

About the BSCC's Grant Management Process

Over the past few decades, the Legislature has vested a variety of grant programs with the BSCC and has provided related local assistance for distribution to counties. Each grant program has unique legislative intent and statutory requirements. Some programs' requirements are quite prescriptive, while others are more general in nature. Most programs require a competitive grant funding process, some level of evaluation or assessment to determine program impact or completion, and an overall report of results or outcomes.

What is the Grant Management Process?

When the Legislature places the administration of a grant program with the BSCC, three key elements generally guide the BSCC's efforts:

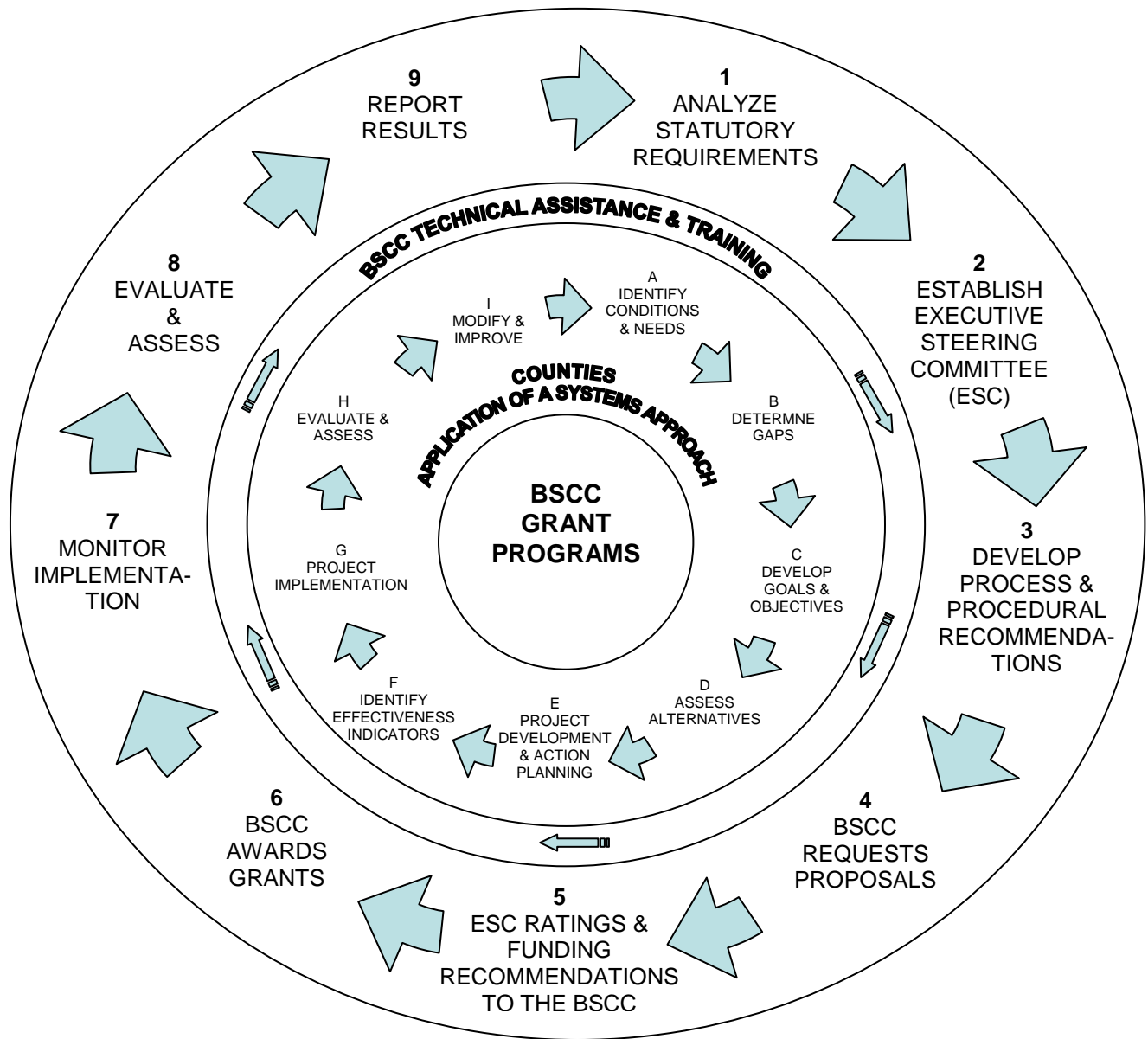
- 1) **Policy Focused:** The legislative intent and the "big picture" public policy impact are the primary focus.
- 2) **Constituency-driven Process:** The BSCC involves those people with the most specific knowledge and expertise to serve on an Executive Steering Committee (ESC) to provide recommendations to guide each grant program's efforts ([ESC Process](#)). Counties are responsible for design and development of grant-funded projects to meet local needs.
- 3) **Timely Implementation:** The grants are awarded, and the specific grant projects in each county are developed and implemented, in an expeditious and timely fashion.

The BSCC's grant management process was developed in collaboration with state and local policymakers. It is an ongoing "systems approach" as illustrated on the chart displayed on the next page. There are two major bands that work concurrently in implementing various grant programs. One band shows the BSCC's grant management process; the other shows the counties application of a systems approach to project development and implementation. From the beginning of the processes until project closeout, the BSCC provides ongoing technical assistance and training to counties to help ensure a successful effort.

Why is a Systems Approach Used?

An applied "systems model" is a simple, yet powerful, philosophical approach that has been historically used by the BSCC in working with its constituents during the planning, development, implementation, and assessment of various public policies, programs, and projects. It is designed to convert concepts into appropriate action, in an overall system of continuous improvement. The model draws from fundamental principles of public administration and program development/improvement. As can be seen from the diagram on the next page, the initial steps are used to determine what conditions are to be addressed with a public policy, program or project, what is to be accomplished, and various alternative ways to address the conditions. The remaining steps focus on the actual development, implementation, and evaluation or assessment of the selected public policy, program, or projects. Information provided in evaluation or assessment of results is designed to be used by policymakers to reassess the conditions and needs identified in the first step, thereby forming a feedback loop of continuous improvement.

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¹ Some steps in the model may not be applicable depending upon the nature and requirements of a specific grant program.

Key Elements of the BSCC's Grant Management Process

Step 1. Analyze Statutory Requirements: The BSCC begins each grant program by analyzing law/statutory requirements and related legislative intent. This forms the basis of future steps and actions taken by the BSCC.

Steps 2-3. Establish an ESC to Develop Process/Procedural Recommendations: The BSCC appoints an ESC to guide the grant process and provide recommendations on specific implementation procedures. This may include recommendations on criteria and elements of a Request for Proposals (RFP), rating factors to be used to evaluate and determine which counties receive grant awards, and effectiveness indicators to be used to determine project success. This process typically includes draft material developed by the ESC that is circulated to constituents and potential grantees for feedback before finalizing recommendations to the BSCC. Constituent feedback on draft material often provides critical information that is used by the ESC to develop recommendations to the BSCC.

Step 4. BSCC Request for Proposals (RFP): ESC recommendations are provided to the BSCC for its consideration/action at a regularly scheduled meeting and public comment, if any, can be provided. In determining what action to take, the BSCC may accept, change, or modify any ESC recommendations. The BSCC issues the RFP, which is distributed to constituents and posted on the BSCC's website.

Step 5. ESC Rates Proposals and Develops Funding Recommendations: If the law (or BSCC policy) has prescribed a competitive grant process, each member of the ESC will independently review each applicant's written proposal, and apply the BSCC-approved rating factors. Raters may also hear county testimony about each proposal if required by the RFP. For each proposal, the cumulative scores on all rating factors, by all ESC members, determine the applicant's rank in relationship to other projects (BSCC Grant Proposal Evaluation Process).

Step 6. Award Grants: The ESC provides the BSCC with a rank-ordered list of proposed projects for funding consideration/action at a regularly scheduled meeting and public comment, if any, can be provided. In determining what action to take, the BSCC may accept, change, or modify any ESC funding recommendations. The BSCC awards grants and counties are formally notified. Each county project description and funding level is posted on the BSCC's website.

Step 7. Monitor Program Implementation: BSCC staff monitors each county's project and provides training and technical assistance throughout development and implementation. The goal of BSCC monitoring, training, and technical assistance is to provide for early identification and resolution of any issues and enable mid-course corrections to be made if necessary. Monitoring also helps ensure that the project is meeting its goals and objectives and that it can be reasonably assumed that desired outcomes can be achieved.

Step 8. Program Evaluation/Assessment: Each grant program is subject to some level of evaluation and assessment. Depending on legislative requirements, this can be as extensive as formal research designs using experimental and control groups or much less formal methodologies (Information Gathering, Research and Evaluation Overview). For every grant program, regardless of the research and evaluation methodologies used, the BSCC seeks information to enable two fundamental public policy questions to be answered: 1) Did the program work as intended? 2) Were the program goals, objectives, and desired outcomes achieved?

Step 9. Report Results: If required by law (or BSCC policy), a written report of program results is prepared for use by state and local policymakers. This enables findings and best practices to be identified, as well as the ability to aggregate data and lessons learned across projects statewide. It provides a valuable feedback loop to enable necessary modifications or improvements to be made to projects or related public policy.

Key Elements of the County Grantee Project Process

Steps A-B. Identify Conditions/Needs and Determine Gaps: When requests for grant proposals are announced by the BSCC, the first step taken by counties is an assessment of current conditions and needs relative to the BSCC's grant program. Counties determine if the grant program can improve public safety or community conditions, and address local public policy needs. If so, counties identify specific gaps that may be met by the grant program.

Steps C-D. Develop Goals/Objectives and Assess Alternatives: If the assessments in Steps A-B indicate that the grant program may be a good fit, counties move into the initial phase of project planning involving the development of goals and objectives. Goals are broad level statements of desired public policy, and objectives are specific statements of what the project seeks to achieve. At this point, counties generate and assess alternatives and typically make a decision whether or not to apply for a grant.

Steps E-F. Project Development/Action Planning and Effectiveness Indicators: Although all steps up to this point can be considered in the broad context of initial project development, at steps E-F counties typically develop a formal, written proposal for submission to the BSCC. Counties planning and development teams engage in intensive system wide collaboration among key parties. Roles and responsibilities are identified, action plans and timelines are developed, lines of authority are established, policies and project procedures are drafted, and project effectiveness indicators (or desired outcome measures) and evaluation protocols are developed. (If the county receives a grant, project development continues and is refined.)

Steps G-H. Project Implementation and Evaluation/Assessment. Counties start project implementation, which typically involves operationalizing all policies and procedures (e.g., taking clients, delivering services, starting construction, etc.). At this point, necessary evaluation data collection begins.

Step I. Project Modification/Improvement. Lessons learned in implementation, and evaluation results, are used by counties to make project modifications and improvements. This occurs throughout the life of the project as part of an ongoing process of program assessment and continuous improvement.