

**The Headwaters Fund
2006 Grant Fund Application**

For Office Use Only
F Application # 200605
C Organization # 53

I. COVER SHEET

Date of application: June 23, 2006

A. Organization Information

Organization Name: Humboldt County Community Development Services Department

Address: Clark Complex, 3015 H St, Eureka CA, 95501

Telephone number: 707-445-7541 Director/CEO: Kirk Girard

Organization Type: Gov't type: local Nonprofit type: N/A
(local, state, etc.) (c3, c4, etc.)

Total organizational budget (current year): \$ 13,640,360 Number of FTE employees: 57

Summarize the organization's mission (two to three sentences): Humboldt County Community Development Services Department is responsible for protecting the public health, safety, and welfare through building permit review and inspection, planning and development review and approval, maintaining the County's general plan, administering economic development grants and programs, and staffing the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) which reviews proposals for changes in boundaries of cities and special districts in the County.

B. Project Information

Project title: Permit Streamlining Development

Summary of project/grant request (3-4 sentences): The Community Development Services Department is in the process of streamlining the permitting process to provide greater efficiency, speed, clarity and public confidence in the outcome of permit applications. To accomplish this change, the Department will purchase a comprehensive software program for permit application management. This grant application requests funding for the public internet access interface component of the software package, which will provide applicants web access to track the status of their applications online. This entire software package will provide a standardized and automated

system for the management and updating of records that will decrease permit processing time, increase clarity and transparency, increase processing capacity, lower permit costs, and improve communications with the public.

Grant amount requested: \$20,000 Total project cost: \$259,500

Total match amount: \$239,500 Cash match: \$239,500 In-kind match: _____
(see Application Instructions for match requirements)

Period grant will cover: September 1, 2006 through December, 31, 2007

Type of project (specify planning/technical assistance or implementation): Implementation

Geographic focus of project: Humboldt County unincorporated areas

Contact person name and title: Kirk Girard, Director of Community Development Services Department

Contact phone: 268-3735 Contact email: kgirard@co.humboldt.ca.us

II. NARRATIVE

1. Describe the project including project goals.

The Humboldt County Community Development Services Department is in the process of streamlining the permitting process to provide greater efficiency, speed, clarity and public confidence in the outcome of permit applications. To accomplish this change, the Department is proposing the purchase of a comprehensive software program for permit application management. This grant application requests \$20,000 for the public internet access interface component of the software package, which will provide applicants web access to track the status of their applications online. This entire software package will provide a standardized and automated system for the management and updating of records that will decrease permit processing time, increase clarity and transparency, increase processing capacity, lower permit costs, and improve communications with the public.

The permit streamlining software will support more efficient investment of private/public sector time and resources in permitting, and will add transparency to the planning process. This software component will create a user-friendly Internet access where permit applicants can visit and track their permit's progress. The software package will include the following features:

- **Permit Management:** An automated and standardized format in which the Department can issue and track a variety of permits. This platform will allow input from multiple agencies into a single user-friendly format that will be instantly available online to individual applicants. Everything the user needs is right in front of them for easy access. Contact information, related permits, scheduling, financials, and links to further details are all visible from the main screen. Additional benefits to the permitting process will include: ability to manage multiple permits quickly, extensive inspection tracking,

automatic retrieval of information from multiple contractors associated with a project, flexible reporting capabilities, and an interface with word processing, spreadsheet and GIS files. This platform streamlines the permitting process and improves business efficiency.

- **Project Application Tracking:** Organizes all the necessary reports associated with an application into an easy to read and quickly accessible electronic format. This will allow multiple agency bodies to access the data in a timely and efficient manner, thus speeding up processing and project timelines.
- **Code Enforcement:** Organizes all relevant documentation needed to track code violations relevant to a specific parcel or applicant. Complaints and additional relevant information are also linked to the stored data – reducing the risk of lost documentation.
- **License Management:** The software can issue and track a range of business license information including: license number types, issue/expiration dates, business address/owner information, fees specific to the business, and applicable ID numbers. At a glance, the user can quickly review all information pertinent to a specific business.
- **Internet Interface:** The permit tracking platform is available over the Internet for online public access through a user-friendly web interface. This interface can be configured based on the needs of the local community applicants. At a minimum this will include parcel, permit and associated databases (as allowed by the Agency) but could also extend to allow the public to request scheduling of inspections and to obtain inspections and parcel and application status. This is the feature we are requesting Headwaters to fund.
- **Mobile Field Access:** Inspectors in the field can use laptops or hand held units and cell phone or modem connectivity to access the county server directly and download their inspection schedules. Upon completion of their day, the inspectors can then update the permit or case records with the inspection results automatically.
- **GIS Technology:** Interfacing GIS technology enables the department to click on a parcel and quickly obtain such information as: details about the owner, legal description of the property, site data, any restrictions placed on the property, land use data and property valuations. Currently, GIS data solely includes Geographic/land use data and is not linked to a permit management system. This software will link permit tracking and parcel permitting history with GIS parcel data.

As a software package, these features will improve efficiency, standardization and automation of the permitting process. It will support the Department to track workflows for all types of permits from application to finalization. The Internet Interface software will improve the public interface of the permitting process, providing immediate web-based tracking of permits by private sector applicants. Project managers can track permitting 24/7 via the Internet. They can view all permits, projects, cases, licenses, and additional databases (as allowed by the Agency) associated with the property. In addition, applicants can request scheduling of inspections and obtain inspections and parcel and application status from the site. This improved efficiency and transparency is a win-win for the Department, private developers and business owners.

2. *How and to what degree will the project further economic development in Humboldt County? Quantify where possible. List measurable outcomes and how outcomes were*

calculated – e.g. explain how you estimated the number of jobs created by the project (please be specific and state assumptions).

A software platform will streamline permitting efforts and provide cost savings to businesses and developers by increasing efficiency in documentation and record keeping, thus reducing the time needed to finalize the planning process. In addition, the software package provides businesses and developers their permit status online. This clarity of the planning process allows users to more efficiently forecast and allocate their time, thus reducing costs.

The Department surveyed 100 permit applicants about their experiences with the permitting process. As seen below, the results of the survey indicate a strong need for permit process streamlining, easier inter-agency coordination and a way for the public to easily check the status of their permit application:

- Thirty (30) people commented that they thought the process took too long. A majority of respondents expressed a desire to speed things up and streamline the process. Most of these comments did state that it was not a delinquency on the staff's part. The time it takes to process permits was by far the biggest complaint. People wanted improved coordination between the permitting agencies, because that seemed to cause the most delays.
- Twenty-one (21) people mentioned that they were frustrated trying to communicate with planners. People wanted to be continually updated on the status of their project. The time needed for a planner to personally call and update the public on the status of their projects is time consumptive and inefficient.
- Thirteen (13) people thought that the one thing that the Department could do to improve permit processing was to add online services. People were especially excited about checking the status of their applications online.

The number of new planning permit applications has risen from 186 per year in 2001 to 310 per year in 2005. This is a 60% increase. The number of annual building permit applications has risen from 740 per year in 2001 to 888 per year in 2005. This is a 17% increase.

While we cannot estimate the amount of jobs created from this project, we can guarantee savings in time and money for businesses and individual developers in the permitting process. Business owners repeatedly tell stories about how they could have planned for that delay in the permitting process, had they known in advance. The clarity and confidence in outcome of being able to track their permit online will allow businesses to save staff time and focus their efforts more effectively. Based on interviews with cities and counties who have implemented similar software programs, we expect individuals to save a significant amount of time on permitting. This can account for a financial return to business operations and investment in the community.

3. Describe who and how many will benefit from the project.

The primary beneficiary of this project to streamline permit processing will be the applicants to the Department. Staff processes applications for many types of development and business actions in the unincorporated areas of the county. In past years the number of applications has steadily risen, while funding for processing applications has not risen. The result of these trends is that processing time and uncertainty for applicants has increased. With such a high workload,

planners are caught between the time it takes to talk applicants through each stage of the process, so they know where they are, and doing the work to move the project through to the next step. The period of time that elapses while the outcome of the permitting process is uncertain is costly to the applicant and may discourage investment in Humboldt County. Streamlining the process and putting the access to permit status online will free up staff time to communicate with applicants about more complex issues.

Other agencies in the County will also benefit from this streamlining effort. Standardization and automation of the permitting process will decrease the public employee time allocated to correspondence with applicants, data tracking, record keeping, data entry, inspection scheduling, code violations, licensing, coordination with partnering permitting agencies and private contractors associated with a project, and data retrieval. Information sharing becomes streamlined because it is entered and shared in a standardized format, which is easily available and accessible to additional agencies involved in the permitting process. The software will link the permitting activities of the Planning, Building, Public Works and Environmental Health Divisions.

The County is also working with the City of Fortuna on the evaluation of alternative permit automation and tracking programs. Ideally, we will agree on a common platform to promote the standardization of the permit process between the two jurisdictions.

4. What methods will be used to achieve the expected results? Include a scope of work, timeline, description of relationships with other programs or projects, and a description of stakeholder involvement in planning and project execution. Submit the project budget in Attachment III.A below.

The incorporation of a permit streamlining software package into the existing Department planning operations will follow these basic steps and have these associated costs:

- A. **Procurement of the software license fee:** \$120,000 for annual license and maintenance fees. These costs reflect the actual software license of all the features, described above, in the software package for use by 40 Department employees.
- B. **Implementation:** \$90,000 - \$120,000 will cover the costs of "turn-key" setup of the software program. The various tasks included in implementation include:
 - o Project implementation meetings
 - o System configuration and set up of basic control tables
 - o Development of custom reports and forms
 - o System installation
 - o Software customization and modifications
 - o Go - Live (upload system) with support from contractor
- C. **Data Conversion:** The Department currently utilizes Fox Pro to manage around 5,000 permitting records. Converting this data into the new software package is expected to cost around \$8,000-15,000. The software company will administer data transferal from the current program into the new platform, and will take 2-5 weeks.
- D. **Training:** System Administrator trainings will be conducted onsite and effectively train up to 8 persons at one time. Each training session takes two days and is expected to cost \$2,500 per training session.

5. *What qualifications do the organization, partners and project staff bring to the project? Outline key staff and partners including their qualifications. Include a brief overview of the organization and list any relevant certifications, licenses, etc.*

The purchase of permit tracking and automation software is a high-priority of the County of Humboldt Permit Reform Committee. The Permit Reform Committee was formed by the Board of Supervisors in 2005 to recommend improvements to the County land use and building permitting processes. Chairman Woolley and Supervisor Neely, Loretta Nickolaus, Stephanie Larson, Phil Crandall, Alex Wineland, Brian Cox, Kirk Girard and Todd Sobolik are members of the Committee. The Planning Commission is represented by Commissioner's Bruce Emad and Jeff Smith. The Committee will oversee the choice of the software and make a final recommendation to the Board of Supervisors. The Humboldt County Community Development Services Department Director, Kirk Girard, will provide management oversight for the project. Implementation will be coordinated by an Information Technology Analyst and Division Managers in the Planning, Building, Public Works and Environmental Health Divisions. Approximately 40 staff members will be trained to operate and administer the software program. This software will build on the existing GIS and digital document imaging and handling strengths of the Department.

6. *How do you know the project will succeed? What are the risks and challenges?*

Other cities and counties have successfully demonstrated the benefits of using a permit management software program. The following comments document the positive experience the cities and counties have had with a permit streamlining software package:

- **City of Eureka** - The software allows the City of Eureka to write letters, track coding, link zoning to parcel, and connect permitting to their website for user interface. "It has made the office more efficient."
- **City of Vallejo** - The software has put an end to lost documents. All information related to a parcels project became easily accessible. All inspections are tracked in the system, creating more accountability of the inspectors. Planner Leon McNeil says of the Vallejo planning office, "We have become more efficient in our daily operations and have simultaneously improved services to our customers."
- **City of Escondido** - The transfer to the new software was implemented within a short space of time and employees began using it immediately. They encountered no problems and adapted to the new system very quickly because they were able to access information much more easily. They were also able to access documents much faster than with the previous old paper permits system. As a result, business process efficiencies have increased, enabling the City to live up to its values and mission statement – that of providing the highest quality of service in a professional manner using a fiscally responsible approach.
- **Redwood City** - The Building & Inspection Division is a busy place; they review over 2,500 projects each year and conduct 15,000 inspections, servicing a population of more than 75,000. To support this activity the department used an in-house developed system, however, this was getting more expensive to support. "The software has greatly improved communication and service both inside our offices, and to the public, as well as being more efficient and reducing frustration."

- **Sonoma County** - They implemented an integrated software program for permitting management, and evaluated it as follows: "This is a good product that is flexible. You can configure it to the way you work and not have to change your permit number scheme. The data is accessible in many different ways."

The risk of not supporting this permit streamlining effort far outweighs the risk of implementing it. These are integrated software programs that have incorporated every aspect of planning and building permitting that the County of Humboldt needs to manage their permit system. Other cities and counties have proven that this technology works and adds efficiency and value to businesses and planning agencies.

A challenge of this project is acquiring full funding for the initial investment. The Headwaters Fund's support will go directly to making the system accessible to the public and beneficial to businesses needing development permits.

7. *When the project is complete, how will you know if it has succeeded (e.g. quantified increase in sales/jobs, change in behavior)?*

The capacity of the Department to process permits will increase using a software platform. Planners will need to use less time updating the public because most of their questions will be easily accessible online, in a user-friendly format, available 24/7 to the applicant, which will free up more time to process additional applications and assist the public with more complex permits. Office management efforts can be redirected from database management toward more proactive planning efforts, such as permit review and finalization, and increasing workload capabilities.

8. *How will you evaluate (quantitatively and qualitatively) the success of the project? What indicators will you look at (and when) to gage success?*

The Department tracks total labor expenses allocated to permitting, based on the type of permit issued. The Department also tracks permit process performance by the number of permits approved and the average (and median) elapsed permit processing times for each permit type. These indicators will be used to track changes in permit efficiency after installing and using the permit streamlining software program. The Department also tracks complaints and conducts an annual customer survey by phone. These too will be used as indicators of the success of the project.

9. *How will the project be sustained after the grant?*

Once the initial costs of licensing, implementation, data conversion, and training are completed, the Department projects the operational costs of permitting will be reduced, workload capacity will be increased, and permit application revenue will cover the cost of maintaining the system.

III. ATTACHMENTS

- A. *Project budget* – see Attachment
- B. *List all other funding sources for this project. For each source, list:* see Budget
- C. *List of your board of directors or council members.*

Humboldt County Board of Supervisors:
John Woolley, Third District, Chair
Jimmy Smith, First District
Roger Rodoni, Second District
Bonnie Neely, Fourth District, Vice Chair
Jill Geist, Fifth District

- D. *Documentation of collaboration and/or project need in the form of Letters of Support, Letters of Partner Commitment, and/or Memoranda of Understanding. For example, if the project is to assist an industry cluster, it is suggested that you include letters of support from relevant businesses and/or cluster leaders. Attach no more than 5 letters of support.*

IV. ENCLOSURES

Include only one (1) copy of each of the following. Do not submit binders or folders of any type.

- Most recent IRS tax status certification (for non-profits only)
- Most recent, full-year organizational financial statement (expenses, revenue and balance sheet), audited, if available: *County of Humboldt 2005 Single Audit on file with Headwaters Fund Secretary*
- Organization's current annual operating budget: Attachment A

V. PROJECT BUDGET FORMAT

Use the following format for your project budget submittal. You may modify individual "Project Expense Items" depending on your project's needs (i.e. you do not need to use the expense items shown if they do not apply). For major expenses, please be specific (e.g. instead of listing "Equipment - \$20,000", write "10 laptop computers - \$20,000"). See *Application Instructions* for guidelines on overhead costs. You may recreate this form on your computer or download it at www.theheadwatersfund.org

Project Expense Item	Total Cost (\$)	Requested Amount from Headwaters Grant Fund	Amount from Matching Funds	Source of Matching Funds
Direct Salaries & Wages				
Staff 1-40: Planning & Building staff to oversee and be trained	\$20,000	0	\$20,000	County of Humboldt Planning and Building Trusts
Sub-total: all Direct Salaries, Wages, Benefits & Payroll Taxes	\$20,000	0	\$20,000	
Consultant & professional fees (software license fee)	\$120,000	\$20,000	\$100,000	County of Humboldt Planning and Building Trusts
Consultant & professional fees (implementation)	\$90,000	0	\$90,000	County of Humboldt Planning and Building Trusts
Consultant & professional fees (data conversion)	\$11,000	0	\$11,000	County of Humboldt Planning and Building Trusts
Consultant & professional fees (staff training)	\$12,500	0	\$12,500	County of Humboldt Planning and Building Trusts
Overhead- non-staff related	\$5,000	0	\$5,000	County of Humboldt Planning and Building Trusts
Overhead- staff related fiscal	\$1,000	0	\$1,000	County of Humboldt Planning and Building Trusts
All Overhead Costs as % of Total Project Cost	2%			
Total Project Cost	\$259,500	\$20,000	\$239,500	

Note 1: "Overhead- non-staff related" is comprised of office supplies, printing & copying, telephone/fax, postage & delivery, and rent & utilities.

Note 2: "Overhead- staff related" is comprised of indirect staff costs (e.g. bookkeeper).

**The Headwaters Fund
Application for 2006 Grant Fund**



Thank you for your interest in the Headwaters Grant Fund. All applications must include a cover sheet, project narrative, project budget, and the required attachments. Complete application packages must be received in the Headwaters Fund office by 5:00PM on June 23, 2006. Send or drop off applications to: Headwaters Fund Coordinator, 520 E Street, Eureka, CA 95501. Late and incomplete application packages will not be accepted, but may be resubmitted in future grant cycles.

This application form, instructions, and information on the Grant Fund may be found on our website at www.theheadwatersfund.org - please review this information, especially the *Applicant Instructions*, before completing your application to ensure the project meets all requirements.

Please review the following *Application Checklist* to ensure your application package is complete. Do not submit an application with binders or folders – stapled or paper-clipped pages are preferred.

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

A completed application package consists of the following:

Nine (9) collated and stapled copies of the following items in order:

- Cover Sheet (i.e. the form on the attached page)
- Narrative (no more than 10 pages single-sided, 12 point font, 1" margins)
- Attachments in the order listed in Section III below

One (1) copy of each of the following enclosures:

- ~~NA~~ Most recent IRS tax status certification (for non-profits only)
- Most recent financial statements (expenses, revenue and balance sheet), audited if available: *County of Humboldt 2005 Single Audit on file with Headwaters Fund Secretary*
- Organization's current annual operating budget: Attachment A