



# TOWN OF ERIE

645 Holbrook Street  
Erie, CO 80516

## Town Council

**Board Meeting Date: 4/13/2021**

---

**File #: 21-144, Version: 1**

---

**SUBJECT:**

Discussion and Board direction on staff requests for the following positions: (1) Grants Manager, (2) Grants Accountant, (3) Recruitment and Retention Specialist, and (4) Administrative Assistant/Town Hall Customer Service Representative.

**DEPARTMENTS:** Administration, Finance and Human Resources

**PRESENTERS:** Malcolm Fleming, Town Administrator  
Victoria Runkle, Interim Finance Director  
Ben Pratt, Economic Development Director  
Alicia Melendez, Human Resources Director  
Amy Teetzel, Administrative Operations Manager

**TIME ESTIMATE:** 30 minutes

**FISCAL SUMMARY:**

Cost as Recommended: Total cost is \$397,982, plus initial IT expenses.  
Two of the positions will be paid from grant and reimbursable sources. The General Fund costs are \$184,015, plus IT Expenses. In 2021, staff expects the costs to be 50% of these costs -- \$92,008 - for the General Fund, reflecting time required to advertise, evaluate and complete hiring.

Balance Available: \$0  
Budget Line Item Number: TBD  
New Appropriation Required: Yes

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

**Authorize staff to create and proceed with hiring four new positions and appropriate funding to cover these new positions as part of the supplemental budget in June.**

**SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND OF SUBJECT MATTER:**

Staff would normally wait for the annual budget process to request additional positions. However, the federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) and other grant opportunities, the increasing complexity of recruitment and retention activities and the increasing volume of recruitments as the Town grows, and the need provide more complete administrative support for Finance and other departments in Town Hall has created opportunities and issues staff believes should be addressed more quickly than

will be possible through the annual budget process. For this reason, staff requests Board approval to create and proceed with hiring four new positions: Grants Manager, Grants Accountant, Recruitment and Retention Specialist, and Administrative Assistant/Town Hall Customer Service Representative. The cost of the two grants positions will be offset by ARP and other grants funds. The cost of the other two positions will be offset by General Fund revenue already received so far this year that exceeds budget forecasts. Staff asks the Board to formally appropriate the funding to cover these new positions as part of the supplemental budget in June. The justification for each of these positions is described in detail below.

### **Grants Manager and Grants Accountant**

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARP) is a complete change from anything State and local governments have experienced in a generation. In addition to the benefits of direct payments to individuals and the expanded and extended unemployment insurance, there are also significant immediate infusions of money for state and local governments and billions of dollars for community & economic development, transportation, and infrastructure.

The Town must be prepared to spend the Town's direct allocation, which staff expects to be \$5.8 million, and must have a plan to seek monies from the State for specific programs. Each state will receive a minimum of \$100 million for "critical capital projects directly enabling work, education, and health monitoring - including broadband infrastructure." In addition to those dollars, the State has access to dozens of targeted grant types that amount to *billions* of dollars.

The State of Colorado (State) has already identified five goals to which the State will dedicate its funding opportunities:

- Strengthening small businesses
- Revitalizing our infrastructure
- Supporting Colorado families
- Investing in Rural Colorado
- Developing our workforce

In addition to the Town's direct allocation and access to State money, there are also billions of dollars for Transit, Airports, EPA, Economic Development, Small Business, Non-Profit Support, arts, restaurant, and other grant opportunities.

### **Challenge**

There are going to be at least two challenges that come with this new opportunity. First, the Town must be organized enough to apply for these grants. Second, we will also need to properly manage and account for all funding the Town is awarded.

Grants "management" is a full-time job. The Town will need to compete with municipalities like Boulder, Denver, and other larger cities with more staff members dedicated to grants. Grants management cannot be an additional job of every director and manager. To be competitive, the Town needs one position to devote time to the guidelines or parameters set by the State and federal governments. Competing for, securing and properly accounting for funds will require strictly following complex application, program, legal, purchasing, and financial reporting requirements, constant monitoring of deadlines, and staying informed of new grant opportunities. The Town's audits with this new grant money

will take a new level of complexity and demand additional time.

#### Grants Manager

To successfully navigate all this, the Town needs a full-time Grants Manager. Grant applications require working with multiple departments and developing proposals that go across multiple programs. It involves working with program Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) to develop grant proposals that demonstrate how our ideas meet the State and federal goals. Having worked in a City with over \$100 million in grant funded programs and projects, the Interim Finance Director knows that having a grants manager to coordinate and support this work is imperative. Knowing the right contacts, deciphering the federal regulations and the State objectives requires extraordinary time and, of course, a specialized set of skills.

#### Grants Accountant

The CARES 2020 allocation was \$1 million. The Town's 2021 ARP direct allocation is expected to be \$5.8 million. The Town also currently has multiple smaller grants where we are doing a "catch as catch can" job-usually at year-end-to fully account for grant expenditures and complete financial reporting. Grants accounting best practices suggest this be accomplished monthly, and the Town should be spending more time ensuring it is receiving reimbursements on a timely basis. Finally, the Town-as do other cities-has one outstanding project from the 2013 FEMA flood that no employee has had the time to bring to closure. Addressing current grant issues will become even more difficult as departments want to access and spend the newly available ARP grant money. Also, an ICMA webinar *stressed* there will be much more forthcoming regarding record keeping and management of the monies received.

In discussions with other municipalities, all have identified the need for more resources to manage the acceptance and monitoring of additional grants. CARES 2020 demonstrated municipalities have not had this level of work in recent times. Currently, grant funding is preceding the federal regulations. The Town needs to be forward-thinking about policies and procedures on accepting and monitoring grants to ensure the organization follows all known federal rules and prepares for the new rules to come.

In addition to ARP and other grant opportunities, the Town is also seeing more activity in the Town's 5 existing Urban Renewal Areas (URA). This requires additional time and expertise to properly manage. The Grants Accountant can also cover this area as part of their responsibilities.

#### Synergistic approach

People and organizations with substantial grant experience approach grant management as a holistic program. Grants management requires a leader who understands the federal and State requirements, informs the program/project SMEs on opportunities, and knows the organization's programmatic and operational needs to see where opportunities align with the organization's needs.

The Grants Manager works closely with the Grants Accountant to ensure the expenditures are appropriate but leaves the details of the spending to the program manager and the Grants Accountant. Usually, there is ongoing training and support for program managers to complete the monthly/quarterly reports in a timely and consistent manner.

Completing reports should become a standard work requirement-and departments will have to help with this work, particularly if the grants become widespread across the organization. In short, the grants manager and accountant provide support to departments, but grants management requires the entire organization.

#### Funding Mechanisms

When working with federal grants, having overhead costs between 18% and 26% are considered reasonable. Staff recommends charging at least 10% of the initial grant to pay for these two positions through 2023. This proposal will cost approximately \$507,000 through 2023. After that, future budgets will address funding needs.

The Town has indirect cost mechanisms already in place for some grants and for the URAs. It needs to be more formalized, but this approach does result in a portion of General Fund expenditures being covered by grants and TIF

where possible. The Grants Manager and Accountant can formalize and expand this approach to offset any additional costs incurred for new grants. Additionally, and when allowable, they can implement indirect fees to cover future grant administrative costs.

#### **Organizational Considerations**

The Grants Accountant should be in the Finance Department. The Department already has well-trained employees in grants and will be responsible for the reporting and annual audits. The Department already works across the organization to help departments complete the relevant reports and other financial records.

The Grants Manager is a different type of position. While it can work from the Finance Department as an internal service role, it is not a Finance role. The Economic Development Department is very involved with many types of projects and programs for which the Town seeks grant support. And though there will be unique grant funded departmental projects, the Economic Development Department already often works in a "matrix management" environment - like an internal service department. For these reasons, staff believes the best organizational fit for the Grants Manager is in the Economic Development Department.

#### *Other considerations from the ICMA presentation:*

- Get organized and start immediately developing your plans. There are not yet Federal and State parameters so set up the systems as well as you can.
- If you have a municipal fiscal hole and fill it with ARP funds, that funding could become "unrestricted" and able to be used for any local government purpose
- Clear intent of the Recovery funds is to allow broad and flexible investments, including in tourism, travel, and hospitality sectors
- Economic Impacts Test: Was the project, program, or organization harmed revenue-wise or otherwise by the economic slowdown caused by COVID?
- **Consider important, catalytic, and transformational projects that can make a lasting, positive difference in your communities - as long as the funding meets the basic Rescue Plan Act tests. Consider eligible, catalytic projects that are otherwise hard to fund.**

#### **Summary**

The Town needs two new positions-Grants Manager and Grants Accountant-to help organize departments across the Town develop the catalytic projects and understand all the sources of money available for the Town to tap into and generate a more vibrant future. The Town needs more resources for grant and URA accounting. Without good grants management and accounting, the Town risks missing grant opportunities and could potentially have to return grants funds if they are not properly accounted for.

#### **Recruitment and Retention Specialist**

One of the most important services the HR Office provides to the Town is hiring. Currently, due to lack of bandwidth among staff, our current practice of, "post and pray" (post the position and pray the right candidate finds us) is not a viable option any longer. The landscape has changed with the pandemic and civil and political unrest, the traditional work environment has changed with remote working and there is a spotlight on the need for diversity, equity and inclusion in the work force and in recruitment and retention practices. It will be extremely important to put a focus on DE&I in hiring; to learn about and stay abreast of what that looks like, what candidates are looking for and to be dynamic in our hiring practices to remain competitive in the market and continue to attract and hire the best and the brightest.

Currently, to keep up with demand, recruiting duties are divided up amongst the HR Generalist, Manager and Director, and the Department's focus is split between recruiting and other HR functions. With current and projected growth of Erie and normal turnover, demand will exceed HR's capacity at our current staffing level. There is no time to focus on innovation in this area, as well as other important aspects of HR. Additionally, the HR Director should be focusing more on higher level strategy instead of having to continually engage in basic recruitment duties. A Recruitment and Retention Specialist would also free up the HR Manager to place greater

focus on staff training and development to help improve internal camaraderie/communication.

A full-time recruiter will devote time to:

- The overall candidate experience, (SO important that all candidates walk away feeling good about Erie, even when they are not selected)
- Developing a robust recruiting program that includes proactive outreach and partnership building
- Creating more exposure and marketing of Erie to the surrounding communities
- Targeting diverse populations and identifying more effective ways to attract diverse applicants
- Partnering internally for added support to Town hiring managers
- Refining and improving the recruitment lifecycle through metric tracking and analyzing outcomes.

Lastly, with one additional person in the HR Department, we will be able to keep up with the growing needs associated with supporting our most important assets: Town employees. We will be able to put even greater focus on development, retention, training, and succession planning. Adding this new position will also help free up administrative support for the Risk Manager to allow more dedicated time for managing the Town's ADA, safety, and insurance programs and working closely with the departments to minimize risk by developing strategies and providing training, guidance, and recommendations to safely meet Town objectives.

### **Administrative Assistant/Town Hall Customer Service Representative**

As the Town continues to grow, so does the need to provide efficient and effective customer service to residents who visit or call Town Hall. Currently, all incoming calls and walk-in visitors are served by the Administrative Technician in the Finance Department. This position has the responsibility for all administrative support of the Finance Department, including cashiering, utility bill payment processing, bank deposits, audit support, dog licensing, and much more. Shifting the service of non-utility billing incoming calls and walk-in customers to the new customer service position would free up this position to fully support the Finance function. For walk-in customers, the location of the Finance Administrative Technician behind the Finance Office window does not allow them to see every customer who walks in the building. This can lead to wandering visitors throughout Town Hall which causes safety and information security issues. In the past, the Utility Billing Specialists would serve as a backup to the Administrative Technician for walk-ins and phone calls when the Technician went to the mail, bank, lunch, and on vacations. In the current environment, as the Town's population grows, the Utility Billing staff do not have the bandwidth to serve as backup for phone calls and walk-in customers.

To address these issues staff proposes adding a new Administrative Assistant position, which is an existing job description, and designate this new position as the Town Hall Customer Service Representative. This new position and the Administrative Technician would be cross-trained to provide backup coverage for each other, which would allow for better coverage and service to customers.

The Town Hall Customer Service Representative would be a member of the Town Administration Department and report to the Administrative Operations Manager. Their designated work space would be a desk in the front entrance of Town Hall so they would be positioned to welcome and direct all customers entering the building, receive all packages delivered to Town Hall and be the first point of contact for answering customer questions.

This position would be responsible for answering all calls to the main Town phone number and provide administrative support to various Town departments. (Utility Billing calls would continue to be directed to the Finance Administrative Technician.) Some of the other duties this new position could take on to support other departments include:

- Monitoring and processing all customer requests that come into [contactus@erieco.gov](mailto:contactus@erieco.gov) and Erie Submit
- Preparing invoices and purchase orders for the departments of Town Administration, Economic Development and Communications and Community Engagement prior to sending to accounts payable for processing
- Mail distribution; supply orders; conference room scheduling; and general administrative support.

Fiscal Impact:

---

If the Board approves proceeding to create all four positions, the *full annual* cost with salary and benefits, plus initial costs for IT equipment, consists of:

- Grants Manager: \$118,567
- Grants Accountant: \$95,400
- Recruitment and Retention Specialist: \$102,599
- Administrative Assistant/Town Hall Customer Service Representative: \$81,416

Staff believes the costs for the two Grants related positions would be fully offset by ARP and other grant funding.

		Benefits @		6 months
Position (Grade)	Midpoint	29.60%	Total Cost	2021 Cost
Grants Manager (17)	\$ 91,487	\$ 27,080	\$ 118,567	59,284
Grants Accountant (14)	\$ 73,611	\$ 21,789	\$ 95,400	47,700
HR Recruitment Specialist (15)	\$ 79,166	\$ 23,433	\$ 102,599	51,300
City Hall Admin Coordinator (12)	\$ 62,821	\$ 18,595	\$ 81,416	40,708
Total Cost			\$ 397,982	\$ 198,991
General Fund Total Cost			\$ 184,015	\$ 92,008

**Board Priority(s) Addressed:**

- ✓ Attractive Community Amenities
- ✓ Engaged and Diverse Community
- ✓ Prosperous Economy
- ✓ Well-Maintained Transportation Infrastructure
- ✓ Small Town Feel
- ✓ Safe and Healthy Community
- ✓ Effective Governance
- ✓ Environmentally Sustainable
- ✓ Fiscally Responsible