

Best Practice: Program and Project Accounting

Because of the wide variety of grants that BWSR disburses to local governments, the accounting systems and structures that are already in place at those local governments, and the many different funding sources that local governments have to deal with and are held accountable to, it is impossible to dictate a universal method of accounting for BWSR grants that will work for all. What we can do is offer you a few examples of good practices that we have collected during our verification visits, and specify the essential elements that they track. You can then adapt these examples to your own systems.

Example 1: Program Summary

The first example shows how a grant recipient might summarize the expenditures, including staff time, on a BWSR Conservation Program and Operations Grant—in this case, the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) program.

Grant: BWSR NRBG, WCA, FY 2013							
Salaries							
Employee Name	Hourly Rate	Activity (Grant Hours/ Match Hours)		Total Hours (Grant/ Match)	Total Amount Charged to Grant	Total Amount Contr. in Match	Total Amount Spent
		Admin./ Coord.	Tech./ Eng. Assist.				
Hanna Gray	\$40/hour	50/50	10	60/50	\$2400	\$2000	\$4400
Ed Levi	\$30/hour		300	300	\$9000		\$9000
Subtotal					\$11400	\$2000	\$13400
Expenses							
Expenses		Activity		Amount Budgeted		Amount Spent	
Vehicle Expense		Admin./Coordination		\$400		\$395	
Field Supplies		Supplies/Equipment		\$20		\$20	
Postage		Admin./Coordination		\$10		0	
Subtotal						\$415	
Transfers:							
To SWCD						\$5000	
Total				\$18815			

Figure 5. Program Accounting

To save space on the page, the example lists hours charged to the grant by Activity in the same column as hours contributed in match. It may be clearer to list them in separate columns. After summarizing staff time expenditures, the worksheet lists the other direct costs charged to the grant, similarly categorizing them by eLINK Activity.

Note: The staff time listed in this program summary, as well as in the following example, is meant to be a summary only. It should be backed up by a more detailed time tracking system, one that tracks the time spent on the grant by multiple employees not only by grant and activity, but also by date. For examples of good time tracking, see “Best Practice: Time Tracking.”

Example 2: Project Summary

Here is an example of accounting for expenditures on a Clean Water Fund project. The example tracks staff time assigned to the Activity of Technical/Engineering Assistance separately from the expenditures assigned to the Activity of Conservation Drainage. In addition, local dollars contributed to the projects in match are separated out from other spending on the project, so that the costs charged to the grant can be totaled separately.

Grant: BWSR CWF Grant, FY 2013				
Salaries				
Activity: Administration/Coordination				
Employee	Hourly Rate	Total Hours Worked	Total	
Hanna Gray	\$40/hour	10	\$400	
Subtotal			\$400	
Activity: Conservation Drainage				
Description	Amount Budgeted	Amount Spent	Match	Amount of Grant Spent
Jones	\$300	\$300	\$50	\$250
Smith	\$400	\$290	\$50	\$240
Subtotal				\$490
Total				\$1040

Figure 7. Project-Based Accounting, CWF Grant

These examples are not exhaustive, nor are they meant to be definitive. There may be other data elements that you track in your time, program, or project-based accounting systems, depending on your own capacities and needs. Yet these are the data that, at a minimum, BWSR will collect to reconcile the expenditures on your BWSR grants.