



eGrants Project Grading

A guide for a Project Manager's review and grading of Subgrantee Performance Reports and Requests for Reimbursements

Project Grading – Why do we do it?

Both the State of Texas Uniform Grant Management Standards, Section __.36 (b)(8) and Section 18.36(b)(8) of CFR 49 Part 18 – Department of Transportation Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments state:

“Grantees and subgrantees will make awards only to responsible contractors possessing the ability to perform successfully under the terms and conditions of a proposed procurement. Consideration will be given to such matters as contractor integrity, compliance with public policy, record of past performance, and financial and technical resources.”

To comply with the above and to assist TRF-TS in reviewing project accomplishments (performance measures completed, targets achieved) and to ascertain whether or not the grant provided a beneficial service to the Traffic Safety Program, as well as to document a continued need for a project, TRF-TS has developed the eGrants Project Grading System.

eGrants Project Grading System

Each subgrantee will receive a grade (A – F), at the end of the grant year based on a possible 100 points. Subgrantees start with 0 points and earn points throughout the grant year. Points will be earned by the timely submission of reports, the subgrantees performance (per reporting period) and adherence to the project budget (per reporting period).

Points will be awarded by the review and grading of Performance Reports and RFRs by the TxDOT Project Manager and additional criteria will be automatically calculated and scored by eGrants. Point values of all criteria can be found in the attached documents; General – Project Grade and STEP – Project Grade.

Subgrantee’s that meet all grant objectives, including submitting all reports within the 30 day time frame, meeting all grant goals and target numbers and stay within the grant budget by 10% through the grant year will receive a score of 90, or an A.

The subgrantee’s performance and grade will be reviewed as a component of the subgrantee’s “demonstrated effectiveness” in providing traffic safety projects and will be considered during the awarding of future projects. With funding being cut across all federal/state agencies, including NHTSA it is especially important that grants be awarded to those agencies that have proven to be capable of carrying out the terms and conditions of their awards and that have made a positive impact to the Traffic Safety Program. In addition, with the eGrants grading system, Project Managers will now have a voice in determining the need for continuing a grant for their program area or District.

Both the STEP and General grants will be graded on 10 criteria. eGrants automatically calculates and grades 5 criteria for the STEP grants and 3 criteria for the General grants. Project Managers will review and grade the remaining criteria by reviewing Performance

Reports and Requests for Reimbursements and completing the Review and Comment pages of these reports.

The Project Manager will review Performance Reports and complete the Review/Comments page of the Performance Report. This page contains questions concerning the subgrantee's performance and the Project Manager's Risk Assessment of the subgrantee to date. A comments box is also included on the page to allow the Project Manager the opportunity to provide any comments.

The Project Manager will review RFRs and complete the Review/Comments page of the RFR. There are three questions on this page that the Project Manager must answer concerning budget and supporting documentation submitted by the subgrantee. A comments box is also included on the page to allow the Project Manager the opportunity to provide any comments.

TRF-TS requests all Project Managers complete the questions on the Review/Comments pages of the reports to the best of their ability. Each question is answered by selecting the appropriate radio button that best represents the subgrantee's performance for the reporting period. Therefore, careful review of information contained in the Performance Reports and RFRs, including supporting documentation, is required.

Each Review/Comment page includes a comments box, which is a mandatory field. This is an excellent avenue to document any concerns, reminders, or to praise a subgrantee for excellent work. The comments box should be used in conjunction with the Project Manager's assessment and grading of the performance period through the use of the radio button selections. The file of record, including a subgrantee's performance, must be thoroughly documented (especially for a subgrantee that is struggling to meet performance measures/target numbers) to include evidence of continued communication between the Project Manager and subgrantee.

As there are some differences in the Project Grading System grading criteria between a STEP and General Grant, both are discussed in detail below, as well as, the point values of the criteria.

If at any time during the grant year, a Project Manager has any questions regarding the eGrants grading system, please contact Garry Rand, TRF-TS Policies and Procedures Coordinator, at (979) 778-9715 or garry.rand@txdot.gov

STEP – Project Grade

Criteria automatically calculated and graded by eGrants (Questions 1-5)

- 1) **Performance Report (PR) Submission** is automatically calculated and scored by eGrants. Submitted reports earn 0.5 points per month. Up to 6 points per year
- 2) **Requests for Reimbursement (RFR) Submission** is automatically calculated and scored by eGrants. Submitted reports earn 0.5 points per month. Up to six points per year

PRs and RFRs are due 30 days after the end of the reporting period. The 30 day period is policy and is included in the subgrantee terms and conditions agreed to by the subgrantee in the Traffic Safety proposal. Subgrantees missing the 30 day deadline for PRs and RFRs must include this information on the next reporting period.

Drawbacks of missing the PR 30 day deadline:

- The subgrantee will not receive the 0.5 points for meeting the PR deadline.
 - The subgrantee will not have an opportunity to receive points (up to 2 points per month), based on meeting and/or exceeding performance measures and target numbers for the reporting period and the Project Manager's Risk Assessment analysis.
 - The subgrantee cannot submit an RFR (and will not receive the 0.5 points) without first submitting the PR for the reporting period.
 - The subgrantee will not have an opportunity to receive RFR points (up to 3 points per month), based on review of the RFR and budget information submitted with the RFR.
 - Therefore, a STEP subgrantee missing the 30 day deadline to submit a Performance Report could lose up to 6 total points per month.
- 3) **Match** is automatically calculated and scored by eGrants.

A subgrantee meeting their match percentage as specified in the grant will receive 0 points (after all, this is what they contracted for).

Subgrantees exceeding match percentage can earn additional points (1 – 4) for the year. Subgrantees will receive 1 additional point for every 25% additional match supplied to the grant, up to 4 points for providing 100% additional match.

TxDOT project managers must watch match percentage during year to ensure the subgrantee is on track to meet the minimum match percentage by the end of the grant year.

To determine if a subgrantee is meeting its match percentage:

- Pull up a subgrantee grant in eGrants
- Click on latest RFR

- Click on “RFR Summary”
- Look at the Total Expenditures row
- At the far right (under percentage) if the match percentage is equal to or greater than the TxDOT total expenditures percentage, the subgrantee is meeting its match share.
- This is very important to check on the September (or last) RFR submitted by the subgrantee. If the match % is lower than the TxDOT %, the RFR must be returned for modifications to correct the match amount.

4) **STEP Indicator** is automatically calculated and scored by eGrants.

Although the STEP indicator is scored by eGrants, it provides an excellent overview of how the subgrantee is performing. The STEP indicator should be reviewed each reporting period and compared to the target number. If the STEP Indicator is at or above the subgrantee’s targeted number, then they should be close to meeting and/or exceeding citation/arrests performance numbers.

At the end of the year:

- The subgrantee will receive 10 points by meeting and/or exceeding its targeted STEP indicator.
- The subgrantee will receive 0 points if it is below the grant’s targeted STEP indicator, but above 2.50.
- The subgrantee will lose points (-5 points) for every .50 under the 2.50 minimum STEP indicator, up to a -20 points.
- See Grading criteria for more information

5) **Public Information and Education activities (PI&E)** are automatically calculated and scored by eGrants.

The subgrantee will receive 2 points each for meeting or exceeding the 5 PI&E target numbers included in the grant (up to 10 points per year). **Note:** If the subgrantee did not request to purchase its own PI&E materials, and line d. of the performance report contains a 0, then the subgrantee will be given credit (2 points) for meeting this target number.

If the subgrantee does not meet a PI&E target number, they will receive 0 points for that target number.

The PI&E activities page should be reviewed by the Project Manager each reporting period to verify that the subgrantee is conducting the activities and is on track to meet the targeted numbers by the end of the grant year.

Review and Grading of Performance Reports by Project Manager –
(Questions 6 & 7)

6) **Citations / Arrests** – Project Manager to complete on the PR Review/Comments page.

The Project Manager provides an assessment of the subgrantee's performance for the current reporting period (for each of the targeted enforcement elements) by choosing the appropriate radio button. Options include:

- Below Target - Not Justified
- Below Target – Justified
- Meets
- Exceeds
- Not Applicable

Each of the five STEP enforcement elements (Speed, DWI, Seat Belt, Distracted Driving and ITC) must be addressed by one of the above options. If the grant does not include an enforcement element(s), choose the option "Not Applicable".

For example, if a year-long STEP Grant contains a Speed, DWI and Safety Belt enforcement element and if the project started on October 1 and ends on September 30, then this grant will consist of 12 months and 12 PRs.

- The Project Manager should divide the grant's proposed target number of an individual enforcement element by 12 to provide a number of citations/arrests by month. (to provide a reasonable estimate)
- Therefore, if the grant contains a target number of 2400 speed citations (2400/12) = 200 speed citations per month.
- The Project Manager should check the Performance Report – "STEP Performance Measures" page to review the subgrantee's performance for this enforcement element. The subgrantee does not have to provide a certain number of citations/arrests per month; however, review of this page will provide a good indication of the subgrantee's progress towards meeting the grant target goals by the end of the year. Therefore, if the subgrantee is not meeting the monthly citation/arrest target over several performance periods, it may be an indication that the grant target numbers will not be met as well.
- Also, review the Performance Report - Narrative Page to check if the subgrantee has provided any additional information, including a justification for not meeting a performance measure/target number for an enforcement element.
- Select the appropriate option on the Review/Comments page.
- Repeat this process for the DWI and Safety Belt target numbers.
- **Note:** add safety belt and child safety seat numbers together to come up with the safety belt number.
- Select "Not Applicable" for the ITC enforcement target number (as this fictional year long STEP does not contain an ITC element).

For a STEP Wave grant, target numbers are included by Wave period. Therefore, review the Wave period Performance Report and grade the performance for each of the enforcement activities versus the Wave period's targeted numbers. If the grant does not include an enforcement element(s), choose the option "Not Applicable".

< Target (Below Target) not Justified means the subgrantee did not meet the targeted number of citations/arrests for a STEP enforcement activity and adequate justification was NOT included in the Performance Report Narrative Page.

< Target (Below Target) "Justified" means the subgrantee has included adequate information in the Performance Report Narrative Page explaining difficulties/obstacles encountered by the subgrantee that directly impacted their ability to meet the objectives and/or activities of the grant for the reporting period. Project Managers must use their best judgment, based on the available information, that a valid reason existed that caused the subgrantee to fail in meeting one or more objectives, or target numbers for the reporting period in order to be considered "justified". Valid reasons would have to be considered exceptional and beyond the subgrantee's control.

If the subgrantee submits documentation/information that the Project Manager feels is sufficient to explain any difficulties encountered and that the subgrantee can ultimately meet its grant's targeted numbers, then the Project Manager can select Objectives did not meet Target, but Justified*. In this case, the subgrantee will receive the same point value as if it has met the objectives for the reporting period. However, choosing this option does not preclude the subgrantee from ultimately meeting its grant's target numbers.

7) **Risk Assessment** - Project Manager to complete on the PR Review/Comments page. Options include:

- Exceeds (1pt/month)
- Meets (.75 pts/month)
- Below (0.5 pts/month)
- High Risk (0.25 pts/month)
- Suspension/Termination (0 pts/month)

The Risk Assessment is the project manager's assessment of the subgrantees performance as a whole since the start of the project. Overall, is the subgrantee meeting, exceeding or not meeting its target numbers and/or any other contractual requirements? If the subgrantee has been meeting 3 of the target numbers every month and below on one target number, then overall they are meeting the target numbers of the grant. If the subgrantee is exceeding one target number (for the year) but are below on 3 target numbers, then overall, they would be considered below. Project managers must use their best judgment in providing scores based on the information provided in the PRs.

Review & Grading of monthly RFR by Project Manager (Questions 8–10)

8) Overrun/Underrun

Is the subgrantee within 10% of grant budget, either overrun or underrun?
Options include:

- Overrun – Within 10% of target (1 pt/month)
 - Overrun – Above 10% of target, but justified (Same as above)
 - Overrun – Above 10% of target (0 pts/month)
 - Underrun – Within 10% of target (1 pt/month)
 - Underrun - Below 10% of target, but justified (Same as above)
 - Underrun – Below 10% of target (0 pts/month)
- This question only pertains to the federal (TxDOT) amount of the budget.
 - The Project Manager should take the total dollar amount of grant/12 to determine (as a rule of thumb) the monthly budget for the grant.
 - If the subgrantee is not within 10% of the TxDOT budget, is adequate documentation/justification included in the PR Narrative page explaining the reason(s)?
 - It is up to the subgrantee's Project Director to monitor the budget closely and provide underrun/overrun information in the PR Narrative Page.
 - The 10% is a guide and the Project Manager can grade this accordingly. Budget expenditures will vary from month to month; however, if the Project Manager feels the subgrantee is on track to expend all budget by the end of the year, or if the subgrantee provides a plausible explanation in the Performance Report for an underrun/overrun and plans to correct the underrun/overrun in the future, the project manager should either grade as either 1) Yes, or 2) No, but justified for this question. Both the Yes and No, but justified are worth 1 point per month.
 - Note:

9) Are all expenditures being charged to appropriate budget categories?

Options include:

- Yes (1 pt/month)
- No, but justified (1pt/month)
- No (0 pts/month)

If yes, the subgrantee receives 1 point per month.

This should be an automatic yes for subgrantees. Are they charging all costs to the budget categories identified in the grant? If not, the RFR should be sent back for modifications.

If the subgrantee has established a history of not charging costs to the correct budget category, or if the Project Manager has continually submitting RFRs back to the subgrantee for this type of modification, then the Project Manager can select the "No" button and the subgrantee will receive 0 points for the reporting period(s).

10) **Is supporting documentation submitted to justify all expenditures?**

Options include:

- Yes (1 pt/month)
- No, but justified (1 pt/month)
- No (0 pts/month)

If yes, the subgrantee receives 1 point per month. Is back-up documentation submitted (attached) in eGrants to substantiate all expenditures? i.e., receipts, salary summaries, mileage documentation, etc. If the answer is No, RFRs should not be approved and sent back for modifications.

If problems persist in obtaining back-up supporting documentation, the Project Manager should feel free to select the “No” button for this question and the subgrantee will receive 0 points for the reporting period(s).

Note: Both TxDOT reimbursement expenditures, as well as, any local cost sharing (matching) costs must be supported by back-up documentation attached to eGrants.

General Grants – Project Grade

Criteria automatically calculated and graded by eGrants (Questions 1-3)

- 1) **Performance Report (PR) Submission** is automatically calculated and scored by eGrants. Submitted reports earn 0.5 points per month.
- 2) **Requests For Reimbursement (RFR) Submission** is automatically calculated and scored by eGrants. Submitted reports earn 0.5 points per month.

PRs and RFRs are due 30 days after the end of the reporting period. The 30 day period is policy and is included in the subgrantee terms and conditions agreed to by the subgrantee in the Traffic Safety proposal. Subgrantees missing the 30 day deadline for PRs and RFRs must include this information on the next reporting period.

Drawbacks of missing the PR 30 day deadline:

- The subgrantee will not receive the 0.5 points for meeting the PR deadline.
 - The subgrantee will not have an opportunity to receive points (up to 4 points per month), based on meeting and/or exceeding performance measures and target numbers for the reporting period and the Risk Assessment.
 - The subgrantee cannot submit an RFR (and will not receive the 0.5 points without first submitting the PR for the reporting period).
 - The subgrantee will not have an opportunity to receive RFR points (up to 3 points per month), based on review of the RFR and budget information submitted with the RFR.
 - Therefore, a subgrantee missing the 30 day deadline to submit a Performance Report could lose up to 8 total points per month.
- 3) **Match** - automatically calculated and scored by eGrants.

A subgrantee meeting their match percentage as specified in the grant will receive 0 points (after all, this is what they contracted for).

Subgrantees exceeding match percentage can earn additional points (1 – 4) for the year. Subgrantees will receive 1 additional point for every 25% additional match supplied to the grant, so up to 4 points for providing a minimum of 100% additional match.

TxDOT project managers must oversee match percentage during year to ensure the subgrantee is on track to meet the minimum match percentage by the end of the grant year.

To determine if a subgrantee is meeting its match percentage:

- Pull up a subgrantee's grant in eGrants

- Click on latest RFR
- Click on “RFR Summary”
- Look at the Total Expenditures row
- At the far right (under percentage) if the match percentage is equal to or greater than the TxDOT total expenditures percentage, the subgrantee is meeting its match share.
- This is very important to check on the September (or last) RFR submitted by the subgrantee. If the match % is lower than the TxDOT %, the RFR must be returned for modifications to correct the match amount.

Note: Subgrantees do NOT have to supply a minimum match percentage per reporting period; however, the match percentage should constantly be reviewed, and if the percentage is low (as compared to the TxDOT percentage) the subgrantee should be reminded that they must meet the minimum match percentage by the end of the project year.

Review and Grading of Performance Reports by Project Manager – (Questions 4 – 7)

On the Review Comment page of a Performance Report (to be completed by the Project Manager), there are four questions to be answered (Questions 4 – 7 of the grading criteria).

4) **Objectives Applicable to this Reporting Period**

The Project Manager is to assess the subgrantee’s performance in meeting Objectives for the current reporting period on the PR Review/Comment page. Options include:

- Objectives Exceed Target (1 pt/month)
 - All Objectives Meet Target (0.75 pt/month)
 - Objectives did not meet Target, but Justified* (same as Meet target)
 - At Least One Objective did not meet Target (0.5 pts)
 - None of the Objectives meet Target (0 pts/month)
- If Target number is not met during the current reporting period, is adequate documentation/justification included in the PR Narrative page explaining the reason(s)?
 - If the grant contains an Objective target number that the subgrantee plans to obtain throughout the grant year, is the subgrantee on track to meet the target number by the end of the year? For example, if a subgrantee is to train 600 participants by continually providing training classes throughout the year, the numbers of participants trained and reported on the Performance Report should be used to effectively gauge the subgrantee’s progress towards meeting the targeted goal. For instance, at the end of March (1/2 through the grant), the subgrantee should be around 300 participants trained. If the

number is far below 300, has the subgrantee submitted documentation explaining the reason for the low number and some assurance/plan to for making up the difference so they will meet the targeted number at the conclusion of the grant?

- If the subgrantee submits documentation/information that the Project Manager feels is sufficient to explain any difficulties encountered and that the subgrantee can ultimately meet it's grant's targeted numbers, then the Project Manager can select Objectives did not meet Target, but Justified. In this case, the subgrantee will receive the same point value as if it has met the objectives for the reporting period.
- If a grant contains few objectives and these objectives and related activities clearly identify the steps necessary to complete the objective as well as the time lines involved,
- **Note:** If no objectives are due in a reporting period reviewed, the subgrantee's performance will be scored as objectives met.

5) **Activities Applicable to this Reporting Period**

Project Manager assessment of the subgrantee's performance for the current reporting period on the PR Review/Comment page. Options include:

- All Activities Completed (1 pt/month)
- Activities not Complete, but Justified* (same as all completed)
- At Least One Activity not Completed (0.5 pts/month)
- None of the Activities Completed (0 pts/month)

Did the subgrantee complete the activities as stated in the Objectives, PI&E, Performance Measures and Activities pages of the grant?

If activities were not completed for the current reporting period, is adequate documentation/justification included in the PR Narrative page explaining the reason(s)?

If an activity date was revised, is there adequate documentation in the PR Narrative page explaining why the date was changed and how and when they will complete the activity?

Note: If no activities are due in a reporting period, the subgrantee's performance will be scored as objectives met.

6) **Are activities for an objective being performed as identified in the grant?**

The Project Manager will assess the subgrantee's performance on activities thus far into the grant year (Yesr to Date) on the PR Review/Comment page. Options include:

- All activities are performed as identified in the grant

- Activities not performed as identified in the Grant, but justified*
- At least one Activity is not performed as identified in the grant
- None of the activities are performed as identified in the grant

Are activities being performed to date (unlike the monthly review), the project manager will assess activities performed through the grant year to date, including activities being completed on time, or revised w/justification, completed in the order presented, to complete the objective?

If not, is adequate documentation/justification included in the PR Narrative page explaining the reason(s)?

7) Risk Assessment

The Project Manager will assess the subgrantee's total overall performance on all activities thus far into the grant year on the PR Review/Comment page. Options include:

- Exceeds
- Meets
- Below
- High Risk
- Suspension/Termination

The project manager will grade the subgrantee's overall performance to date on whether of not the subgrantee is meeting, exceeding or not meeting their objectives/target numbers and/or any other responsibilities of the subgrantee.

Review of the monthly RFR; There are three questions to be answered by project manager after review of each RFR (Questions 8 – 10):

8) Overrun/Underrun

Is the subgrantee within 10% of grant budget, either overrun or underrun? Options include:

- Overrun – Within 10% of target (1 pt/month)
 - Overrun – Above 10% of target, but justified (Same as above)
 - Overrun – Above 10% of target (0 pts/month)
 - Underrun – Within 10% of target (1 pt/month)
 - Underrun - Below 10% of target, but justified (Same as above)
 - Underrun – Below 10% of target (0 pts/month)
- Take the total dollar amount of grant/12 = monthly budget.
 - If the subgrantee is not within 10% of budget, is adequate documentation/justification included in the PR Narrative page explaining the reason(s)?

- It is up to the subgrantee's Project Director to monitor the budget closely and provide underrun/overrun information in the PR Narrative Page.
- The 10% is a guide and the Project Manager should grade this accordingly. Budget expenditures will vary from month to month; however, if the Project Manager feels the subgrantee is on track to expend all budget by the end of the year, or if the subgrantee provides a plausible explanation in the Performance Report for an underrun/overrun and plans to correct the underrun/overrun in the future, the project manager should either grade as either 1) Yes, or 2) No, but justified for this question. Both the Yes and No, but justified are worth 1 point per month.
- Note: There is not an option to choose if it is determined that a subgrantee is exactly on their monthly budget. In these cases, either select Underrun – Within 10% of target or Overrun – Within 10% of target for the subgrantee to receive full credit (1 pt/month).

9) **Are all expenditures being charged to appropriate budget categories?**

Options include:

- Yes (1 pt/month)
 - No, but justified (1 pt/month)
 - No (0 pts/month)
- If yes, the subgrantee receives 1 point per month.

This should be an automatic yes for subgrantees. Are they charging all costs to the budget categories identified in the grant? If not, the RFR should be sent back for modifications.

If the subgrantee has established a history of not charging costs to the correct budget category, or if the Project Manager has continually submitting RFRs back to the subgrantee for this type of modification, then the Project Manager can select the "No" button and the subgrantee will receive 0 points for the reporting period(s).

10) **Is supporting documentation submitted to justify the expenditures?**

Options include:

- Yes (1 pt/month)
- No, but justified (1 pt/month)
- No (0 pts/month)

If yes, the subgrantee receives 1 point per month. Is back-up documentation submitted (attached) in eGrants to substantiate all expenditures? i.e., receipts, invoices, salary summaries, mileage documentation, etc. If the answer is No, RFRs should not be approved and sent back for modifications. If problems persist in obtaining back-up supporting documentation, the Project Manager

should feel free to select the “No” button for this question and the subgrantee will receive 0 points for the reporting period(s).

***Justified** - means the subgrantee has included adequate information in the Performance Report Narrative Page explaining difficulties/obstacles encountered by the subgrantee that directly impacted their ability to meet the objectives and/or activities of the grant for the reporting period. Project Managers must use their best judgment, based on the available information, that a valid reason existed that caused the subgrantee to fail in meeting one or more objectives or target numbers for the reporting period in order to be considered “justified”. Valid reasons would have to be considered exceptional and beyond the subgrantee’s control.