



DHS News

Newsletter of the Allegheny County
Department of Human Services



November 2019

Five questions with Hilary Marcella

Hilary is grants coordination manager in Integrated Program Services (IPS). She can be reached at Hilary.Marcella@AlleghenyCounty.US or 412-350-5835. She also manages a [DHS Grants Team Site](#) where staff can find historical files, job aids and other resources for working on grants.

1. What was your path to Allegheny County/DHS?

My background is in nonprofit fundraising and development, and I've worked both in human services and advocacy. Right before I came to DHS, I was the grants manager for YWCA Greater Pittsburgh.

2. DHS is looking into/has recently purchased new grant management software. What does this software do and why was it important?

The new grants management software is called eCivis. It's designed for state and local governments to help track grants and manage them throughout the lifecycle – from the research stage when we're just looking for new opportunities through award, post-award, and close-out phases. Some of eCivis' functions include funding opportunity research tools, automated workflows, task management features (like application and reporting reminders), accounting system integration to assist with program budget monitoring, and reporting and analytic features.

A team here at DHS is currently working with eCivis to migrate data into the system and get the integration with our accounting system working right.

3. How do grants help DHS to meet its mission and goals?

First, I think we have to define what we mean by "grant." Revenue sources like the Human Services Block Grant (HSBG) are certainly grants, but they do not require a competitive application process like what we most typically think of when we think about grants. Grants like the HSBG come from non-discretionary, formula-based funding sources that are designed specifically for local government departments like ours. We still have to plan for and report on these funds, but we don't have to compete with other organizations for them. These awards are really important; they make up the bulk of DHS's budget and enable us to deliver reliable human services.

Other grants are competitively-awarded, requiring us to develop proposals for review and scoring. Competitive awards can come from public or private sources (e.g., from

government agencies, like SAMHSA, or foundations, like The Heinz Endowments). These represent a relatively small share of DHS's overall budget when compared with the HSBG. Nonetheless, these competitive awards are important because they enable DHS to innovate and fill funding gaps. DHS pilots a lot of new programming through competitively-awarded grants, trying out new models, practices and approaches. For example, DHS was [recently awarded](#) more than \$3 million from HUD to develop and operationalize a community response to youth homelessness. Another recent grant from the Kresge Foundation will enable DHS to implement [new two-generation, whole family approaches](#).

At any given time, DHS's grant portfolio can contain 75-100 awards and more than \$100M in funding.

4. What most excites you about the work you do?

The things I value most about my role are the opportunities I have to work with folks across DHS and learn about programs in every office. I enjoy the variety of work I get to do – I toggle between project management, problem solving, research, administrative work, budgeting, and creative writing, and this variety keeps me energized. I'm also excited to be at DHS where we are pushing the envelope, working toward the continuous improvement of human services, and willing to be self-critical in our analysis of human service systems.

5. What is most important thing DHS staff should know about your role?

Folks should know that I'm here to help. I don't necessarily do all the grant-related work – there's way too much of it and a lot of really great people executing it. But I aim to be a central point of contact and information for grants, and to be a connector between the people and places at DHS where the work takes place.