

2024 Building Official Training (BOT) Municipal Grant Program

Frequently asked questions and answers (FAQ)

1. How many grants will be awarded by DLI?

DLI will award up to three grants for the 2024 second grant cycle.

2. What will be the amount of the grant awards?

DLI may award up to \$195,000 total for the 2024 second cycle. Award amounts for each grant can be up to \$65,000.

3. How will the awards be paid?

Municipalities selected will receive reimbursements after each quarter for approved expenditures until the maximum has been exhausted provided the terms of the municipality's contract agreement are not violated.

4. How long does the grant last?

The grant cycle or "Period of Performance" is from April 1, 2024, or the date the contract agreement is fully executed, whichever occurs later, until March 31st, 2025.

5. What is meant by "Qualified Municipality"?

To be considered eligible, all applicants must be a qualified municipality. For the BOT grant, "municipality" is defined in Minnesota Rule 1300.0070 subp. 17 and Minnesota Statute 326B.103 subd. 9 as a city, county, or town.

To be a qualified municipality:

- 1) A municipality must administer and enforce the Minnesota State Building Code by having adopted the code by ordinance in compliance with Minnesota Statute 326B.121 subd. 2(a)(b).
- 2) Education and training must be under the direct supervision of the municipality's Minnesota Certified Building Official certified in accordance with Minnesota Rule 1301.0300 p. C (1).
- 3) Meet the application deadline.

If an application does not fully meet these requirements it will not be considered for further review.

6. If my municipality has received a BOT grant in the past, can we apply for the 2024 grant?

All qualified municipalities are free to submit a proposal to the BOT grant program. If a municipality has received a BOT grant before their performance during the previous grant(s) will be evaluated during the review.

7. What is the deadline to submit questions about the grant application?

All questions must be submitted via email by noon, Feb. 23, 2024, CDT. The answers will be updated and posted each Friday on the BOT Grant website at www.dli.mn.gov/bot up to the above date.

8. What are the expected outcomes?

The municipality's trainee will achieve experience in building plan review and building inspections per Minnesota Rule 1301.0300 section C (1) by serving as a construction code inspector as specified in Minnesota Statute 326B.135 and achieve the competency criteria detailed in Minnesota Rule 1301.1400. The grant program goal for the trainee is to gain a Building Official-Limited (BO-L) or Building Official (BO) certification.

9. Can grant money be used to purchase equipment and supplies for the trainee's use?

Yes, but only at the levels permitted by the program (see section 5 "Eligible and ineligible expenses" in the RFP); and if the purchase(s) are important to the completion of the training program, and they are used for the BOT Grant Program trainee. Remember though, once the maximum funds are exhausted there will be no more reimbursements for the 2024 grant cycle. Also, the BOT Grant funding is designed to create and implement the BOT Grant Program and is not designed to become a building plan review and inspection department funding source. The BOT grant award is not intended to fully fund the municipality's training program.

10. Can the city hire a trainee that already has a BO-Limited certification, is more advanced or one that is under qualified in their experience?

The BOT Grant program is designed as an entry level training program for the code enforcement industry. It is intended to bring new individuals into our industry or cross train existing municipal employees in a first-year scenario. The program concentrates on residential aspects of plan review and inspection as well as building code department administration. Hiring someone overqualified would take resources away from others and put the trainee through training they may not need. However, some trainees may have a BO-Limited but lack on-the-job experience in a municipal setting.

It is up to the city as to who they hire and overcome any difficulties that may arise with an under qualified trainee. The program has set training requirements for a designated period of time that **must** be achieved by March 31, 2025. It is up to the grantee city to accomplish the contract agreement requirements in the period of performance of the grant. Within the first year of hire the Trainee must meet the requirements of MN. Statute 326B.135 and MN. Rule 1301.1400.

11. If all the available grants are not awarded, will those grants be available for later awards?

No. The next award session will be for the 2025 BOT grant which will open for application in late 2024.

12. Where is the grant funding coming from?

Statute 326B.148 subd. 1: *...The Commissioner may use any surplus in surcharge receipts to award grants for code research, development, and education.*

13. Can a private inspection service get a grant?

This is a municipal grant. The grants are awarded to "qualified municipalities" (See section 4 of the RFP, "Eligible applicants"). The grant application must be submitted by a municipality. The municipality's authorized representative and designated building official are held responsible for adherence to the requirements of the grant contract agreement and program expenditures are processed through the municipality's financial department which invoices DLI for reimbursement and approved payments are made to the municipality. The trainee will be hired by the grantee municipality and be a non-exempt employee of that municipality.

14. Will the information submitted in the quarterly reports be public data? i.e., the trainee's work record and pay.

Yes, with the exceptions allowed by law. (See section 14 of the RFP, "Public use of applicant's data".)

15. Will there be report forms for grantees to fill out and submit?

Yes, grantees will be provided with assistance and forms where possible to help with the reporting process. There will be quarterly training reports to be filled out by the trainee and their building official and there will be quarterly financial reports to be filled out by the grantees financial contact person. These will be for expense reimbursements. All reports will have quarterly deadlines outlined in the RFP and contract agreement.

16. Would a small city that applied for the grant have a better chance at receiving it if they work with another city or organization to achieve the training requirements? Or doesn't that have anything to do with it?

The review process uses a point system, evident in the RFP and proposal form, to determine a city's ability to deliver the requirements of the grant: i.e., on-the-job training, education, position sustainability, etc. (see the application and RFP). The ability to deliver on the requirements will have a bearing on the city's eligibility if the city does not demonstrate, in their proposal, the ability to provide those necessary requirements.

With that said though, the grant process allows collaboration with others to deliver such requirements. If for instance a municipality that has few residential projects or other projects needed to provide training, they may need to enlist the help of a larger city or other methods to achieve their grant responsibilities, i.e., site visits, ride-a-long inspections, shared training, creating plan review scenarios etc. Remember though, get any collaboration documented, agreed upon ahead of time and included in your proposal to demonstrate to the reviewers, your ability to deliver the requirements. A **joint powers agreement** would be necessary if the city is contacting with others to provide that city's inspection and plan review services and if they are to be used in the training it is important, they know and commit to the time requirements for the required training. A letter of commitment may also be in order.

Collaboration benefits all of us in the industry by adding more trained building officials to our ranks. The bottom line is that the smallest city can compete with the biggest if the grant requirements can be accomplished. It may just take more ingenuity and commitment on the part of the small city.

17. If a municipality were awarded one of the grants it appears the municipality would decide what the hiring wage would be based on the maximum grant amount. Is that correct? Does the grant dictate how much the trainee is paid?

No. The city will decide how much they need to pay to get the best candidate. The trainee will be an employee of the municipality. The Grant Program provides some funding, but it is not intended to fully fund the training program or position. In most all cases your actual costs will exceed the grant awarded amount and additional municipal funding will be needed.

18. Would it be up to the municipality to decide whether the position was benefited or not?

No. The BOT Grant Program is based upon the fact that the municipality's trainee is a NON-EXEMPT employee of that city. This is a competitive grant. All applicants are competing on this basis. Also, the grant reviewers will be awarding points based upon proposal responses. Benefits are included in the budget form.

19. Trainee criteria – other than 18 years of age, are there any other requirements a city must consider in hiring?

1. The city must comply with all hiring laws and regulations.
2. The grant does not look at the trainee's qualifications in the review of the proposal and application. In most cases the municipality will not hire the trainee until after the grant award.
3. There is a requirement, though, that the trainee must be hired as a benefited/NON-EXEMPT employee of the municipality.
4. The municipality must comply with the construction code inspector competency criteria required by law within the first year of hire. See MN. Statute 326B.135 and MN. Rule 1301.1400.
5. The goal of the program is to work towards and achieve the application requirements of the Building Official-Limited certification. See MN. Rule 1301.0300.

20. If we are able to absorb the cost of education, books, supplies and safety equipment, in order to provide a slightly higher hourly wage, is that allowed?

Yes. The grant requires a budget be submitted and justified (narrated). All line items asked for, in the budget worksheet, should be provided. These will be considered by the reviewers. It is understood that the cost of employing the trainee will be higher than the amount of the grant award and that the municipality will pay the portion that is not covered by the grant award.

At the bottom of the budget worksheet, the budget items are totaled up and then at the top of the budget worksheet, the total amount of the budget request is entered. The requested amount cannot exceed the maximum awarded which is up to \$65,000. Remember, the grant award is to help with the funding; not be the sole source.

19. Our city already has a person training with the current Building Official to take over and this person already has his building official-limited certification. Can we still get a BOT grant?

Qualifying municipalities are free to submit a proposal to the BOT grant program. In it you will need to make your case for receiving and using the funds, the criteria is laid out in the RFP and application which are available on the BOT website: <https://www.dli.mn.gov/bot>.

Also, remember, this is a competitive grant that will be scored by a review committee so the better case you make for your city needing and achieving the goals and requirements of the grant the better chance you will have of being awarded a grant.

The Exhibit B-1 (entry level) and B-2 (advanced - previous BOT trainee) training requirements layout the required training for the aspect you choose depending on your trainee's progress thus far. If your individual already has that experience, you would be duplicating training and potentially taking funds away from others.

20. Are there specific trainings available for each of the items listed in the required training exhibit? Or is most of that to be provided by the current building official designated as the trainer?

The training requirements are not provided by the grant program like an academy or college. The training city will pursue educational classes or ICC certifications, if necessary, to comply with Minnesota Rule 1301.1400, competency criteria for construction code inspectors and/or BO-Limited prerequisites in Minnesota Rule 1301.0300 (A-C). These are available through sources like: ICC and BIT college classes through North Hennepin.

The program trainee does not get any additional or extra points for being in the BOT grant program. The points are earned as per the above listed MN. Rules.

The on-the-job training (Exhibit B) of course is provided by your Building Official and city staff such as Permit techs, other inspectors, Human Resources, Financial, Planning and Zoning, Fire dept., City Administrator and anyone else that can provide insight into the operation of the municipality and municipal building code department. These areas of training that may require help from other city staff are listed on the training requirements under: *Building Department Administration* and *Legal aspects of Building Code Administration*. It is an effort by all not just the B.O. You will list these other trainers on the application/proposal.

Also, as explained in question **15** earlier in the FAQ sheet, your city may need to enlist the help of another city to provide some training. i.e.: another city may have a project that will not come up in your city during the training year, but your trainee and B.O. can arrange with the other city to do walkthrough or ride-along inspections on that type of project to get that experience. Your trainee could also sit in on plan review of that other city's project. Make sure to pre-arrange with the other city(s) in advance and include evidence of this in your proposal.