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Grant Compliance Setup Checklist

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Introduction

This Grant Compliance Setup Checklist is designed as a high-level starting point for individuals and organizations seeking to establish strong grant management and compliance practices. Whether you are managing federal, state, or philanthropic grants, this tool provides a foundational framework to help ensure proper setup, internal coordination, and long-term accountability.

It is important to note that while this checklist covers common requirements and best practices, it should be adapted and refined to align with your organization's specific strategic approach, internal controls, and legal obligations. Different funders and programs may carry distinct requirements, and successful grant management depends on tailoring compliance tools and procedures to fit your structure, staffing, and funding portfolio.

Use this checklist as a guide to identify gaps, streamline processes, and build a culture of compliance that supports both your programmatic goals and your fiduciary responsibilities.

1. Grant Award Review
□ Read and understand the full grant agreement and all attachments.
□ Identify the funder's compliance requirements (e.g., 2 CFR Part 200 for federal grants).
□ Note all performance, financial, and reporting deadlines.
□ Determine allowable and unallowable costs.
□ Confirm any matching or cost-sharing obligations.

2. Administrative & Governance Setup
□ Assign a Grant Manager or Compliance Officer.
□ Notify leadership, finance, and program staff of award.
□ Update Board of Directors on grant award and responsibilities.
□ Establish grant-specific internal grant code or account in your accounting system.
□ Set up a grant file (digital or physical) with:
- Grant application and award documents
- Budget and approved scope of work
- Policies and procedures related to the grant
- Contact information for funder

3. Financial Management Systems

□ Chart of Accounts reflects grant funding and matches line items.
□ Time-tracking system for personnel paid with grant funds.
□ Procurement system complies with applicable requirements (e.g., competitive bidding, sole-source justifications).
□ Internal controls and segregation of duties documented.
□ Grant-specific bank accounts or tracking mechanisms established (if required).
□ Indirect cost rate documented or negotiated (if applicable).

4. Policies & Procedures (Written and Implemented)

□ Financial and Grant Management Policies
□ Procurement Policy (in alignment with 2 CFR 200.318-326 if federal)
□ Travel Policy
□ Time and Effort Reporting Procedures
□ Equipment and Property Management Policy
□ Subrecipient Monitoring Policy (if subawards will be issued)
□ Conflict of Interest Policy
□ Record Retention Policy
□ Whistleblower Protection Policy

5. Staff Training & Roles

□ Provide grant-specific compliance training to relevant staff.
□ Assign roles:
  ○ Finance Lead
  ○ Program Lead
  ○ Data/Reporting Lead
  ○ Procurement/Contracting Lead
□ Ensure all staff understand documentation and audit readiness responsibilities.

6. Subrecipient & Contractor Setup (if applicable)

□ Determine if partners are subrecipients or contractors.
□ Create subaward or contract agreements.
□ Collect required documentation (SAM.gov registration, insurance, W-9, UEI).
□ Conduct pre-award risk assessments.
□ Provide subrecipient training on compliance obligations.
□ Schedule monitoring and reporting checkpoints.

7. Programmatic Oversight & Monitoring
□ Create program implementation timeline aligned with grant deliverables.
□ Define key milestones and responsible parties.
□ Develop a data collection plan for performance measures.
□ Establish regular check-ins or grant team meetings.

8. Reporting & Documentation
□ Create a grant reporting calendar with:
   ○ Financial report due dates
   ○ Performance/data report deadlines
   ○ Special condition updates
□ Assign responsibility for report preparation, review, and submission.
□ Set internal deadlines 5–10 business days ahead of funder deadlines.
□ Maintain supporting documentation for all submitted reports.

9. Audit Preparation
□ Ensure records are audit-ready and organized by fiscal year and grant.
□ Schedule internal reviews every 6–12 months.
□ Maintain all supporting documentation for at least 3–7 years (depending on funder).
□ Ensure Single Audit readiness if expenditures exceed $750,000 in federal funds.

10. Closeout Readiness
□ Final financial and program reports scheduled.
□ Inventory of all equipment purchased.
□ Final reconciliation of expenses to budget.
□ Closeout meeting scheduled with internal team and/or funder.
□ Confirm record retention and disposition requirements.

- Upload/submit via online portal or email before deadline
- Save a PDF copy of submission for your records

4. Post-Submission
- Send a thank-you or acknowledgment email to funder (if appropriate)
- Track submission status and follow-up date
- Schedule internal debrief and grant calendar update
- Prepare to respond to requests for clarification or site visits

5. If Funded
- Review and sign award agreement
- Set up reporting schedule and internal tracking
- Acknowledge the funder publicly (if required)
- Submit reports on time and maintain communication

Federal/State Grant Checklist

1. Organizational Readiness
- Register or confirm status in SAM.gov (active UEI & CAGE code)
- Ensure Grants.gov or state portal account is active and accessible
- Confirm eligibility based on NOFO/RFP
- Review matching/in-kind requirements and cost allowability

2. Pre-Application Planning
- Read full Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) or RFP
- Hold kickoff meeting to assign roles and set deadlines
- Develop logic model or theory of change
- Collect required attachments: resumes, letters of support, MOUs
- Check federal/state assurances and certifications (SF-424, SF-LLL, etc.)

3. Narrative & Budget Development
- Address all evaluation criteria in narrative
- Prepare clear, detailed budget using federal/state forms (SF-424A, budget narrative)
- Justify each line item per Uniform Guidance (2 CFR 200)
- Incorporate sustainability and equity components if required

4. Review & Submission
- Internal compliance review (double-check for responsiveness and errors)
- Confirm all required forms and attachments are complete

- Validate system submission deadlines (Grants.gov, JustGrants, state portals)
- Submit at least 24–48 hours before the deadline

5. Post-Submission
- Save Grants.gov tracking number and confirmation email
- Track award announcement dates
- Organize files in grant folder (narrative, budget, forms, correspondence)

6. If Funded
- Review Notice of Award and terms
- Schedule onboarding with grant officer (if offered)
- Set up grant in internal accounting and compliance system
- Create reporting calendar and assign responsibility
- Train relevant staff on grant compliance and tracking