



STRATEGY GROUP

GRANT AWARD TO PROGRAM DELIVERY

A POST-AWARD ROADMAP

RESOURCE GUIDE



GRANT AWARD TO PROGRAM DELIVERY: A ROADMAP

Winning is just the beginning.

For many minority-led nonprofits, receiving a grant or public contract award triggers a moment of celebration followed quickly by uncertainty. What happens next? Who does what? How does the organization move from a signed agreement to actual service delivery without losing ground on compliance, reporting, or team alignment?



This roadmap outlines the five critical phases between award notification and sustained program delivery, offering practical guidance at each step.

The Five Phases

- Award Acceptance & Contract Execution
- Internal Launch & Team Mobilization
- Systems Setup & Compliance Preparation
- Program Launch & Early Monitoring
- Ongoing Delivery, Reporting & Course Correction

1. AWARD ACCEPTANCE & CONTRACT EXECUTION

Review Before You Sign

Before executing any grant agreement or public contract, leadership should **conduct a thorough review of all terms, conditions, and deliverables**. This includes understanding the scope of work, reporting timelines, allowable cost categories, performance measures, and any special conditions. Legal or fiscal counsel should be consulted when terms are unclear.

Example: *A nonprofit's Executive Director and fiscal manager review the full contract together before signing, flagging three ambiguous line items and requesting written clarification from the program officer before executing the agreement.*

Identify Key Requirements & Deadlines

Once the agreement is signed, all **critical dates should be extracted and entered into a master grant calendar**: report due dates, budget amendment deadlines, required meetings, closeout timelines, and renewal windows. This calendar becomes the operational anchor for the entire award period.

Example: *A grants manager creates a shared digital calendar with color-coded entries for all funder deadlines across three active awards, setting automated reminders 30 days and 7 days before each submission.*

Set Up the Grant File

A **complete grant file should be established immediately** upon award execution. It should contain the signed agreement, award notice, budget narrative, scope of work, all correspondence with the funder, and any required attachments. Physical and digital files should mirror each other and be accessible to key staff.

Example: *Within the first week of a new award, the program director creates a shared digital grant file folder with clearly labeled subfolders for the contract, financials, reports, and correspondence — and briefs the team on its structure.*

2. INTERNAL LAUNCH & TEAM MOBILIZATION

Conduct a Grant Kickoff Meeting

An internal kickoff meeting ensures that all staff responsible for the award program, fiscal, administrative, and leadership understand their roles, the deliverables expected of them, and the compliance requirements attached to the work. This meeting should produce a written action plan with assigned owners and due dates.

Example: Within two weeks of contract execution, a nonprofit convenes its full program and finance team for a 90-minute kickoff meeting, walking through the scope of work, budget, reporting calendar, and data collection responsibilities.

Assign Roles & Establish Accountability Structures

Every post-award function data entry, budget tracking, reporting, subcontractor oversight, funder communication **should have a named owner**. Accountability structures, including supervisory check-ins and documentation protocols, should be established before service delivery begins.

Example: A program director creates a Responsibility chart for all grant-related tasks and shares it with the team and board's Finance Committee to ensure clear ownership throughout the award period.

3. SYSTEMS SETUP & COMPLIANCE PREPARATION

Align Financial Systems to the Award Budget

Before the first expenditure is made, the organization's accounting system should be configured to track income and expenses at the grant level. Budget line items should map directly to the approved award budget, and cost codes or project codes should be established so that all transactions are correctly allocated from day one.

Example: *A nonprofit's bookkeeper creates a dedicated project code for the new award in their accounting software, mapping each approved budget category to a corresponding expense account and sharing the coding guide with all staff who submit reimbursements.*

Build or Update Data Collection Tools

If the grant requires performance data, the tools for collecting that data — intake forms, attendance logs, participant trackers, outcome surveys — should be created or updated before the first client is served. Data tools should align directly with the performance measures in the award agreement.

Example: *A job training nonprofit redesigns its participant intake form to capture all required demographic and outcome data points specified in their federal grant, testing it with staff before the first cohort begins.*

Train Staff on Compliance Requirements

Staff who deliver the program and handle grant funds must understand the compliance requirements specific to that award. This includes allowable activities, documentation standards, data privacy rules, and reporting deadlines. Training should be documented and repeated when staff turn over.

Example: *Before the program launch, a program manager leads a 60-minute compliance orientation for all frontline staff, covering documentation expectations, client eligibility criteria, and what to do if a compliance question arises during service delivery.*

4. PROGRAM LAUNCH & EARLY MONITORING

Launch with a Monitoring Mindset

The first 90 days of program delivery are critical. Organizations should monitor key indicators closely: enrollment pace, spending rate, data quality, and partner performance and address gaps early before they compound. A brief monthly internal check-in structure helps catch problems before they appear in funder reports.

Example: In the first month after program launch, the program director reviews enrollment numbers weekly and flags to leadership when actual intake falls below projected targets, triggering an outreach strategy adjustment before the first quarterly report is due.

Communicate Proactively with Funders

Funders generally respond better to proactive communication than to surprises. If early implementation reveals challenges: a delayed start, a staffing gap, a data collection obstacle, notifying the program officer early and in writing builds credibility and allows for documented solutions. Most funders have mechanisms for reasonable adjustments when notified in advance.

Example: When a nonprofit experiences a six-week hiring delay for a funded staff position, the Executive Director sends a brief written update to the funder, explains the delay, outlines the interim plan, and requests a no-cost extension on the affected deliverables.

5. ONGOING DELIVERY, REPORTING & COURSE CORRECTION

Build a Reporting Rhythm

Consistent, calendar-driven reporting preparation prevents last-minute scrambles and improves report quality. Organizations should establish internal deadlines for data compilation, narrative drafting, and fiscal reconciliation at least two to three weeks before each funder submission. Assign a primary author and a reviewer for every report.

Example: A nonprofit establishes an internal policy that all data for quarterly reports is compiled by the 15th of the final month of each quarter, with a draft narrative submitted to the Executive Director for review by the 20th; giving a week of buffer before the funder's deadline.

Monitor Budget-to-Actual Spending

Regular budget-to-actual reviews: at least monthly, allow organizations to identify overspending, underspending, or category imbalances before they create compliance problems. Significant variances should prompt a conversation about whether a budget amendment is needed and whether the funder requires prior approval.

Example: At the end of each month, the fiscal manager prepares a one-page budget-to-actual summary for each active grant and shares it with program leads, flagging any line item where spending is more than 15% above or below projections.

5. ONGOING DELIVERY, REPORTING & COURSE CORRECTION

Conduct Mid-Award Reviews

A formal mid-award review, conducted at the midpoint of each grant period is an opportunity to assess whether the program is on track to meet all deliverables, identify compliance gaps, revisit the budget, and make course corrections before the second half of the award. Mid-award reviews should be documented and include both program and fiscal staff.

Example: At the six-month mark of a 12-month grant, a nonprofit's leadership team holds a structured review meeting, comparing actual outcomes to projected milestones, reviewing the budget, and documenting three adjustments to be implemented in the second half of the award period.

Plan for Sustainability Beyond the Award

Post-award planning should not wait until closeout. Organizations should begin identifying revenue alternatives, transition strategies, and sustainability options including follow-on funding opportunities, fee-for-service models, or program integration into core operations, at least six months before an award ends.

Example: Nine months into a 12-month grant, a nonprofit's leadership begins conversations with two other funders about continued support, identifies a fee-for-service revenue model for a portion of the program, and documents a sustainability plan to include in the final report.