

Green Municipal Fund

Loans and grants to implement capital projects

Writer's Guidelines for Project Completion Reports

1. Overview

Project completion reports are intended to summarize projects funded by FCM's Green Municipal Fund (GMF). These guidelines are provided to assist writers in preparing project completion reports on behalf of project participants. While project completion reports fulfill a reporting requirement for FCM, the information they contain may be useful to other municipalities. As such, FCM may share these reports with other municipal decision makers who have the authority to authorize and encourage sustainability initiatives. For simplicity, the lead municipality or municipal partner is referred to throughout as the "borrower." Similarly, the term "project" is used to describe all types of projects, including new infrastructure, programs, and others.

2. Length

Reports should be between eight and 15 pages long. Complex projects may require longer reports. While there are no maximum word counts for each section, the most pertinent sections of the reports should be given more weight:

Section 5 – Environmental benefits of the project

Section 7 – Lessons learned

Section 9 – Update

3. Style

Project completion reports may be shared with municipal decision makers in other Canadian municipalities. These may be council members or senior staff. Writers must assume a low to moderate level of technical knowledge and a preference for clear, direct and focused writing.

Please adhere to the following plain language guidelines:

Clarity: Use the clearest words possible (see Word Choice, below). Avoid long sentences (more than 30 words).

Jargon: Define the meaning of technical terms (jargon) that you may need to use in the report. If there is a lot of technical terminology, you could include a glossary. Only do so if at least 15 words need to be defined. Otherwise, define the terms in the report, on first use.

Voice: Use the third person and generally use the active voice. Sentences in active voice are usually clearer, more direct and more concise than those in passive voice.

Word choice: Complex words, however precise, may need to be replaced by several simpler words.

For general style information and tips on usage, consult the Canadian Press Stylebook, Canadian Press Caps and Spelling, and the Guide de rédaction (La Presse Canadienne).

4. Content

The following guidelines describe the type of information and details required in each section of the project completion report.

Section 1 – Project and community context

This section summarizes the purpose and motivation for undertaking the project.

Describe the objective of the project and the factors that led to it. Was the project undertaken following a previous feasibility study or pilot project? What problem(s) did the project hope to solve?

Describe how the project relates to existing sustainability plans, practices, policies or programs within the municipality (or as adopted by the borrower).

If the entity that has received the funding is not a municipality, describe or profile the borrower. Describe the factors that led to the borrower's involvement in the project.

Provide a short (three- to four-sentence) description of the community in which the project took place. Include such factors as population, major economic drivers, and other significant aspects (e.g. tourism-based economy). Such information can be obtained from the Community Profiles section of the Statistics Canada website at <www.statcan.ca>.

Section 2 – Project team

This section identifies the participants in the project.

Identify the principal contact and provide his or her contact information.

Describe the implementation team. Who is on the team? Why are they involved?

If there is a project champion, identify that person and describe how his or her input helped the project. (Note: A project champion is someone such as a senior manager or elected official whose support raised the profile of the project and who was critical to its success.)

If members of the community were involved in the project (e.g. through a public participation exercise), explain how and the impact this had on the project.

Section 3 – Project implementation

This section describes how and when the project was implemented.

Include the duration of the project. How many months did it take to build or develop the project? How long did it take (in months) to complete the whole project, from the time it began (initial planning) to the time it was completed (project commissioning)?

Describe any new technology or new approach (e.g. full-cost accounting) used in the project. Outline the benefits and

drawbacks of using this new technology or approach.

Indicate whether the project was implemented as outlined and expected in the GMF funding proposal. If there were substantial changes to the implementation plan, identify them and explain why they happened (e.g. bad weather delays, labour disruption, challenges getting the new system to operate correctly, etc.). Describe the effects of any changes on the project (e.g. higher overall costs, less time allotted for a particular stage of the project, more staff training required, etc.).

Section 4 – Project budget and financing

This section describes the project budget, including the project cost and financing.

Identify the cost of the project and how it is being financed (e.g. tax increases, user fees, capital budget, etc.). Indicate when the borrower expects the costs to be paid in full.

Describe how the project costs compare to existing or similar projects in the community, if known.

Section 5 – Environmental benefits of the project

This section describes the environmental benefits of the project.

Describe, in quantitative but non-technical terms, the environmental benefits associated with the completed project. Note: If the benefits cannot be identified or calculated when the project is completed, the borrower must report on the environmental benefits after the project has been in operation, in accordance with the contractual agreement. For more information, see Section 9, Update.

Section 6 – Social and economic benefits of the project

This section describes the social and economic benefits of the project.

Describe, if known, the social benefits of the project. Social benefits may include improved health, community revitalization, heritage conservation, quality of life improvements and greater public safety, among others. If the information is available, include quantifiable and measurable benefits, such as fewer recorded smog days.

Describe, if known, the economic benefits of the project. Economic benefits may include financial savings the borrower expects as a result of the project (e.g. reduced energy use leading to lower operating costs), or benefits to the community, such as job retention or creation, employment income, increases or decreases in property taxes due to the project, among others.

Section 7 – Lessons learned

This section describes knowledge gained from the project that can be applied to other situations. This knowledge can be acquired through positive experiences (i.e. what worked) or negative experiences (i.e. what didn't work).

Describe what the borrower would do again in the same way (and why), if it were to launch a similar project in the future. Encourage the project team to consider and reflect on all aspects of the implementation of the project as they answer this question.

Include what the borrower would do differently (and why), if it were to launch a similar project in the future. Encourage the project team to consider and reflect on all aspects of the implementation of the project as they answer this question.

Describe any barriers the borrower encountered during the project and how they were overcome.

Include any advice the borrower might give to other communities interested in undertaking this type of project.

Include any "products" or outputs that could be shared with other communities. For

example, a water metering project could result in new municipal bylaws for water use or a series of householder brochures on ways to reduce water use. A new LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) building could result in a "green building" policy within a municipality and creation of "green guidelines" for developers. If these kinds of products or outputs have stemmed from the project, identify them and include a hard copy and an electronic copy with the project completion report.

Lessons learned from the operation of the project (in contrast to the lessons learned during the implementation of the project, as reported in Section 7).

Section 8 – Publicity and photos

This section describes the public recognition the project received.

Describe any publicity the project has received. Has the project won any awards? Has it been recognized by other organizations or had significant media coverage? Did it garner public support?

Provide at least five photographs that depict different aspects of the completed project. Additional photos are welcome. The photos must be in jpeg or tiff format, at least 300 dpi, and a minimum of two inches square (larger photographs are acceptable).

Section 9 – Update

This section does not form part of original project completion report. Once the project has been in operation, the contractual agreement requires the borrower to submit information to verify the environmental benefits achieved by the project. At this time, the borrower must also provide an update to the project completion report.

The update must include the following information:

Actual environmental, economic and social benefits achieved by the project, based on its operation as opposed to its implementation. If there is no change to the information previously provided, the borrower must advise FCM of this.