SUBJECT: VANCOUVER **FIRST!** (Funding for Innovation, Reinvention, and Super Thinking!) Grants

Concept:

The City of Vancouver is establishing FIRST!, an internal venture capital fund to support new ideas, innovative approaches to existing problems, and concepts that would be aided by a one-time influx of funding. This fund is not for recurring operational expenses. The program will be piloted for about six months in 2003 and funded with $50,000. Based on the results from 2003, a full program will be launched in 2004 with $100,000 in funding.

Of the pilot funding, $10,000 is reserved for small projects under $2,000 each and the remaining $40,000 will be available for any combination of projects. In special cases, projects in excess of $40,000 may still be fundable and should be submitted.

Start Date: June 17th, 2003

Limits:
- FIRST! grants are envisioned to be funded in amounts ranging from $500 to $15,000.
- Activities that are partnerships between or among departments will receive high priority
- There is no limit on the number of funded projects by department
- All grant applications will be reviewed by a committee to ensure they meet the criteria before being sent to the City Manager for approval.
- FIRST! grant funds will be expended from the General Fund, regardless of the fund in which the applying department(s) is funded. The account will be managed by the Budget Office.
- Recipients of a FIRST! grant are required to report progress and use quarterly on the first Friday of the quarter to the City's Performance Analyst, and be prepared to discuss progress with Donna Mason on camera for CVTV.
- Proposals not approved in the Budget process may be submitted.
- Expected savings or improvements must be visible or quantifiable within one year.
- Existing level of service will not be put at risk during or as a result of implementation of the proposal.

Application Process:
The application process consists of two parts

- 1. An initial screening based on the written application submitted. It will be important to fully answer as many questions as possible.

- 2. An interview and the answers to more detailed questions may be required. The Interview will be with the FIRST! Action Review Committee (FARC - defined below)

 The amount of detail needed within the application will vary with the complexity of the project and its nature. It is best to provide as much detail as possible for the initial screening. Call (or email) Tom Nosack ph. 619-1074, (**tom.nosack@ci.vancouver.wa.us**) or Paul Lewis (**paul.lewis@ci.vancouver,wa.us**) if you have any questions about how much "homework" is needed.

- Applications not approved will be returned with a written explanation. They can be resubmitted if the issues identified can be resolved.

- The FARC will consist of Betsy Williams, the Deputy City Manager; two internal department members; (Howard Anderson from VPD and Antoinette Gasbarre from Parks & Recreation) a representative of the business community; and a council member. Tom Nosack, the city's performance analyst, will facilitate. The FARC will review and forward each application with a recommendation to the City Manager.
- Final approval authority for FIRST! grants will be with the City Manager.
- Beginning in July, the FARC will initially meet monthly to evaluate submissions. Submissions may require a short personal presentation.
- Criteria for approval will include:
    o Quantifiable savings in time or funds to the city
    o Quantifiable increase in service level – to a level not being currently met
    o Measurable improvement in quality of performance data
    o An approach to a task or business practice that holds promise of fundamental change in our service delivery
    o Measurable improvement in satisfaction level of customers
- Funds can be used for equipment, labor, professional services, temporary staff, software, or nearly any category of expenditure. However, the application must clearly explain how the requested funds are necessary to the success of the project.

Sample Submission Ideas:
- Hiring outside expertise we lack for a specific task that will save money or significantly improve quality over the way we currently do business. (Contracting a study of how to lower grounds maintenance costs, or expertise to review food purchases contracts)
- Hiring short term labor to offload staff for a specific, defined project with excellent payback potential (A project your staff does not have time to do but want to try)
- Hiring short term labor to do a task that will bring an excellent return for the cost (billing or collections type work)
- Backfill of staff time to launch "audits" of city expenditures (e.g., telecommunications)
- Contracting for a service we do not currently use but with high likelihood of a good return
- New equipment/software (that has low maintenance or your organization is prepared to cover if adopted) that is a significant change from how we do business but has great potential to improve our service, quality, or effectiveness
- Technology that holds promise and is medium-to-low risk. (handheld technology that integrates with existing business systems is an example)
- Energy improvement programs (Tennis Center lights)
- Staff time to develop other revenue enhancements (Contract with a firm that wants the City to make information available for title companies out of our utility system).

Other Information:
- Project begins June 17th, 2003
- Pilot project ends December 1st, 2003 or when funds are depleted.
- First review of submissions; July 31st, 2003.
- Questions? Contact Tom Nosack 619-1074.
- Copies of application forms are available below.

FIRST!
Funding for Innovation, Reinvention, and Super Thinking

Do you have a great idea, but we need a little help to make it happen?

Apply for a FIRST! Grant

First Name:

Last Name:

Department: (Pick your department) ▾

Phone Number:

Here's my/our idea:

(Please include answers to the "five w's and two h's": who, what, when, where, why, how, and how much.

This is going to save the City: $ [   ]

| Erase form and start over | Send my idea to the |

How will we quantify success: (payback)

Official Rules

1. FIRST grants will be funded in amounts from $500 to a maximum of about $15,000. The initial pilot program is funded with $50,000 in 2003 and $100,000 in 2004.
2. Activities that are partnerships between departments will receive high priority for approval
3. There is no limit on the number of funded projects by department
4. All grant applications will be reviewed by a FIRST! Action Review Committee (FARC) to ensure they meet the criteria before being sent to the City Manager for approval.
5. Projects may be approved based on the initial application, but some will require additional written information or a concept presentation for a decision to be made.
6. Recipients of a FIRST! grant will report progress and use on the first Friday of each quarter to the FARC. You may be asked to also discuss it on CVTV.
7. Items or projects not approved in the Budget process may be submitted. Submissions not approved in this process may be resubmitted if the reasons for disapproval are fixed.
8. Expected savings or improvements must be visible or quantifiable within the first six months
9. First grant funds will be expended from the General Fund regardless of the applying department. The account will be managed by the Budget Office
10. Existing level of service will not be put at risk during or as a result of implementation of the proposal.

To:	
From:	Vancouver FIRST! Action Review Committee (FARC)
Date:	
Subject:	FIRST! Grant – Selection for Second Stage of Consideration

Congratulations! Your project has passed the initial screening for a FIRST! Grant. We need some additional information to help our committee assess your idea. In addition to the information you provide today, you may also be asked to speak to the FARC about your proposal.

1. **Project Description: (One or two paragraphs to cover the basic questions: who, what, why, how much)**

   Please explain in detail how this proposed equipment purchase or project will

   - improve an existing service;
   - provide a new, needed service.
   - save funds, time, or staffing; or

2. **Additional Evaluation Questions**

a. What is the purpose of the project and what you hope to accomplish?

b. How will this project or proposal will be of benefit to the community? If there is a partner, please explain how you will work with partner(s) to broaden the scope of the community benefit.

c. How does this fit into your organization's strategic plan, business plan or service delivery plan?

d. Please provide a timeline of when the project will begin (and end, if appropriate) if selected for funding.

e. Is anyone else doing this or using this product? Please provide any information from other cities or organizations that have successfully used or are currently this or a similar idea/concept/product.

f. What return do you expect to get for this investment? Please be as specific as possible.

g. Why can't (or shouldn't) you do this with your current budget?

h. Is there any other information you wish to provide which may be of assistance to the evaluation team for this project?