

Reimbursement and Project Management FAQs Colorado Parks and Wildlife Hunter Education Small Range Improvement Grant

The following Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) provide guidance to project sponsors to navigate through the many ins and outs of seeking reimbursement for project costs to be paid with CPW license plate dollars.

According to grant program guidelines, local project sponsors are responsible for providing or obtaining matching funds for the CPW funds that help pay for the project. The following are general guidelines which will apply in most cases. However, if you have any questions on how to proceed with your project, it is best to talk to your Colorado Parks and Wildlife contact for the project, or the contact in the Hunter Education office.

What forms do I need to complete to request reimbursement?

Project sponsors can send in invoices, receipts, etc., with the proper documentation of payment (as described later) and a completed Request for Reimbursement form (included in confirmation package) requesting payment. Match documentation is highly preferred at the time of the reimbursement request, but in any case all documentation must be provided by the end of the project.

What documentation of expenses and payments do I need?

We will need copies of invoices, receipts, time sheets, etc., showing the expenses that were incurred. If a receipt includes expenses beyond those for the project, sponsors should specifically note those costs that are related to the project. For example, if you bought construction items at a lumberyard for a Colorado Parks and Wildlife-funded project, and also items for an unrelated range improvement project, those items that were for the CPW construction project should be noted on the copy of the receipt sent in as part of the reimbursement request.

We will also need proof of payment for the items or work included in the reimbursement request. This most commonly takes the form of cancelled checks (both front and back) or credit card receipts.

If volunteer time is used as part of the match for a project, we will need signed time sheets giving the volunteer's name, time worked and date of the work. Also, each time sheet should be signed by a supervisor of the volunteer work. Experience has shown that this information should be collected at the time of the volunteer work. Going back later to collect signatures is difficult at best, and sometimes impossible.

At this time the value of a general volunteer is \$24 per hour of volunteer time. Some projects involve work by an employee while on paid time. For example, a public works department employee may help build a walkway as part of a range improvement project. Documentation of that time is most commonly done in the form of a time sheet listing the dates and hours of the work performed. If more than one public works department employee puts in time on a project, the hours can be compiled on a single tracking sheet. In both cases, the employee's

hourly wage rate should be indicated as part of the calculation of the value of the employee's time, and should be signed by the project supervisor.

It is also not uncommon for a project sponsor to use town-owned equipment, such as a grader, as part of a project. The use of that equipment should be based on comparable market rental rates, or a value normally assigned by the town for the use of that equipment. As with employee time, a chart showing the times the equipment was used on the project will be most helpful. The Match Report form should be used for this type of match.

Do I need to document matching funds when requesting reimbursement for expenses that are to be paid for with Parks and Wildlife grant funds?

Yes. Documentation is needed for both the costs you are asking to be reimbursed for, and for the expenses used as match in a project. Both require the same level of documentation.

How often can I request reimbursements?

Reimbursement requests can be made monthly and should be for at least \$500. Smaller and more frequent reimbursement requests increase administrative time relating to the review, processing, certification, etc., of the request. A series of small and frequent reimbursement requests should only be done in rare circumstances, and with the pre-approval of the Lead CPW contact for the project.

Most project sponsors are able to wait until the end of the project to make a reimbursement request. If a project sponsor needs to have expenses reimbursed more quickly we can accommodate those situations. However, we cannot send numerous checks for every separate expense.

For project sponsors who plan to wait until the end of the project to send in a single reimbursement request, it is important to keep in mind the documentation requirements, particularly when there may be months between when a cost is incurred and when the reimbursement request is made. Keeping files and documentation up to date as the project unfolds can save time and effort down the road, and avoid situations where evidence of an expense or payment is lost, and therefore may not be eligible for reimbursement.

May I have the contractor or supplier paid directly?

No. Our agreement is with the project sponsor and that is who we can reimburse for project expenses. A request to pay a contractor or supplier directly who is not the project sponsor will not be approved by the accounting section.

Also, most grants are provided on a "reimbursement" basis, which means we will need evidence of not only the expense (e.g., an invoice or bill) but also that the expense has been paid (e.g., copy of cancelled check, front and back, or credit card receipt).

To whom do I send the reimbursement requests?

Send reimbursement requests to the name and address of the person in the Letter of Authority to Proceed (this should be the Lead CPW contact). Sending the reimbursement request to the wrong person or office will at least slow the reimbursement.

How long does it take to get reimbursed?

Once the request has been reviewed and approved by Colorado Parks and Wildlife, a check will normally be in the mail within 7-14 business days. However, Parks and Wildlife's review of the request can be slowed by a number of factors, including:

- unsigned forms
- inadequate documentation of expenses requiring addition information from the project sponsor
- difficulty in matching expenses with the project budget
- urgent workload responsibilities of the Parks and Wildlife staff

If reimbursement is needed quickly, be sure to tell the project contact as soon as possible and every effort will be made to expedite payment. Remember—having the paperwork in order and the expenses documented will ensure the payment process will move quickly. Each time a reimbursement request is submitted to the state for payment the hunter education office has to prepare a detailed spreadsheet outlining the expenses. The better the records submitted by the range, the quicker that can be created.

How are matching fund requirements tied to reimbursements?

Suppose a grant calls for a 1:1 match of CPW and matching funds. In general, a reimbursement request for \$1000 to be paid by the grant will require evidence of \$1000 in match (e.g., receipts, documentation of donated materials, volunteer labor) for the request to be fully paid.

By way of example, suppose a project budget calls for Colorado Parks and Wildlife to pay for a \$2000 shelter and for the project sponsor to provide the project match by constructing \$2000 worth of walkway. If the shelter is the activity completed first and the sponsor sends in the bill for the shelter without evidence that the walkway has been done, Parks and Wildlife can only reimburse \$1000 of the shelter expense—representing \$1000 of grant-reimbursable costs and the \$1000 match. When the walkway is done later, then the remaining \$1000 of shelter costs can be reimbursed.

What happens if the project comes in under budget?

If a project comes in under budget, the expenses will be reimbursed at the cost share ratio in the agreement. So if a \$1000 project is approved at a 1:1 cost share (\$500 federal funds, \$500 local match) but it only ends up costing \$800, Parks and Wildlife can reimburse up to \$400 (maintaining the 1:1 ratio). Parks and Wildlife cannot reimburse the full \$500, with local match totaling \$300.

What happens if the project comes in over budget?

The state can only reimburse costs up to the amount included in the grant agreement. If the overall cost of a project exceeds original estimates, the project sponsor must absorb those additional costs.

If a certain part of the project came in over budget, but other parts came in below, the higher costs for one part may be able to be reimbursed, as long as the total cost of the project remains at or below the budgeted amount.

The budget in the initial project description is recognized to be an estimate, so some variation from estimated costs is expected and not unusual. However, if you see significant cost changes, talk to your project contact at Parks and Wildlife to see if any formal amendments to the project are needed. If an amendment is needed, it is important that this be done prior to the closing of the grant period. Once the grant period has closed, there can be no changes to the eligible project work or budget. Do not wait until the end of a project term to tell Parks and Wildlife about significant project or budget changes as part of the reimbursement request. If you do, some costs incurred may not be reimbursed.

What if the portion of the project that was used as matching funds comes in under budget?

Projects are reimbursed based on the overall cost share ratio. If the portion used as match comes in under budget that will reduce the amount Parks and Wildlife can reimburse the project sponsor.

How long after a project ends do I have to request a reimbursement?

Reimbursement requests should be in to Parks and Wildlife no later than 45 days after a project closes. Project sponsors should keep an on-going file of expenses associated with a project. It can sometimes be difficult or impossible to track and account for expenses incurred several months earlier.

Particularly for projects where volunteer labor is used as match, it can be critical to sign time sheets the day of the work. Trying to collect those certifications of volunteer work later can be very difficult.

Without proper documentation, Parks and Wildlife may not be able to reimburse you for your expenses. It will not suffice for the auditors to just be able to point to completed work. Financial records are the standard we are held to, and that we must hold you to.

Can I get reimbursed for costs incurred before I receive my Approval Letter?

No, only costs incurred as of the date on the Approval Letter will be honored. In the past grants have been cancelled because materials were purchased, and volunteer labor expended, before the date of authorization.

The project is taking longer than I thought to complete. Can I get an extension?

In most cases, yes. The request has to be approved by Colorado Parks and Wildlife prior to the close of the grant. A grant cannot be reopened or extended once it has passed its closing date.

For example, the closing date on a construction project is December 31, 2020, and midway through the preceding fall you know additional time will be needed to complete the work.

Talk to the Lead CPW Contact as soon as possible about an extension of the closing date. At least 60 days before expiration is desired. If you think you should complete the work by December 31, but are not positive that will be the case, talk to the Lead CPW contact anyway. An extension is comparatively easy to do, and it is much better to have completed the required project amendment rather than lose access to the funding to complete the work.

If you wait until shortly before the grant closing date to notify Parks and Wildlife of the need for an extension, it may not be approved in time and costs incurred after the grant closing date may not be reimbursed or counted as match.

As we got into the project, we made some changes. Is that OK?

If significant changes are anticipated, such as a change in location of the range or any change in construction of a project that becomes a permanent part of the landscape, please notify the Lead CPW Contact or Grant Program Administrator BEFORE any change is started. If you make changes in a project compared to how it was described in the original application, it may require an amendment to the grant. In general, we would look at whether the changed portion of the project could be viewed as significantly changing the value or outcome of the project. **Making changes in a project without notifying CPW could result in invalidation of the grant.**

Under any circumstances, it is best to determine whether a proposed change could alter the overall value of the project before the change is made. Waiting until the end of the project and submitting expenses for work that is not included in the original description could make it ineligible for reimbursement. It's always safer to check with CPW before making changes.

Do I need to send in a final report?

Yes. When the project lead sends in the final request for payment, please include a brief review of the project and include pictures of the completed project. This can be included in the final payment request package, or can be emailed to the Lead CPW Contact (below). This doesn't need to be a formal report, but should outline the benefits of the project and show the completed work.

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