

## A Winning Grant Approach for Smaller Localities



### A winning grant approach for smaller local governments

When it comes to successfully applying for competitive grants at the state and federal level, it's no surprise that smaller to mid-sized communities across the country are increasingly taking a back seat to their larger counterparts. In an atmosphere where program administrators are expected to accomplish more with less, I understand why most grant programs routinely favor the big boys. That is, larger projects create larger impacts by default.

That being said, all is not lost for smaller communities. With the right projects and an effective strategy in place, towns, cities and counties of all sizes can significantly increase their chances of securing funding.

For an example of what I'm talking about, one must look no further than the City of Covington, WA which has secured six grants this year. As Krill Hill [covered this fall in the Maple Valley Reporter](#), Covington is currently reaping the benefits of a funding strategy it put in place almost three years ago.

According to Hill, Covington's recent success is "the culmination of a process that began three years ago, explained Glenn Akramoff, the city's public works director. 'In 2009 we started a process where our department in partnership with a consultant put together a public works grant strategy,' Akramoff said. 'The crux of the strategy was to apply for grants only when we have a viable project so as part of that we needed to put together some viable projects and get them grant ready...That philosophy is bearing fruit.'"

I recommend reading [the full article](#), but here are few excerpts and quick take-aways from Hill's piece:

In order to overcome those challenges, Covington developed this strategy, one which has been successful so far. Akramoff noted that grant-giving agencies know the city comes to the process with what's commonly known as "shovel-ready projects," in other words, they've been designed and engineered, all the city needs is the



money to get the work done.

Covington's strategy is predicated on a simple yet essential concept: Develop sound projects that are "shovel ready" and backed with local funding. Program managers would much rather help a local government complete a project than start one from scratch. Similarly important is the fact that city officials worked from the beginning to solicit and incorporate community feedback when developing and prioritizing projects.

Additionally, Akramoff said, Covington has looked outside its limits to make getting grant funding easier. "We also do a lot of partnerships outside, so we also seek support for our grants and provide it to our partner cities and the school district," Akramoff said. "But we've also done it internally where we've done joint grant applications (with other departments)."

When competing with larger cities and counties, the best thing a smaller community can do to raise a project or initiative's profile is to build partnerships with outside groups and neighboring communities. And while it's not always feasible to solicit full buy-in from large non-profits and other entities in the area, a simple letter of support can go a long way towards making your project seem larger and more regionally significant than it actually is.

*What successful strategies has your community employed lately?*

Source: [Maple Valley Reporter](#)

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