Grant questions and answers


1. How many Building Official Training (BOT) program grants will be awarded by DLI?

DLI will award up to five full-time grants and up to two half-time grants for the 2023 grant cycle.

2. What is a half-time grant?

A half-time grant is for a trainee that may only work part-time in the building codes department either because they were only hired for part-time employment or because they are a full-time employee shared with another department. The half-time trainee still must accomplish all the same training requirements as the full-time trainee.

3. What will be the amount of the BOT grant awards?

DLI may award up to $390,000 total for the 2023 cycle. This is broken down into $65,000 max. per full-time grant and $30,000 max. per half-time grant. Municipalities selected will receive reimbursements each quarter for approved expenditures until the maximum has been exhausted provided the terms of the municipality’s BOT program contract with DLI have been met.

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

All questions must be submitted via email by 4 p.m. CST Aug. 31, 2022. The answers will be posted on the BOT Grant website at www.dli.mn.gov/bot.

5. What are the expected outcomes?

Each Building Official Training Program trainee is to obtain a Minnesota limited building official certification by the end of their first year of training as well as knowledge and experience in building inspection and plan review of residential structures.

6. Can grant money be used to purchase a vehicle, equipment and supplies for the learner’s use?

Yes, but only at the levels permitted by the program (see allowable expenditures in the RFP); and as long as 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 2023 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.
7. What if the city hires a trainee that is more advanced or one that is under qualified in their experience?

The BOT Grant Program is designed as an entry into the code enforcement industry. It is intended to bring into our industry and train new individuals to become building officials – limited. It is up to the city as to who they hire. However, the program has set training requirements for a designated period of time that must be achieved by Dec. 31, 2023. It is up to the grantee city to accomplish that with their trainee.

8. What if the city cannot hire a trainee in time to get into the first building official limited (BOL) training session?

They can attend one of the other BOL programs at a later date as long as it is accomplished by the end of the 2023 training period.

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

No. There will be only one award session this grant cycle.

10. 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.

11. Can a private inspection service get a grant?

No. The grants are awarded to “qualified municipalities” (See “Qualified Municipalities” on page 4 of the RFP). The grant application must be submitted by a municipality. The municipality’s authorized representative and primary contact person are held responsible for adherence to the requirements of the grant contract agreement. The trainee will be hired by the grantee municipality and be a non-exempt employee of that municipality. Also see the answer to question 13.

12. 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 page 8 of the RFP.)

13. Will there be a report form for grantees to fill out and submit?

Yes, we will provide grantees with assistance and forms where possible to make the reporting process simple. 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 contract agreement.

14. 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 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 proposal worksheet 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 an outside agency to provide that city’s inspection and plan review services if they are to be used in the training.

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 on the part of the small city.

15. 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 we pay the trainee?

No. The city will decide how much they need to pay to get the best candidate. The Grant Program is to help with funding. It is not intended to be the complete source. In most all cases your actual costs will exceed the grant awarded amount. Open the Application Packet and go to page 4, the Budget Request form.

- The first item is the “requested amount,” and as noted at the bottom of the page, this amount cannot exceed the maximum amount of the type of grant applied for. You’ll fill this in last because –
- In the rest of the budget line items, you will fill in those costs first to determine the total cost to the city for each of those items; which will probably be higher than the grant amount but you are required to show you entire costs of participating in this grant, limited to the line items on the budget form. You are showing the grant reviewers your budget for the program.
- In a grant proposal you are required to provide a budget and prove it (budget narrative).

16. 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.

17. 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.

18. 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 for the type of grant applied for: $65,000 full-time, $30,000 half-time even though the total budget amount exceeds the requested amount. 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?

Your city is 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 all 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.

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

The classroom training requirements (Exhibit A) are guidelines and not provided by the grant program like an academy or college. The training city will pursue these classes or seminars through sources like: AMBO Region III, AIBO U of M, ICC courses, college classes through North Hennepin and Dakota County Tech., CCLD fall & spring seminars, and courses offered by approved organizations as listed on the DLI-CCLD website: https://secure.doli.state.mn.us/ccldecourses/ and whatever other source that is acceptable.

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 in section 3cii on the application/proposal.

Also, as explained in question 14 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.