annual to once every four years.

Other Programs available include:

- Maintenance and Servicing, which supports projects funded by Proposition A and Measure A, and is available to identified public agencies and nonprofit organizations;
- Technical Assistance Program (TAP), which provides funds for a range of assistance that helps public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and schools deliver completed park projects. The TAP include funds for planning and design work; and
- Innovation Grant Program, which provides funds for projects that can serve as precedents to help pioneer innovative park design, use, access, and function in Los Angeles County. Projects funded by this program should be replicable in communities throughout the County.

Refer to the Measure A Basics Handbook for detailed information on each grant program.

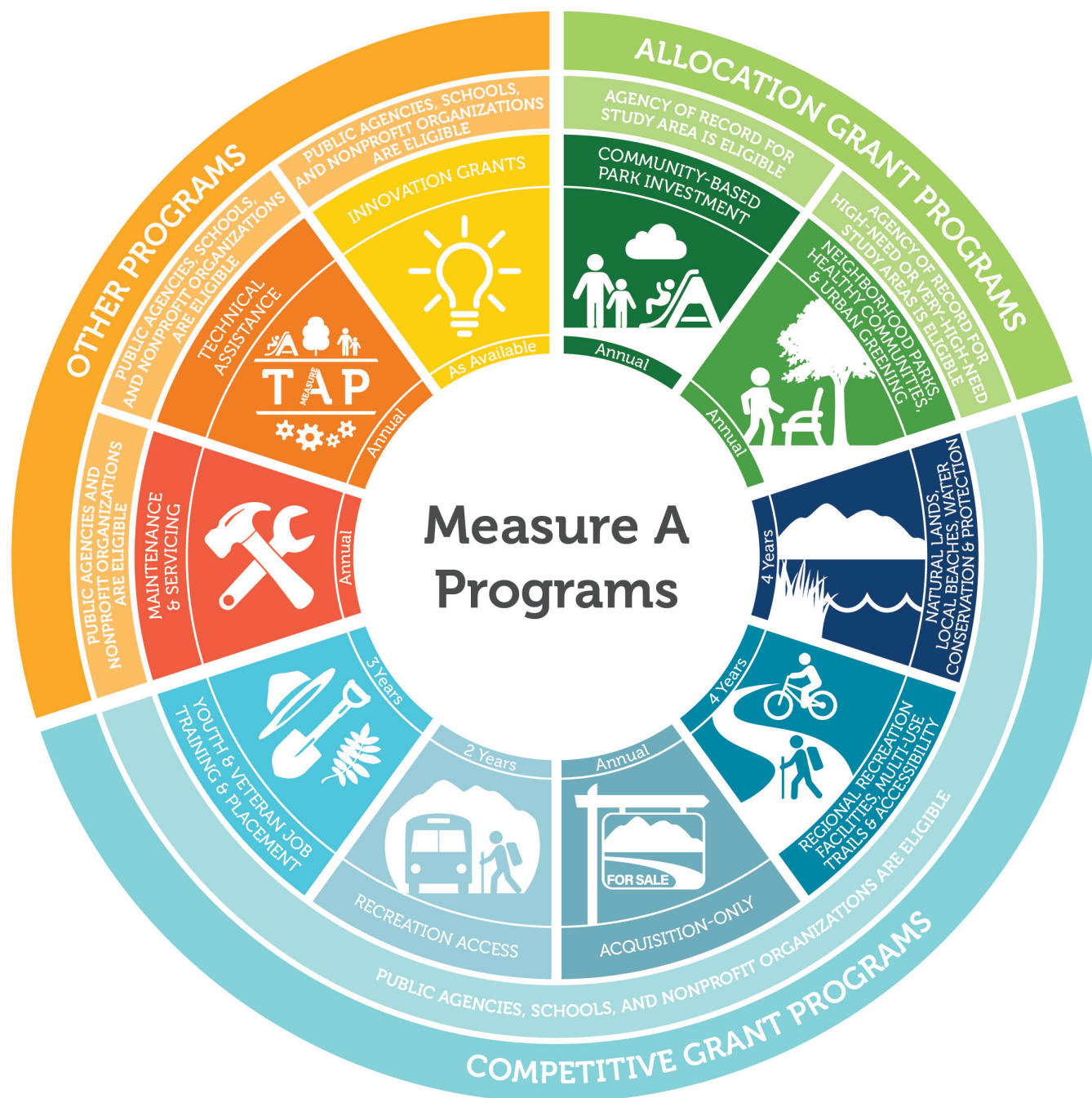


Important Tips:

- Get in contact with your Grants Officer early on in the grant writing process. They are available to answer your questions as you move through the process!
- Visit RPOSD's online Grant Management System at <http://grantfunding.rposd.lacounty.gov> to verify the amount of your annual allocations (public agencies only).
- Make sure that your registration with RPOSD's online Grant Management System is current, including all contact information.
- Get to know the requirements for each grant program BEFORE the application period opens.

Measure A Programs

Refer to this graphic to determine which grant programs your type of agency/organization is eligible to apply for.



The following programs are *not* shown on this graphic, but are available to County departments:

- County Priority Projects
- County Cultural Facilities
- Department of Parks & Recreation
- Department of Beaches & Harbors





WHICH GRANT PROGRAM SHOULD I APPLY TO?

When selecting a grant program to apply to, consider two questions:

1. Is my agency/organization eligible for funding from this grant program?
2. Does my project meet the grant program's Project Eligibility requirements?

Every grant program has unique requirements for the projects that it funds. In general, a project must:

- Meet the grant program's goals
- Be compatible with existing planning documents
- Request an amount of funds within the program's minimum and maximum award sizes

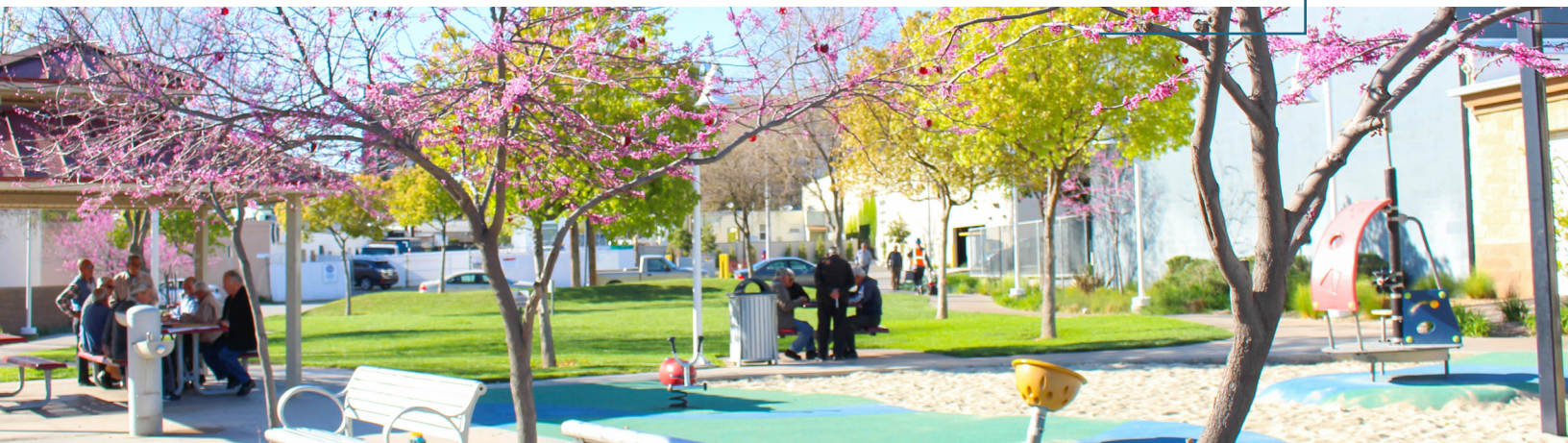
Consult the Measure A Basics Handbook to review the detailed requirements of each grant program and determine which grant program is best for your project. If you're still not sure which funding program is most appropriate for your project(s), contact your Grants Officer for an informal consultation.



Good Standing

Your agency/organization must be in Good Standing with RPOSD to receive grant funding. If all your existing RPOSD grants are in compliance with their grant agreements, or if you've never received funding from RPOSD, you're in Good Standing.

Contact your Grants Officer to verify Good Standing!



BEFORE YOU BEGIN YOUR APPLICATION

Now that you've determined which grant program you'll be applying to and have verified that your agency/organization is in Good Standing, it's time to make sure both your project and your agency/organization are adequately prepared to begin the application process.

Project Readiness

To ensure that your project is ready for funding by Measure A, consider the following questions:

- ❑ Is this project a **high priority** for your agency/organization and the community in which it will be located? *If not, consider pursuing projects that have been identified as priorities or that have strong community support.*
- ❑ Is there known **community support or opposition** to the project? *If so, be sure to develop a comprehensive community engagement plan to address known and anticipated concerns.*
- ❑ Does this project **duplicate or complement efforts** and budgetary goals of other agencies or departments such as public works, public health, or schools? *If so, consider exploring partnering opportunities to strengthen the project and promote efficient use of time and resources.*
- ❑ Does the project meet the **Project Feasibility requirements** of the grant program you are seeking funding from? Refer to the Measure A Basics Handbook to see the Project Feasibility requirements for your selected grant program. *If the project doesn't meet the feasibility requirements, you may want to consider applying for Technical Assistance to develop it further.*
- ❑ If the project will require **funds beyond those available from Measure A**, have you identified potential sources for those funds? *If not, consider exploring funding possibilities with other agencies, departments, and organizations. The Technical Assistance Program may be able to assist you in your search for funding.*
- ❑ If you are applying for a competitive grant, check the Competitive Grant Calendar to be sure the grant you're interested in is offered in a timeframe that works with your project. *If the grant you're interested in isn't offered on a schedule that works for your project, consider looking for funds from other sources or phasing the project so that it does align with the Competitive Grants Calendar.*

Login

to the GMS to see funding opportunities that your agency or organization is eligible to apply for.





Organizational Capacity

Preparing a Measure A grant application requires staff time, effort, and knowledge. Managing a Measure A grant also requires significant staff resources. Ask yourself and your team the following questions to determine how ready you are to move forward:

- ☐ Does your staff have the **knowledge and time** to complete the grant application process? *If not, consider other resources available to assist your staff.*
- ☐ Does your staff have **capacity** to successfully implement the project once funds are received? *Grant management can be time-consuming, so be sure that your staff has capacity to take on additional administrative tasks. Failure to properly manage your Measure A grants can result in loss of Good Standing.*
- ☐ Does your staff have **appropriate training** that will allow them to successfully complete the project and close the grant? *If not, consider other resources that are available to assist your staff.*
- ☐ Are there other agencies, departments, or organizations you could **partner with** to more efficiently manage the project? *Consider partners who could assist with community outreach, share resources, or operate the project.*
- ☐ Does your agency/organization have the resources to meet the **long term obligations** of the grant? *If not, consider partnering with agencies/organizations who can assist with these obligations or identify funding sources that ensure resources will be available.*



Important Tips:

- Familiarize yourself with all requirements of the grant program before starting your application.
- Communicate regularly with other departments, agencies, and organizations in your community that are working on parks and open space to ensure coordination and build collaborative efforts.
- Make sure you're aware of past community engagement efforts related to your project, as well as general historical context for parks projects in your community.
- Consider beginning initial preparation for Competitive Grants well in advance of the grant opportunity announcement.

APPLYING FOR MEASURE A FUNDS

Once you've determined your project is ready to go and your staff is equipped to complete the application process and manage the grant, you're ready to start the application process!

Registration

You must be registered with RPOSD's online Grant Management System (GMS) to apply for Measure A grants. All users of the GMS must register. If your agency/organization has not done so already, complete the registration process at: <https://grantfunding.rposd.lacounty.gov>

Application Workshop

You are required to attend an application workshop prior to submitting your application. Workshops will be held in person and offered as online webinars. RPOSD lists workshop dates and times on their website. The grant application has a link to the webinar, if you are not able to attend a workshop in person.

Application

You must apply for your grants using RPOSD's online Grants Management System. The GMS allows you to apply for and manage your funds from one centralized location. Using the GMS, you can download reference information, complete required forms, upload supporting documents, sign forms, and execute contracts using electronic signatures. The GMS allows you to save your work as you go, so you can complete your application in sections as time allows.

RPOSD provides a Grant Management System Quick Start Guide that contains detailed information for using the GMS. Additionally, RPOSD offers periodic trainings for GMS users.

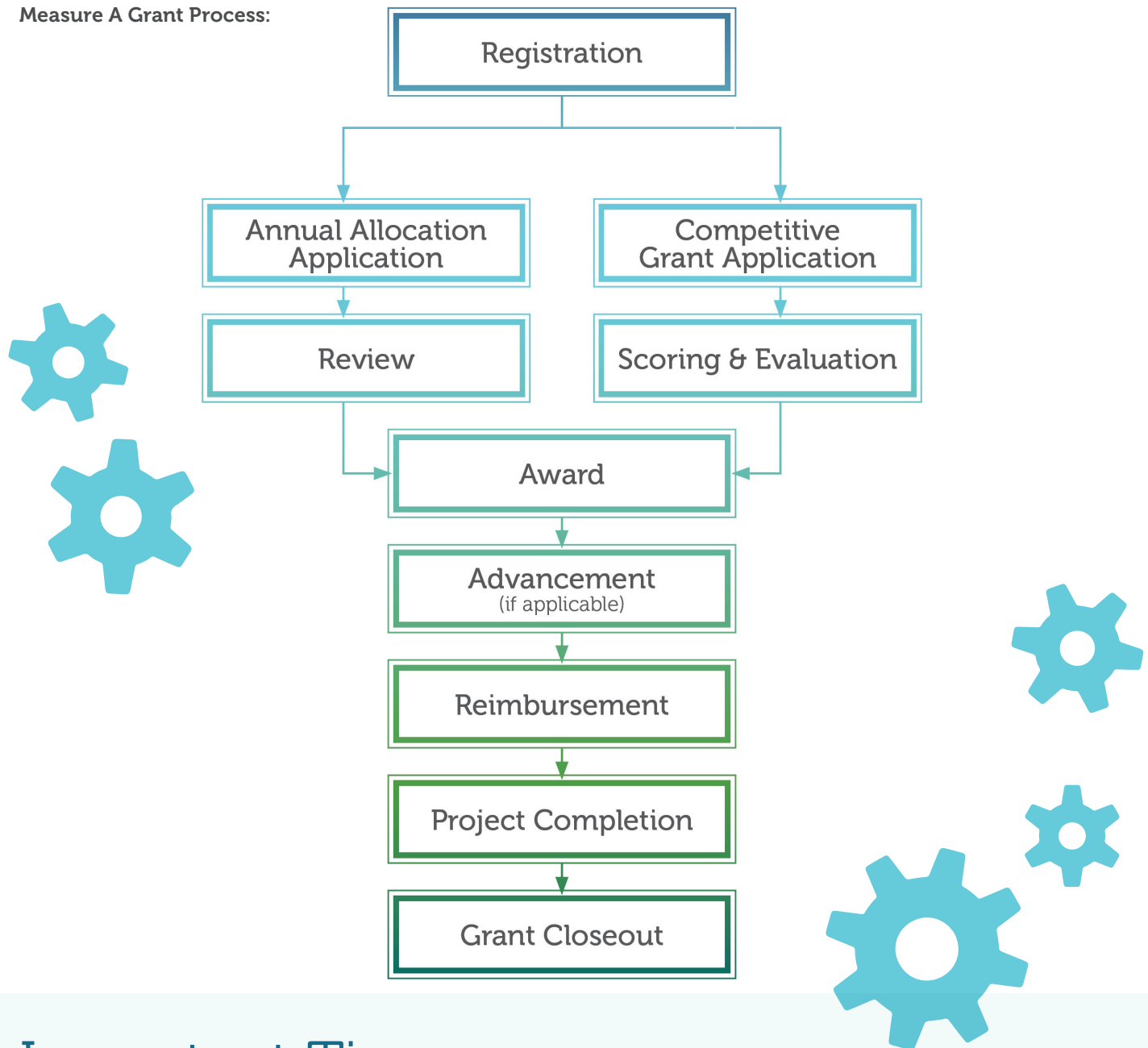
Join

the RPOSD mailing list to receive announcements about funding opportunities, upcoming information sessions, and mandatory workshops.





Measure A Grant Process:



Important Tips:

- Be sure to renew your registration annually!
- Refer to the GMS Quick Start Guide for technical guidance on the registration and application processes.
- Download a blank application from the GMS to familiarize yourself with the questions and requirements.

The following general suggestions will help you successfully complete all sections of the application in an efficient manner:

- Download a blank application from the GMS to familiarize yourself with the questions and requirements for the specific grant program you're applying to.
- Make note of any items that you anticipate needing assistance with. For example, most grants require you to review insurance requirements, and you may need to work with a different department within your agency/organization to confirm that the insurance you carry meets the requirements.
- You may want to consider asking a colleague or mentor to review elements of your application for accuracy, clarity, and completeness. If so, check in with potential reviewers to ensure they are willing and able to look over the materials in a timely manner.
- A strong organizational system will make the application process easier. Develop a filing system that is clear and logical so that files are easy to find when needed and are accessible to all staff working on the application.
- If you will be assisted by others, make sure to add them as additional users in the GMS so that they can access the application to assist you.
- Use the checklist provided in the Quick Start Guide to make sure you have all required elements.



Competitive Grants

have firm deadlines. If you're applying for a Competitive Grant, begin as far in advance of the deadline as possible.

Grant applications completed hastily tend to contain errors and lack sufficient information, which can reduce the likelihood that your project will be awarded a grant.





Applications vary by grant program, but generally contain of the following sections:

- **General Information** – project name, primary contact for the grant application process, and authorized official
- **Pre-Application** – confirmation of your understanding of the grant requirements including Good Standing, signage, project delivery, insurance, deed restriction, and grant agreement requirements
- **Agency Information** – contact information specific to this grant application
- **Grant Funding** – detailed information about how your project will be funded
- **Project Details** – detailed information about your project, including project summary, location maps, site plans, environmental permitting information, land access/tenure information, and other detailed information related to project feasibility. The requested information will be specific to each grant program
- **Grant Timeline** – the project schedule, from time of signing the grant agreement through grant closing
- **Project Budget** – a detailed budget showing how grant funds will be expended
- **Community Outreach and Engagement** – documentation of the outreach and engagement completed, or your plan for completing outreach and engagement
- **Site Photos** – photos documenting site conditions

Although some information required in applications can be supplied quickly with a “yes” or “no” answer or by uploading an existing document or form, there are several elements that you will need to develop specifically for the application. These include the Project Details, Grant Timeline, Project Budget, Community Outreach and Engagement, Site Photos.



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The **Project Description** is a key component of your grant proposal and should describe your project in a concise, clear, and compelling manner. Although the exact requirements of the Project Description will vary by grant program, at a minimum it must include the following sections:

- **Description of your agency's/organization's ability to complete the proposed project.**

Consider the following questions as you prepare this section:

- » What past experience does your agency/organization have successfully completing similar projects?
- » What policies, procedures, and structures does your agency/organization have in place to support successful completion?
- » Who will be responsible for managing the grant, and what skills do they bring to the process?
- » What resources does your agency/organization or your identified partners provide that will contribute to a successfully completed project?

- **Explanation of the issue(s)/need(s) the project addresses**

Consider the following questions as you prepare this section:

- » What problem or need does your project address?
- » What evidence can you provide of this problem or need? Consider community input, assessment data, or health and safety concerns.
- » What are the conditions in the area adjacent to the project site?



Important Tips:

- Use clear and concise language; avoid jargon where possible.
- Demonstrate your understanding of program requirements and goals.
- Present details in a succinct manner without overwhelming or boring the reader.
- Be sure to include all required information.
- Consider asking a colleague or mentor to review your Project Description for clarity, accuracy, and completeness.





- **A statement of the expected measurable outcomes of the project**

Consider the following questions as you prepare this section:

- » Who will benefit from this project?
- » What improvements will result from this project?
- » How will the project affect maintenance, budget, or staffing?
- » How will you track these outcomes?

- **Details of the methods to be used to achieve the desired outcomes**

Consider the following questions as you prepare this section:

- » How will the work be performed and who will perform it?
- » How and when will you engage the community?
- » What makes this location the most appropriate for this project?
- » How does the project timing affect the desired outcomes?
- » How does the project location affect the desired outcomes?

The most successful Project Descriptions will provide the required information while intriguing the reader by describing the project's unique approaches and anticipated outcomes. Competitive Grants will generally require a deeper level of detail and a more persuasive style of storytelling than Annual Grants. Use the response-length guidelines listed in the application to tailor your Project Description to the grant program.

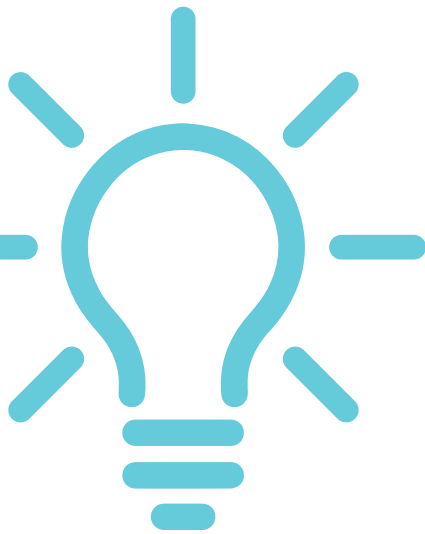


TIMELINE

The exact milestones that are required in your timeline will be specified in the grant application. Review these requirements before starting your timeline. As you develop the timeline, set realistic milestone dates that demonstrate an understanding of project development and delivery. Try to anticipate likely delays and build in buffers that allow for flexibility. Consider the following questions as you complete your timeline:

- ☐ Have you allowed enough time for **permit approval** process?
If you're not sure, check with the correct jurisdiction's building or planning department to learn more about permit approval processes.
- ☐ Does your project require **City/Council/Commission approval**? In some jurisdictions, it may take weeks or months to secure a spot on an agenda, so be sure to allow time for this for every approval needed.
- ☐ Have you included enough time to conduct and analyze **community engagement**? Conduct your outreach leading up to pivotal milestones. Refer to the Measure A Park Planning Handbook for detailed information on best practices for community outreach and engagement.
- ☐ Can your staff **accomplish** the outlined tasks according to this schedule? *If your staff is stretched thin, consider allowing additional time for some tasks, or plan to hire staff/consultants to expedite the process.*
- ☐ Does this timeline consider outside funding sources and your agency's ability to begin this **reimbursement-based** project? *If necessary, allow more time to secure other funding or discuss advancement options with your Grants Officer.*
- ☐ Are these milestones **realistic**? *Reach out to colleagues, partners, or others with similar experience and ask them to review your timeline.*





Consider

asking a colleague or mentor to review your budget for accuracy and completeness.

Be sure to include all required information.

BUDGET

Measure A applications do not require a narrative budget proposal. Instead, you must identify line items in given categories. To ensure your budget contains all required items, be sure to review the entire budget template in the GMS, including limits on the percent of soft costs. Use the categories specified in the application to begin your budget.

Refer to the eligible soft costs and hard costs for each grant type in the tables below.

| ELIGIBLE COSTS: DEVELOPMENT GRANTS | |
|---|---|
| SOFT COSTS | HARD COSTS |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEQA/NEPA • Community Engagement • Design Documents: Up to 30% CD Level • Grantee Labor • Inspections • Indirect Costs • Overhead Rate¹ • Surveys | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Engagement • Construction Documents: Beyond 30% CD Level • Construction Equipment Usage Rate Fees² • Construction Management & Labor • Engineering • Fixed Assets³ with Life >5 years • Interpretive Displays • Permits • Rental Equipment • Technology & GIS • Signage • Surveys |

| ELIGIBLE COSTS: ACQUISITION GRANTS | |
|--|--|
| SOFT COSTS | ACQUISITION COSTS |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEQA/NEPA • Community Engagement • Grantee Labor • Inspections • Negotiations • Overhead Rate¹ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appraisals • Escrow Fees • Purchase Price • Relocation Costs • Title Insurance • Preliminary Title Report • Property Taxes |

| ELIGIBLE COSTS: PROGRAM GRANTS | |
|---|--|
| SOFT COSTS | HARD COSTS |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Engagement • Grantee Labor • Insurance • Overhead Rate¹ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Engagement • Consultant Services⁴ • Portable Equipment² • Grantee Labor • Interpretive Displays • Rental Equipment • Signage • Training Materials² • Transportation² |

| ELIGIBLE COSTS: PLANNING & DESIGN FUNDS | |
|--|---|
| SOFT COSTS | HARD COSTS |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grantee Labor • Overhead Rate¹ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEQA/NEPA • Community Engagement • Design Documents • Grantee Labor • Plans & Specifications • Technical Studies |

| INELIGIBLE COSTS, ALL GRANT PROGRAMS | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bonus Payments • Ceremonial Expenses • Charges above Normal/Customary Rates • Contingency Reserves • Contract Cost Overruns • Costs Paid by Other Funding Sources • Damage Judgments, Attorney's/Legal Fees | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deficits, Overdrafts • Discounts Not Taken • Direct Costs of Rent • Fixed Assets with a Life of <5 Years • Grant Application Costs • Interest Charges • Lodgings, Meals, and Incidentals • Non-fixed, Portable Equipment⁵ • Office Equipment/Furnishings |

¹ If an overhead rate is used, the costs of employees that are charged directly to a grant must not be included in this rate. RPOSD will not allow overhead to be applied to any costs if the grantee fails to adhere to this guideline.

² Use of vehicles and/or equipment owned by the grantee may be charged to the project for each use. Rental rates published by the California Department of Transportation may be used as a guide.

³ Fixed assets must have a useful life of 5 years or more. Examples include air-conditioning, fire alarms, interpretive displays, lighting, signage, and security systems.

⁴ Grantees must pay consultants according to the grantee's customary or established method and rate. Consultant fees may not be paid to the grantee's own employees or to any organization under common control of the grantee or in which any employee of the grantee has a financial interest.

⁵ Excludes Recreation Access Program grants that include pop-up, non-fixed features.





COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

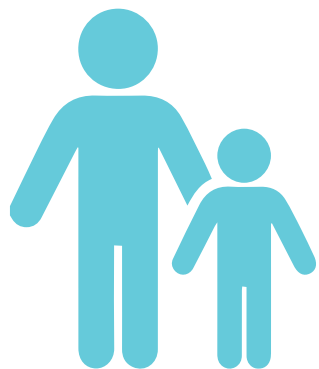
All Measure A grants require community outreach and engagement that meets Measure A requirements. These requirements vary by grant type and project budget. Refer to the Measure A Park Planning Handbook for detailed information about Community Outreach and Engagement requirements and best practices, including language access.

You are required to upload a Community Engagement Plan that describes how you conducted outreach and engagement or how you plan to engage the community in the future. As you prepare your Community Engagement Plan, consider the following questions:

- When is it most appropriate to engage the community?
- What inclusive outreach methods are most appropriate for this project?
- How do the outreach methods and engagement events remove barriers to access?
- Who can you partner with to improve engagement with the community?
- How will community input be incorporated into the project?

If you've completed any qualifying community engagement for this project prior to submitting your application, you will need to upload supporting documents as part of your application. These supporting documents may include:

- Vendor invoices
- Outreach flyers
- Log of canvassing
- Media ads and other graphics
- Sign-in sheets
- Photos
- Activity sheets
- Public comment cards
- Meeting minutes, staff reports, and other summary documents



Have you already conducted outreach and engagement related to this project?

It may fulfill your requirement if conducted within
36 months
of the application date!



SITE PHOTOS

All Measure A grant applications require site photos. When submitting site photos, consider selecting photos that include the following elements:

- Panoramic images of the site, or a series of images that provide a complete view of the site
- Close-up images of adverse conditions
- Images of surrounding conditions such as buildings, intersections, or traffic
- Specific location of proposed amenity/improvement
- Park users

In general, aerial photos from Google Maps or similar services should not be included. RPOSD may use any submitted photos for online or printed materials.

Example site photos:





Application Review and Award Process

Your completed online grant application will be reviewed by RPOSD staff for completeness and adherence to all requirements.

Annual allocation grants will be awarded if all requirements have been met. You may be asked to submit additional information for these grants if RPOSD's review finds any gaps in required information.

Competitive grants will be reviewed by a panel of subject matter experts. Competitive funds will be awarded to projects whose impacts most successfully meet the respective program goals and needs of the community.

Once awards are issued, you will enter into a Grant Agreement and be responsible for maintaining all grant administration documentation and progress through the online grant management system.

This guide provides information on fundamental elements that should be considered when applying for Measure A grants. It is not an exhaustive manual on grant writing. For further assistance with grant writing, contact your Grants Officer to request technical assistance.

Maintenance and Servicing Funds

Maintenance and Servicing funds are available for any project funded by RPOSD. Applying for M&S funds requires a separate process than applying for annual allocations or competitive grants. To apply for M&S funds, you will need to use the GMS to submit a maintenance and servicing budget. Be sure to provide all the requested information in the budget.

Not all project maintenance and servicing requirements are eligible for RPOSD M&S Funds. Refer to the table below for a list of eligible and ineligible M&S costs.



| ELIGIBLE | INELIGIBLE |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project elements (per project description) paid for with Measure A or Proposition A funds • Project elements that were not paid for with Measure A or Proposition A grant funds but were part of the entire project. For example, in a Measure A–funded pool rehabilitation grant project, the pool pump was paid for with other funds. Replacement of the pool pump is eligible for M&S funds • Increased staff costs necessary for the usual operation and maintenance of the facility • Cost of the staff member(s) needed to open, schedule, and oversee (i.e., operate) a new recreation building, such as life guards, maintenance workers, etc. • An agency’s direct overhead rates as applied to wages, services, and supplies. These must be shown as a percentage of the total expenditure, such as supplies or a staff maintenance worker’s hourly rate • Replacement of equipment included in the original project description (e.g., swimming pool pump) • Lighting and security systems • Graffiti removal • The costs of using maintenance equipment; rental rate or a set hourly rate that reflects such factors as depreciation, maintenance and repair of the equipment, replacement parts, and fuel • Contracts with maintenance providers (e.g., conservation corps, weed abatement) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects not paid for with Measure A or Proposition A funds • Maintenance and servicing of projects not funded from Measure A or Proposition A • Direct charges for management, clerical, personnel, and other administrative expenses incurred by the agency • Additional staff to run recreational programs, such as coaches, karate instructors, recreation leaders, cashiers, etc. • Purchase of supplies for office, programming, or public information materials • Purchase of fixed assets or capital outlay equipment • Police patrols or other security patrols • Rewards for information on vandalism of the facility • Travel and field inspection expenses of agency personnel • Penalties, interest, and similar costs levied against an agency by a contractor or a provider of product or service • Liability and injury claims filed against the agency, whether or not the cause of action stems from alleged improper maintenance and servicing of RPOSD-funded projects |





Technical Assistance Program

RPOSD's Technical Assistance Program (TAP) is being developed to ensure that all eligible agencies are able to deliver completed park projects to their communities in a timely matter. The TAP focuses on resources for agencies and organizations in High-Need and Very-High-Need Study Areas, although many resources are available to everyone.

Current TAP resources include digital documents, such as this Handbook, that are available to all, as well as one-on-one assistance from your agency's or organization's assigned Grants Officer. Other TAP resources are currently being developed.

Contact RPOSD by email at info@rposd.lacounty.gov or by phone at 626.588.5060 for more information.



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**LOS ANGELES COUNTY
REGIONAL PARK AND
OPEN SPACE DISTRICT**

**MEASURE
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