Governor's Office of
Economic Opportunity
CENTER FOR RURAL
DEVELOPMENT

County Economic Opportunity Advisory Board Guide & Training

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What County Legislators, Administrators, and Economic Opportunity Advisory Boards need to know

County Economic Opportunity Advisory Boards (CEO Boards) are established by Utah Code Section 63N-4-803 as a prerequisite for counties to receive funding from the Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity (GOEO). Per Utah Code Section 63N-4-802, for a rural county to qualify for the Rural County Grant (RCG) or the Rural Communities Opportunity Grant (RCOG), it must have a functioning CEO board that is actively fulfilling its obligation to advise the county's legislative body on matters related to economic development, grant applications, and the grants' reporting requirements.

The CEO Board should meet regularly to discuss potential opportunities, and generate project and activity ideas. It should then assist in the planning and implementation of projects and activities that are approved by the county's legislative body.

Board Formation

CEO Boards must consist of at least five voting members, appointed by the county legislative body, one from each of the following groups:

- a county representative;
- a representative of a municipality in the county;
- a workforce development representative;
- a private-sector representative; and
- a member of the public who lives in the county.

The county legislative body may appoint additional members with experience or expertise in economic development matters.

Terms of CEO Board Members

- Each CEO Board member shall be appointed for one four-year term. Board members are encouraged to serve no more than two (2) consecutive terms.
- The county legislative body shall appoint members in staggered terms so that approximately half of the advisory board members are appointed or reappointed every two years.
- The CEO Board shall elect a chair of the advisory board annually. The CEO Board Chair is encouraged to serve for no more than two (2) consecutive years.
- The CEO Board shall elect a vice chair of the advisory board annually.
- When a vacancy occurs in the membership of the Board for any reason, the county legislative body shall appoint a replacement to fulfill the remainder of an unexpired term.
- A majority of the CEO Board constitutes a quorum for the purpose of conducting business.
- The majority vote of a quorum constitutes the recommendation of the advisory committee to the county legislative body.

Because CEO Boards are established by statute, they are subject to the Utah Open and Public Meetings Act and are expected to maintain a standard of ethics in governance (Utah Code Annotated Title 52, Chapter 4). Among other statutory requirements, this includes having a quorum present for meetings, adherence to conflict-of-interest practices, advertising meetings and agendas on the Utah Public Notice website, making an audio recording of proceedings, and taking meeting minutes.

RURAL GRANTS AND THE CEO BOARD

There are two rural grants for which a rural CEO Board has specific advisory responsibilities. They are the Rural County Grant and the Rural Communities Opportunity Grant.

The Rural County Grant (RCG)

A rural county may receive up to $200,000 annually from RCG. RCG is designed to empower rural county governments to manage their own unique economic development opportunities, and take responsibility for planning, projects, and activities that will lead to improved economies. The grant is intended to address economic development needs, including:

- Business recruitment, development, and expansion;
- Workforce training and development; and
- Infrastructure, industrial building development, and capital facilities improvements for business development.

The Rural Communities Opportunity Grant (RCOG)

RCOG has the same purposes and intended economic development uses as RCG; however, it is meant for larger, more specifically targeted projects. The RCOG application is competitive and a rural county is required to contribute a certain percentage of matching funds based on the county's classification. A county may receive up to $600,000 under RCOG, and may not receive more than a combined $800,000 from RCOG and RCG in a given fiscal year.

Qualifying Criteria for RCG and RCOG

Both of these rural grants have the same core criteria for counties to qualify:

- A rural county must form and maintain a functioning County Economic Opportunity Advisory Board (CEO Board).
- The county must comply with annual reporting requirements, namely, accounting for RCG and RCOG funds received and used during the previous fiscal year. Annual reports should include a description of the economic development projects and activities the county participated in and/or completed, companies and organizations they distributed grant funding to, and the projects for which those companies and organizations used the funds. Counties must also give an accounting of all funds encumbered for ongoing projects that extend past a single fiscal year, and of all other funds that are unencumbered or otherwise unused.
- The county's legislative body must submit a formal application—annually for RCG, and in the year it is prepared to apply for RCOG—that includes a description of its anticipated economic development projects and activities, a proposed budget, and expected deliverables and outcomes as advised by the CEO Board and approved by the county legislative body.

CEO Board Roles and Duties regarding the RCG and the RCOG

Each CEO board shall assist and advise the county legislative body on:

- its application for a Rural County Grant and/or a Rural Communities Opportunity Grant;
- what projects should be funded by money from these grants; and
- the preparation of its reporting requirements for the grant money received.

RCOG Participation by Rural Communities and AOGs

Rural communities eligible for the Rural Communities Opportunity Grant (RCOG) include cities, towns, and metro townships located in counties of the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth class; and municipalities with a population of 10,000 or less in counties of the second class. The seven Associations of Governments (AOG) established in the State of Utah are also eligible to apply for RCOG.

For a municipality to qualify for RCOG it must have a functioning planning and zoning commission, or a duly organized municipal economic opportunity advisory board or commission, that will act under the same advisory requirements as a CEO Board. An

Association of Governments' General Board must act under the same advisory requirements as a CEO Board to be eligible for the grant. All instructions, directives, requirements, criteria, roles, duties, and operations pertaining to CEO Boards, as described throughout this Guide, also pertain to rural communities and AOGs engaging in RCOG.

As is expected of CEO boards, these boards and commissions should meet regularly to discuss potential opportunities, and generate project and activity ideas. They should then assist in the planning and implementation of approved projects and activities. One or two meetings a year will not be adequate to effectively contribute to either planning or reporting. Community administrators and legislative bodies, as well as AOG administrators, are responsible for scheduling regular meetings.

Requirements exclusive to AOGs
AOGs may be awarded up to 20 percent of the overall RCOG funding in a given fiscal year; however, AOGs are not guaranteed 20 percent of the total funding. AOGs will compete against all other qualified applicants for the same pool of available funds, and will be judged by the same evaluation criteria and standards as all other applicants.

In order to qualify for an RCOG, AOGs must receive buy-in from all of the counties represented by the AOG, and demonstrate that each county has approved the request for grant funds per Utah Code Subsection 63N-4-802(4)(e). Specifically, AOGs must submit letters of agreement from each county within their regions in their applications.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

How often should the CEO Board Meet?
CEO Boards should meet as often as is necessary to generate project ideas, plan successful economic development projects, and meet the annual reporting requirements for each grant. While statute does not set a minimum number of annual meetings, one or two meetings a year will not be adequate to effectively contribute to either planning or reporting. County administrators and legislative bodies are responsible for scheduling regular meetings. They should likewise be very aware of application and reporting requirements and deadlines, and expect to receive advisory input well in advance of deadlines.

Should the Public be involved in CEO Board Meetings?
In as much as the CEO Board is subject to the Utah Open and Public Meetings Act, meetings should be open to public attendance and may include participation and comments from citizens. Involving the public ensures transparency and promotes inclusion.

With the grants, does the county only act for its own governmental interests?
A county should take into account opportunities across all of the communities within its boundaries. For example, if an economic impact can be made in a single community, the county may consider using RCG funding to contribute to that community's project. On the other hand, the county may want to consider regionally significant projects that will not only improve the county, but also a larger region beyond its boundaries.

What if the Commission/Council doesn't accept the recommendations of the CEO Board?
Because the CEO Board serves in an advisory capacity, the legislative body may choose not to accept all of the CEO Board's recommendations. Recommendations may be altered, amended, tabled or altogether rejected. Many factors contribute to the final decision of whether to implement a proposal, such as, budget constraints, priority adjustments, planning and zoning restrictions, return on investment, etc. Ultimately, the role of the CEO Board is to provide economic development recommendations to the legislative body of the county, and to advise on the most effective and impactful use of grant funds.

Does the CEO Board have other responsibilities?
The primary function of the CEO Board is to advise the county legislative body on potential projects, activities, use of funds, and reporting related to the Rural County Grant and the Rural Communities Opportunity Grant. However, a county legislative body may, at its discretion, expand the role of the CEO Board as it deems useful and beneficial to the economic development of a county.

What are the county classifications?
Rural Counties in the State of Utah of the third, fourth, fifth, or sixth are eligible to apply for grants under the Rural County Grant and the Rural Communities Opportunity Grant. Rural Counties by classification (State Code 17-50-501), are:

Counties of the Third Class (Populations from 40,000 to 174,999)

Cache County

Tooele County

Box Elder County

Iron County

Summit County

Counties of the Fourth Class (Populations from 11,000 to 39,999)

Uintah County

Wasatch County

Sanpete County

Sevier County

Carbon County

Duchesne County

San Juan County

Millard County

Morgan County

Juab County

Counties of the Fifth Class (Populations from 4,000 to 10,999)

Emery County

Grand County

Kane County

Beaver County

Garfield County

Counties of the Sixth Class (Populations less than 4,000)

Wayne County

Rich County

Piute County

Daggett County

What are matching funds?
Rural County Grants do not require the county to contribute matching funds to their planned projects and activities. However, most projects and activities generally require more funding than the $200,000 a rural county receives every year. Reporting those additional funds as a matching contribution is appreciated, but expenditure of additional funds is not required.

The Rural Communities Opportunity Grant does require a specified percentage rate of matching funds above the grant award amount. That rate is based on the county's classification (population size) as listed below:

- 10% match for a county of the sixth class;
- 20% match for a county of the fifth class;
- 30% match for a county of the fourth class;
- 40% match for a county of the third class.

What are the approved sources of matching funds?
Under RCOG, the applying community must demonstrate a funding match provided by any combination of the following:

- a community reinvestment agency
- redevelopment agency
- community development and renewal agency
- private-sector entity
- nonprofit entity
- federal matching grant
- county or municipality general fund match

Matching Funds for Rural Communities and AOGs
For municipalities in any rural county classification—including within the second class— a funding match must total:

- 10% match for a town;
- 20% match for a municipality of the fifth class;
- 30% match for a municipality of the fourth class; or
- 40% match for a municipality of the third class.

For municipality classifications see State code 10-2-301.

AOGs must demonstrate a 40 percent match. Sources of funding match are the same for communities and AOGs as for rural counties.

How are matching funds calculated?
Example #1
Kane County has successfully applied for an RCOG. It has been awarded $300,000. Kane County is a county of the fifth-class, and therefore has a matching requirement of 20%. The county must contribute the equivalent of 20% of their award amount to the overall budget of their proposed project.

$300,000 X .20 = $60,000; $300,000 + $60,000 = $360,000

Kane County will spend $360,000 on their project using grant funds, plus funds from qualified fund-matching sources. They will be reimbursed $300,000 from the RCOG.

Example #2
Brigham City has successfully applied for an RCOG. It has been awarded $600,000. Brigham City is a city of the fourth class, and therefore has a matching requirement of 30%. The city must contribute the equivalent of 30% of their award amount to the overall budget of the proposed project.

$600,000 X .30 = $180,000; $600,000 + $180,000 = $780,000

Brigham City will spend $780,000 on their project using grant funds, plus funds from qualified fund-matching sources. They will be reimbursed $600,000 from the RCOG.

When are applications due?
The RCG application opens July 1st of each year, but is not accessible until the previous year's annual report is filed. The RCG application closes on September 1st. The RCOG application opens in mid-September and closes after six weeks. Public announcements regarding applications and their details are posted on the GOEO website and distributed in GOEO newsletters and through emails to qualified applicants well in advance of opening. CEO Boards and county legislative bodies should begin planning projects and activities several months in advance of application dates to assure timely and complete applications.

What are the requirements of an annual report and how detailed should it be?
Annual reports for both RCG and RCOG have similar reporting components, which are as follows:

- The amount of grant money the county has received;
- How grant money has been distributed by the county/community, including:
    - which companies or entities have utilized grant money;
    - how much grant money each company or entity has received; and
    - how each company or entity has used the money;
- An evaluation of the effectiveness of awarded grants in improving economic development in the county/community, including:
    - the number of jobs created;
    - infrastructure that has been created; and
    - capital improvements in the community;
- How much matching money has been utilized by the county/community and what entities or sources have provided the matching money; and
- Any other reporting, auditing, or post-performance requirements established by the Center for Rural Development in collaboration with the Rural Opportunity Advisory Committee.

When are Annual Reports due?
Annual Reports for both RCG and RCOG are due no later than July 31st, or one month after the end of the previous fiscal year. Annual reports for both grants open on May 15th, and close end-of-day, July 31. Counties must complete their annual reports before they can start an RCG application for the new fiscal year. Failure to file an annual report jeopardizes the county's next opportunity for RCG funding.

Under RCOG, contracts are set for two years. Annual reports are required each year that the contract is open, or until the project is completed and the grantee submits a final report and reimbursement request. Failure to file RCOG annual reports may jeopardize future award opportunities.

What type of projects are acceptable?
Projects, activities, and uses of funds must fall into one or more of the following categories:

- Business recruitment, development, and expansion;
- Workforce training and development; and
- Infrastructure, industrial building development, and capital facilities improvements for business development.

Based on these categories, the county should explore and pursue projects and activities that:

- Cultivate new business opportunities and entrepreneurism,
- Expand existing businesses,
- Expand employment opportunities,
- Improve skills and education that will benefit employees and employers,
- Improve consumer services,
- Improve the delivery and distribution of products,
- Create locations and amenities for business operations, or
- Contribute to key industry growth and advancement.

Examples of approved projects and grant fund use—
The following are a few examples of projects and activities for which counties and communities have used RCG and RCOG funds:

Business recruitment, development, and expansion—
- Business marketing and advertising
- Gift certificates for businesses to improve shopping and dining experiences
- Mapping software to illustrate businesses and attractions
- Regional business summits and workshops
- Annual contributions to the Chamber of Commerce
- Historic Downtown Tenant Improvement grants
- Community "Site Ready" planning for shovel-ready economic development purposes, leading to major company recruitment

Workforce training and development—
- Training and mentoring people to return to the workforce sober and empowered to live a better life
- Junior Entrepreneurial Program—youth attend business seminars, complete a business plan, and cultivate business idea
- Partnering with a local college and the Custom Fit program to offer Customer Service training to local businesses
- Trainings leading to certifications and licensures

Infrastructure, industrial building development, and capital facilities improvements for business development—
- Business Innovation Center operations and equipment
- A sub-grant to a new restaurant for machinery and other equipment
- A sub-grant to a fabrication business for new machinery
- Contribution to regional feasibility study for an Agri Park—food processing and food security

- Upgrades to electrical infrastructure to allow for new development in a section of the downtown area for existing businesses and commercial block re-design
- Installed infrastructure (road, water, sewer, natural gas, and communication lines) to improve and expand an Industrial Park for business attraction and growth
- Business development in downtown—installing and constructing a public walkway, patio, and parking lot on a key commercial block

What is the difference between community development and economic development?
Most questions about the difference between community development and economic development are related to infrastructure projects. The following two scenarios highlight the differences between community development and economic development projects, especially as they relate to the use of RCG and RCOG funds:

Scenario 1—

A county needs to upgrade its electric power grid to service its communities. The primary intention is to replace aging infrastructure, and to secure redundancy to protect from power outages. It will require upgrades to transmission lines and displacement from polls to lines buried underground. The county and its communities will all generally benefit from the improved electrical infrastructure, residents and businesses alike.

Scenario 2—

A county needs to upgrade its electric power grid. Two manufacturing companies are expanding their businesses which will require more electricity for new buildings and equipment operations. It will require upgrades to transmission lines and displacement from polls to lines buried underground. These companies are within a mile of each other and upgrades along a common corridor will deliver the power they both need to operate and expand. Both companies also estimate they will need several additional new employees as a result of their business expansions.

Under Scenario 1, the generalized, broad benefit of the new electrical infrastructure would be considered community development, even though it will likely have a positive ancillary effect on local businesses. In this case, the county should look to use other resources and not use RCG or RCOG funds.

Under Scenario 2, the new electrical infrastructure will directly affect business growth and employment opportunities, both of which improve the tax base, personal incomes and discretionary spending. This would be considered economic development and a proper use of RCG or RCOG funds.

Who can help us with grant writing?
GOEO has published a Guide to Applying for Grants—
https://issuu.com/business-utah/docs/goeo-guide-to-applying-for-grants. The Guide includes tips and advice on grant preparation, proposal development, common grant requirements, how grant applications are reviewed and scored, and what to do after a grant has been awarded. We also have a team of outreach managers who are willing to help—
https://issuu.com/business-utah/docs/outreachmap. They will not write or edit grants for you, but they may assist in identifying good projects, reviewing proposals, and communicating potential improvements to a proposal. Occasionally, counties seek professional grant-writing assistance. Profession grant writers generally know how best to communicate plans and proposals that will make an impression on application reviewers.


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