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Grants Work in a Congressional Office

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Summary

Members of Congress frequently receive requests from grantseekers needing funds for projects in districts and states. In considering a response, a congressional office might first determine its policies and procedures regarding appropriate assistance to give constituents, such as when to provide information on grants programs or active advocacy of projects. Each office handles grants requests in its own way, depending upon the Member's legislative agenda and overall organization and workload of office staff.

As for staffing, there may be a full-time grants specialist or several staff members under the supervision of a grants coordinator working solely in the area of grants and projects. In some offices, all grant requests are handled in the district or state office. In others, they are answered by Capitol Hill staff. Offices may encourage congressional grants staff to learn about the grants process themselves and identify practices, in accordance with office policies, that may assist grantseekers at each step in the process.

To learn about grants work, congressional staff can use CRS reports to identify potential sources of information for government and private funding and for details on selected grants programs. In addition to this report, reports on grants work include CRS In Focus IF12906, *Constituent Grants Services in a Congressional Member Office: A Brief Guide*; CRS Report RL34012, *Resources for Grantseekers*; and CRS Report RL32159, *How to Develop and Write a Grant Proposal*, among others. CRS also offers reports on block grants and the appropriations process; federal assistance for homeland security and terrorism preparedness; and federal programs on specific subjects and for specific groups, such as state and local governments, police and fire departments, libraries and museums, nonprofit organizations, small business, and other topics. Congressional staff and Members can view selected additional key reports at the CRS.gov page "Grants and Federal Assistance."

To educate constituents, a congressional office may provide grantseekers information on funding programs or may sometimes sponsor workshops on federal or other assistance. Congressional Member web pages can also link to grants sources—such as SAM.gov Assistance Listings and Grants.gov—so that constituents can search for grants programs and funding opportunities. The CRS web page "Grants and Federal Domestic Assistance" (see sample Member Grants Page), can be added to a Member's home page. Congressional staff and constituents alike might also benefit from CRS grant and assistance reports on various topics. (Note: The public does not have access to CRS.gov web pages but can access most CRS reports at <https://www.congress.gov/crs-products>.)

A congressional office may consider developing an internal grants memo, guide, or manual to help communicate Member office policies and procedures, to respond to frequent grants questions, and to train new congressional staff. In addition to a single place to locate grants-related office policies and procedures, a grants manual may include templates for letters of support, instructional tools for new staff, and lists of local or state contacts. With reductions in federal programs (and with most government grants requiring a cost share, or "matching" funds), local contacts could include private, community, or corporate foundations that may serve as alternatives or supplements to federal grants.

This report will be updated at the beginning of each Congress and as needed.

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Brief Introduction to Grants Work

Members of Congress receive numerous requests from grantseekers for information and help in obtaining funds for projects. These grantseekers may include state and local governments, nonprofit social service and community action organizations, small businesses, and individuals. Congressional staff may be encouraged to better understand the federal grants landscape, process, and practices, in accordance with office policies, so that they may assist grantseekers at each step in the process.

The following are important items to keep in mind about grants work:

- Available federal grants are often intended to meet goals authorized by Congress to target community needs.
- Federal grants are not guaranteed benefits or entitlements to individuals.
- Most federal grant funds go to state and local governments, which in turn may subaward some federal funds to local entities such as nonprofit organizations.
- Contacting federal departments and agencies, state grants administering agencies (SAAs), or both to discuss grant opportunities is likely to be an important step for many grantseekers.

For example, government assistance may be available for nonprofit organizations (including faith-based groups¹) to achieve purposes such as establishing food kitchens or after-school programs benefitting entire communities or for local governments seeking funds for community services, infrastructure, and economic revitalization.

Given the ever-growing competition for federal grant funds, success in obtaining federal grants may be limited. Congressional offices may need to direct constituents seeking government aid to funding options other than grants. For example, community fundraising may be used effectively for school enrichment activities, such as field trips or for band or sports uniforms or equipment, and local business or private foundation funding may be used to support projects such as construction of local memorials or commemorative programs. For other needs, such as starting or expanding a small business or for students, the following sources may serve as alternative sources for grantseekers:

- **Individuals looking for government benefits** may use the website <https://www.usa.gov/benefit-finder>.
- **Students seeking financial aid** might search the Department of Education website at <https://studentaid.gov/>.

For those looking to start or expand small businesses, the federal government provides assistance in the form of loans and advisory or technical assistance through the Small Business Administration at <http://www.sba.gov> (see also CRS In Focus IF12449, *Connecting Constituents with Federal Assistance for Businesses*).

In other cases, grantseekers who have seen ads promising federal grants for personal expenses may be referred to the Federal Trade Commission Consumer alert “How Government Grant Scammers Try to Trick You.” Other grantseekers may need to be educated on the limitations of

¹ See Department of Health and Human Services, “What Are the Rules on Funding Religious Activity with Federal Money?,” <https://www.hhs.gov/answers/grants-and-contracts/what-are-the-rules-on-funding-religious-activity-with-federal-money/index.html>.

congressional office involvement in the grants process—such as the fact that Members of Congress cannot dictate the outcome of a federal grant competition.

The remainder of this report provides examples of approaches and techniques used by congressional offices to organize their grants operations and work with grantseekers.

For a “quick-start” overview of constituent grants work (including a discussion of “responsive” versus “proactive” work in this space), see CRS In Focus IF12906, *Constituent Grants Services in a Congressional Member Office: A Brief Guide*.

Organizing Office Grants Operations

Each congressional office handles grants requests in its own way, depending upon factors that might include the Member’s philosophy on federal support for local projects, representational or legislative priorities, or interest in specific locations or types of projects.

- Some congressional offices may have a dedicated grants specialist/coordinator or grants director working solely or primarily in the area of grants and projects.
- In some offices, all grants requests are handled in the district or state office. In others, they are answered by the Washington, DC, staff. Still others divide grants and project activity between the district or state office and the Washington, DC, office. Regardless of how this responsibility is assigned, it may be helpful to have at least one person in the district or state office and one person in the Washington, DC, office who is familiar with the whole process. District or state staff may be more readily able to communicate with federal agencies’ state and regional offices or state administering agencies, which are often the preferred contact offices for federal programs.
- Because some constituents request the aid of the entire state congressional delegation for a grant or project, cooperation among Members of the delegation can minimize duplication of effort and permit more effective use of staff time. At least a few states’ congressional delegations have established state projects offices or centralized/shared grants coordinators to help constituents learn about the grants process and follow through on all applications until awards are made.

Potential forms of staff assistance could include:

- providing facts about financial and nonfinancial assistance available through federal programs;
- clarifying aspects of proposal development, application, and follow-up procedures;
- writing letters of interest or support from the Member to the granting agency once a grant proposal is ready for submission; and
- suggesting other sources for grant assistance in both the private and public sectors.

A congressional office might establish internal policies to address grant requests based on whatever priorities it establishes. Determinations for pursuing these priorities could be made based on an assessment of:

- volume of incoming grants requests;
- number of people who could benefit from a potential grant award; and

- availability and experience of congressional staff.

A general understanding of the entire grants process may be useful in responding to grantseekers, including how to complete the following steps in the process:

- Defining the project
- Searching for likely funding sources, including federal grants administered and subawarded by states
- Registering on SAM.gov
- Registering on Grants.gov, FedConnect, or agency-specific grant application portals (where required)
- Developing and writing proposals
- Completing any other requirements of the grant program (such as environmental reviews or program-specific assessments)
- Applying for grants
- Understanding review and award procedures
- Knowing post-award reporting and audit requirements

Also see CRS Infographic IG10075, *How Federal Grant Funds Flow*; and CRS Report R42769, *Federal Grants-in-Aid Administration: A Primer*.

Managing Grants Requests

To help assure continuity and consistency and to monitor the progress of the grants projects, several internal resources may be developed.

Internal Office Grants Manual or Memo

An internal grants manual or memo might outline office policies and procedures and ensure continuity when working with constituents. Items that could be included in such a manual include:

- a statement of the Member’s policy on letters of endorsement and press announcements, along with samples;
- a checklist of procedures to facilitate explaining the process to constituents or training new staff;
- office guidelines for writing letters of support on behalf of grantseekers;
- office guidelines and procedures for tracking federal funds to the district or state or by policy area or program(s) of interest;
- office guidelines and goals for coordinating any grants-related constituent outreach activities or events;
- office guidelines and goals for any grants-related outreach to federal or other agencies;
- sample project worksheets, including space for contacts, status reports, and follow-up timetables; and
- updated telephone and email lists of contacts in federal, state, and local agencies and of private funders (e.g., congressional contacts for federal agencies can be found in the CRS resource “Congressional Liaison Offices”).

The House Ethics Committee or Senate Select Committee on Ethics may be consulted, as appropriate, for guidance on compliance with chamber rules and other questions related to constituent services.

Organizing Informational Resources and Tracking Ongoing Work

A system for organizing information and tracking ongoing work with grantseekers may be helpful and could include grouping by categories, such as agencies, constituent files by county, and grant projects.

Agencies

- Agency information may be arranged using subcategories, such as grant topic, program names, or project.
- Program information may include details on the most frequently used programs in communities in the state or district, with a fact sheet describing each program, plus agency brochures and contact numbers.
- Project information may contain lists of applicants for each project. Some offices keep records tracking the steps taken in support of all grant applications.

Constituents

Constituent information may be organized by:

- correspondence with grantseekers,
- correspondence with outside organizations on specific projects, or
- press coverage of awards.

Grant Projects

Grant project information may include:

- status information on grant applications as they move through an agency's review process,
- calendars or logs tracking contacts with grantseekers, or
- grant awards in the district or state—potentially including even those your office did not work on. (For tracking federal funds by state, by county, and by congressional district, see CRS In Focus IF12925, *Tracking Federal Grant Awards: A Brief Overview*. Contact CRS for search strategies and best sources.)

Assisting Grantseekers in the Exploratory Stage of Grantseeking

Congressional staff may wish to consider the following questions early in an interaction with a grantseeker:

- Are there other projects currently underway that address the problem?
- Is there already an appropriate federal or state program that is designed for such a project?

- Is the issue better addressed through local, state, or private organizations, or through legislation?

Congressional staff may also encourage grantseekers to give thought to how they would present themselves in any future grant application or other interactions with grantors. For example, grantseekers should be prepared to provide documentation of any specialized education, training, and professional credentials. A grantseeker should also be prepared to provide the history, goals, activities, budget, and primary accomplishments of any organization connected to the grant project. Finally, the grantseeker may be encouraged to seek support from local governmental or nongovernmental organizations that may benefit from the grant proposal.

Information on Grants Processes

Limits to and competition for federal funding may mean grantseekers should think broadly about possible federal and state government grants as well as private or corporate foundation grants. Also, most federal funding goes to states in the form of formula or block grants, and for many programs, application for federal funds must be made through state-level administering agencies (SAAs). These SAAs might include state-level executive agencies responsible for housing, public health, and emergency management. Congressional staff might assist grantseekers with identifying contacts for these SAAs.

SAM.gov's Assistance Listings database and the Federal Program Inventory offer keyword searching; searching by assistance type (grant, loan, etc.); and listings by department, agency, and program title.² The assistance listing descriptions also link to related websites, such as federal department and agency home pages and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) grants management circulars.³ Grantseekers themselves can then track notices of certain competitive federal funding opportunities at websites such as Grants.gov or FedConnect.net.

CRS Resources

To help congressional offices respond to grants questions, CRS has developed grants-focused web pages:

- For congressional staff, the CRS "Grants and Federal Assistance" web page focuses on key CRS products. It includes CRS publications on grants and programs that congressional offices can forward to their constituents. Also, most CRS reports are available to the public at <https://crsreports.congress.gov>.
- To provide useful information directly to constituents, Members may add to their websites any content they wish from the CRS "Grants and Federal Domestic Assistance" web page, which provides guidance and links to key internet sources covering information readily available to the public.

CRS also has a number of written products to help both congressional staff and grantseekers. Some CRS reports covering key sources and publications about federal and private funding include:

² For summary discussions of SAM.gov's Assistance Listings and the Federal Program Inventory, see CRS In Focus IF12910, *Searching for Federal Grants: An Overview of Resources*.

³ OMB has established government-wide grants management policies and guidelines through circulars and common rules. See OMB, "Key Memoranda on Grant Policy," <https://www.grants.gov/learn-grants/grant-policies/omb-grant-memoranda>. For background on federal regulations governing federal grant management, see CRS In Focus IF13138, *Uniform Guidance for Federal Grants: An Overview*.

- CRS Report RL34012, *Resources for Grantseekers*;
- CRS Report RL32159, *How to Develop and Write a Grant Proposal*;
- CRS In Focus IF12921, *Letters of Support for Grant Seekers: Considerations for a Congressional Office*;
- CRS Report WMR10011, *Introduction to Federal Grants: Resources and Key Concepts*;
- CRS In Focus IF12910, *Searching for Federal Grants: An Overview of Resources*; and
- CRS In Focus IF12906, *Constituent Grants Services in a Congressional Member Office: A Brief Guide*.

Grants Newsletters

Some offices choose to either send out special grants and projects newsletters or include a section on grants and projects in their regular newsletters. Subjects could include programs of interest, descriptions of recently awarded grants, and reminders to constituents about any services that the office might offer, such as identification of potential programs or writing congressional letters of support to accompany applications.

Grants Seminars, Webinars, and Workshops

Another way to proactively get information to interested constituents is for a congressional office to coordinate seminars on federal assistance at state and district locations or online. An office could consider hosting events or programs bringing together federal, state, and local officials—as well as foundation, academic, and corporate specialists, experienced volunteers—and constituents who share common concerns. Agencies, foundations, and corporations may be willing to provide speakers for district seminars arranged by congressional offices and to provide materials such as brochures, sample proposals, and lists of contacts.

For information on contacting speakers from federal departments and agencies, congressional offices could use the CRS “Congressional Liaison Offices of Selected Federal Agencies” or internal lists of state-level contacts. For constituent orientation and group seminars, offices may also consider use of CRS products as handouts and presentation materials, such as CRS Report RL34012, *Resources for Grantseekers*; CRS In Focus IF12910, *Searching for Federal Grants: An Overview of Resources*; CRS Report RL32159, *How to Develop and Write a Grant Proposal*; and any other CRS reports on specific grant programs that may be useful for attendees.

Writing a Proposal: Assistance and Sources

Although congressional staff do not write grant proposals, they may be approached by inexperienced grantseekers seeking guidance on what makes a good proposal. For those grantseekers, CRS Report RL32159, *How to Develop and Write a Grant Proposal*, discusses preliminary information gathering and preparation, developing ideas for the proposal, gathering community support, identifying funding resources, and seeking preliminary review of the proposal and support of relevant administrative officials. It also covers outlining project goals, stating the purpose and objectives of the proposal, explaining the program methods to solve the stated problem, evaluating project results, long-term project planning, and developing a proposal budget. The last section of the report lists free grant-writing websites.

Candid (formerly the Foundation Center and Guidestar) and other organizations also publish guides to writing proposals. Candid offers an “Introduction to Proposal Writing” on its website. Constituents may also be advised that examples or templates for proposals can be found by searching the internet under terms such as *grant proposal AND template or sample*.

Congressional offices may consider offering grantseekers the following suggestions:

- Allow sufficient time to prepare a thoroughly documented proposal by starting work on the proposal well before the application deadline.
- Follow the instructions given in the application form or in other material provided by the agency or foundation and directly answer questions as asked.
- Try to be clear and brief and avoid jargon. Whenever possible, fit the style of the proposal to the style of the agency or foundation being approached.
- When no form or instructions for submitting grant proposals are provided, the proposal might include:
 1. a cover letter providing a brief description of the purpose and amount of the grant request and conveying the applicant’s willingness to discuss the proposal in further detail;
 2. a half-page summary that includes information on the applicant, reasons for the grant request, proposed objectives and means to accomplish them, projections of the total cost of the project, indications of funds already obtained, and an amount being requested for the grant;
 3. an introduction in which the history, credentials, and accomplishments of the applicant are presented briefly (including any supporting documents in an appendix);
 4. a description of current conditions demonstrating the need for the proposed project;
 5. a statement of the project’s objectives in specific, measurable terms;
 6. a description of the methods to be used to accomplish these objectives;
 7. a description of the means by which the project will be monitored and evaluated;
 8. a discussion of plans for continuing the project beyond the period covered by the grant; and
 9. a detailed budget.

Writing Letters of Support

Grantseekers may request that congressional offices write letters to federal departments and agencies on their behalf. Some grants, such as funding for homeland security, are determined by formula to states and jurisdictions, and letters may not be needed.

For most other requests, a Member office might write a letter only when the grantseeker is ready to submit the grant proposal to the department or agency. Check with the department or agency congressional liaison to determine where letters should be sent.

A letter might include:

- the name of applicant or contact person for the project (if different),

- the grant program name and Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number,
- agency contact address and the grants officer's name if available,
- any deadline for proposal submission,
- the project name and summary,
- what the project/program does,
- how many people will benefit,
- why the project is important to the community,
- unique features of the project such as needs not already being met,
- other support for the project (such as from a state or local government), and
- specifically how the grant money will be used.

The letter could close by asking the department or agency to let the Member know when a decision will be made and asking that the office be informed about the progress of the proposal.

For guidance on ethical issues surrounding requests for letters of support, congressional staff may consult the House Committee on Ethics or the Senate Select Committee on Ethics.

Additional guidance on writing letters of support can be found in CRS In Focus IF12921, *Letters of Support for Grant Seekers: Considerations for a Congressional Office*.

Tracking Grant Awards

Congressional offices may consider developing files or databases of grants awarded in order to track funding to their districts and states. While tracking this information precisely may be challenging, P.L. 109-282, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, led to the development of a database, USAspending.gov, which compiles data on federal awards by state, congressional district, county, city, and zip code. For a summary of sources, limitations of currently available data, and the law's requirements, see:

- CRS In Focus IF12925, *Tracking Federal Grant Awards: A Brief Overview*;
- CRS In Focus IF10231, *Tracking Federal Awards in States and Congressional Districts Using USAspending.gov*; and
- CRS Report R44027, *Tracking Federal Awards: USAspending.gov and Other Data Sources*.

Announcements of grants awarded may be posted on Member websites or social media at the discretion of the office.

Federal Assistance: Key Terms and Resources

Hundreds of grants or loans for various purposes are available from federal departments and agencies. Most federal funding goes to state and local governments,⁴ and in some cases, portions of the funding may be “passed through” to subrecipients at the local level. Subawards might be awarded on a noncompetitive or a competitive basis.

⁴ For more background, see CRS Report R40638, *Federal Grants to State and Local Governments: Trends and Issues*.

Brief snapshots of federal grant programs are provided at SAM.gov's Assistance Listings. Current notices of funding opportunities (NOFOs)—which are announcements that federal agencies publish when they are ready to accept applications—for competitive project grants may appear on the websites Grants.gov or FedConnect. See sections below for more information about these key sources.

Currently, programs in SAM.gov, a key source for federal program information (see “Assistance Listings at SAM.gov,” below) are organized into several types of financial and nonfinancial assistance.

Grants

Applicants generally consider grants desirable because they are outright awards of funds. Different types of grants include the following:

- *Formula grants*: allocations of money to states or their subdivisions for activities of a continuing nature not confined to a specific project, which includes block grants to states and local governments.⁵
- *Project grants*: funding for fixed or known periods of specific projects or for the delivery of specific services or products, including fellowships, scholarships, research grants, training grants, traineeships, experimental and demonstration grants, evaluation grants, planning grants, technical assistance grants, survey grants, construction grants, and unsolicited contractual agreements. These may also be referred to as discretionary or categorical grants or funding.
- *Direct payments for specified use*: federal financial assistance provided directly to individuals, private firms, and other private institutions to encourage or subsidize particular activities.
- *Direct payments with unrestricted use*: federal financial assistance provided directly to beneficiaries who satisfy federal eligibility requirements with no restrictions as to how the money is spent.

Loans

Because loans must be repaid, applicants may view them as less desirable than grants. However, with limited amounts of federal funds available for grants and high levels of competition for such grants, loans may be the only form of assistance available. Loans may come in the following forms:

- *Direct loans*: lending of federal funds for a specific period of time with an expectation of repayment that may or may not require the payment of interest.
- *Guaranteed/insured loans*: programs in which the federal government makes an arrangement to indemnify a lender against part or all of any defaults by those responsible for repayment of loans.

⁵ For more information on block grants, see Grants.gov, “What Is a Block Grant?,” updated January 21, 2020, <https://grantsgovprod.wordpress.com/2020/01/21/what-is-a-block-grant-updated/>.

Goods and Properties

The federal government has programs both for the sale, exchange, or donation of property and for temporary use or loan of goods and property:

- *Sale, exchange, or donation of property and goods:* programs that provide for the sale, exchange, or donation of federal real property, personal property, commodities, and other goods including land, buildings, equipment, food, and drugs.
- *Use of property, facilities, and equipment:* programs that provide for the loan of, use of, or access to federal facilities or property wherein the federally owned facilities or property do not remain in the possession of the recipients of the assistance.

Assistance Listings at SAM.gov

SAM.gov (System for Award Management) is a public platform hosted by the General Services Administration providing multiple databases, including the Assistance Listings (formerly known as the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance). The Assistance Listings is a searchable database that describes over 2,200 federal assistance programs, including approximately 1,800 federal grant programs, and it has a variety of search options. SAM's Assistance Listings provide a short summary of each grant program and contact information for grant-making federal agencies (e.g., see the Assistance to Firefighters grant program listing). SAM.gov Assistance Listings does not display grant program opportunities in “real time,” and it is possible that listed grant programs may not be currently available for application (or may not currently have any available funding to award).

In addition to information on all kinds of federal grant programs, SAM.gov provides summaries of federal programs for federal loans, direct payments, surplus equipment, and cooperative agreements. Programs can be searched by keyword and filtered by federal organization, eligibility, and assistance type.

Approximately 1,800 assistance programs are classified as grants. An assistance listing description includes:

- the federal agency administering a program;
- legislation authorizing the program;
- objectives and goals of the program;
- types of financial or nonfinancial assistance provided;
- uses and restrictions;
- eligibility requirements;
- application and award processes;
- criteria for selecting proposals;
- amounts of obligations for some past and current fiscal years;
- range and average of financial assistance;
- regulations, guidelines, and literature relevant to the program;
- information contacts and headquarters, regional, and local offices;
- related programs;

- examples of funded projects;
- formula and matching cost-share requirements, where applicable; and
- requirements for post-assistance reports.

Congressional staff may suggest that constituents seeking federal funding search SAM.gov themselves by keyword, beneficiary, agency, and other options for identifying appropriate program information. Some congressional offices may forward preliminary SAM.gov searches of potential federal funding to constituents. Grantseekers themselves will need to carefully analyze the descriptions of programs identified to see whether they may be appropriate.

Early in the process, the grantseeker might contact the department or agency indicated in the SAM.gov program description(s) for the latest information on funding availability, program requirements, and deadlines. Often a referral to a local or state office will be given. Many programs may be project or formula (block) grants to states that in turn accept local grant sub-applications and determine subaward recipients.

Federal Program Inventory

In 2024, OMB publicly launched the Federal Program Inventory. Using data from SAM.gov Assistance Listings, this site similarly provides “snapshot” summaries of federal financial assistance programs, including grant programs. Like SAM.gov, this site allows searching by agencies, type of program/assistance, and eligible applicants—but it also offers a category search function that displays results by topic across multiple agencies. This added functionality may be particularly helpful for new grantseekers who are at the beginning or exploratory stage of the search process. Grantseekers can select categories (and subcategories) to search, such as agriculture, economic/community development, housing, disaster prevention and relief, transportation, and many others. The Federal Program Inventory also displays some overview data on federal program obligation amounts from USAspending.gov. (See “Tracking Grant Awards,” above.)

Grants.gov

Grants.gov lists federal Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs). Grants.gov opportunities can be searched by keyword, opportunity status, funding instrument type, eligibility, category, and agency. Grants.gov also hosts an online Grants Learning Center where grantseekers can learn basics about the federal grant lifecycle, management, and grant-related terminology.

For grantseekers who have identified appropriate federal funding programs (through SAM.gov or department and agency websites), Grants.gov enables them to do the following for competitive project grant opportunities:

- Search for current funding opportunity notices (including by CFDA program number)
- Sign up for email notification of future grant opportunities
- Download grants application packages and instructions or find links to other websites to apply
- Submit applications electronically through a uniform process for all federal grant-making agencies
- Track the progress of their applications using unique IDs and passwords

Possible Limitations of Grants.gov

Grants.gov primarily lists competitive project grants (i.e., those that are awarded directly from federal agencies to prime grant recipients and might not undergo a pass-through process). This means that grantseekers will not find, for example, state-administered subgrant/subaward opportunities on Grants.gov. Those “pass-through” funds are generally available only through individual state-level agencies.

Also, Grants.gov largely functions as an administrative and submission tool for grantseekers applying for competitive federal grant programs. Prior to using Grants.gov features, a grantseeker is generally already aware of a particular competitive funding opportunity that aligns with the project and has prepared for the application in the weeks and months prior to the NOFO being posted on Grants.gov. (Many postings on Grants.gov have relatively short windows of opportunity, often announced 30-60 days before the submission deadline.)

Before applying through either Grants.gov or FedConnect, the grantseeker is required to register for a free account.⁶ Also before applying, grantseekers must register with SAM.gov.⁷

Federal and State Grants Contact Information

Each assistance listing at SAM.gov includes information contacts either providing the name, address, and telephone number of the main program officer or referring applicants to the regional, state, or local office of the agency. However, many federal agencies have multiple offices: a central office in Washington, DC; a series of regional and state offices; and, in some cases, local or area offices. At times, it may be useful to have other contact information beyond that on SAM.gov.

An alternative source for identifying contact information in federal departments and agencies is a congressional liaison office (see CRS Report 98-446, *Congressional Liaison Offices of Selected Federal Agencies*, for emails and phone numbers). The congressional liaison office will respond only to congressional requests, though you may place a request on behalf of a constituent.

The Important Role of State Administering Agencies and Contacts

Many federal programs are administered directly by state agencies or other entities within the state, and many states have programs funded out of their own appropriations that supplement or complement federal programs. State government agencies provide coordination of local efforts to obtain federal funds through grant programs that are already allocated to the states.

State government agencies familiar with federal program requirements might assist with proposals and provide other guidance. Less frequently, local councils of government or other Regional Development Organizations, where they exist, may also provide technical assistance, planning services, guidance, and counseling on the grants process for local governments. They may also administer loan funds.⁸

State agency websites might provide information about available federal grant funding that will be passed through by the state and subgranted at the community level to local governments,

⁶ Grantseekers should be aware that applying for federal grants does not require any fees. See Grants.gov, “Grant-Related Scams,” <https://www.grants.gov/learn-grants/grant-fraud/grant-related-scams.html>.

⁷ For information on registering at SAM, see SAM.gov, “Get Started with Registration and the Unique Entity ID,” <https://sam.gov/entity-registration>.

⁸ For more information on Regional Development Organizations, see CRS In Focus IF11511, *The Role of Regional Development Organizations (RDOs) in Economic Development*.

nonprofits, or other grantseekers. Many state-level agencies accept grant applications or proposals.⁹

For example, the Secretary of the Interior provides financial assistance to states for outdoor recreation purposes under a formula grant program (through the Land and Water Conservation Fund).¹⁰ Under National Park Service program guidance (from 2023), states may award this federal funding to local units of governments and tribes, among others. Eligible purposes include the acquisition of lands and waters and the development of parks and other public outdoor recreation facilities. A local government looking to fund an outdoor recreation area might explore its state's parks/recreation or similar agency to learn about this federal program.¹¹

Some states might also provide broader search tools. For example, Virginia provides an informational grants portal listing federal, state, and private funding, and Ohio also provides a searchable database of grant opportunities that are administered by the state.¹²

Grantseekers may be encouraged to contact state- or local-level program officers as early as possible in the grant-seeking process. In fact, many states may require that an applicant complete a pre-application screening at the state level before submitting requests.

To help grantseekers, congressional grants staff may identify state-level administering agencies, the state counterpart offices accepting certain grants applications and disbursing federal formula and other grants. Also, many federal department and agency websites provide state contacts. Often the site will have an interactive U.S. map where grantseekers can click on their states and obtain program and funding contact information.

Selected Federal Agency State-Level Contacts

- Agriculture Rural Development state contacts
<https://www.rd.usda.gov/page/state-offices>
- National Endowment for the Arts partners
<https://www.arts.gov/partners/state-regional>
- Economic Development Administration local contacts
<https://www.eda.gov/about/contact>
- Education state contacts
<https://www.ed.gov/contact-us/state-contacts>
- Environmental Protection Agency regional grants offices
<https://www.epa.gov/grants/regional-grants-information>
- Federal Emergency Management Agency state offices and agencies (preparedness)
<https://www.fema.gov/grants/preparedness/state-administrative-agency-contacts>
Federal Emergency Management Agency state offices and agencies (hazard mitigation)

⁹ See Grants.gov, “What Is a Government Grants and Pass-Through Funding?,” <https://grantsgovprod.wordpress.com/2016/08/30/what-is-a-government-grant-and-pass-through-funding/>.

¹⁰ See National Park Service, “Land and Water Conservation Fund,” <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/lwcf/stateside.htm>.

¹¹ For example, see Missouri State Parks, “Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Grants,” <https://mostateparks.com/basic-page/land-and-water-conservation-fund-lwcf-grants>.

¹² See Governor of Virginia, “grants,” <https://www.governor.virginia.gov/constituent-services/grants/>, and Ohio Grants Partnership, “Funding Opportunities,” <https://grants.ohio.gov/funding-opportunities>.

<https://www.fema.gov/grants/mitigation/state-local-territorial-governments/state-contacts>

- Health and Human Services, Social Services Block Grants state officials and program contacts
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/resource/ssbg-contacts>
- Homeland Security state contacts
<https://www.dhs.gov/state-homeland-security-and-emergency-services>
- Housing and Urban Development state/local offices
<https://www.hud.gov/contactus/local>
- National Endowment for the Humanities state councils
<http://www.neh.gov/about/state-humanities-councils>
- Office of Justice Programs SAA
<https://www.ojp.gov/funding/state-administering-agencies/overview>
- Department of Labor, Education and Training Administration, state and local contacts
<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/state/contacts>
- Small Business Administration
<https://www.sba.gov/local-assistance>
- Federal Transit Administration regional offices
<https://www.transit.dot.gov/about/regional-offices/regional-offices>
- Veterans Affairs state/territory offices
<https://department.va.gov/about/state-departments-of-veterans-affairs-office-locations/>

Other Sources for Contacts

- CRS maintains a list of congressional liaison offices of selected federal agencies at <https://www.crs.gov/constituent/congressional-liaison-offices>.
- Some states require federal grant applicants to submit copies of their applications for state-government-level review and comment and have designated a “single point of contact” (SPOC). The state offices listed here coordinate government (both federal and state) grants development and may provide guidance to grantseekers.¹³
- A list of state government agency websites is available at the federal government site USA.gov at <https://www.usa.gov/state-governments>.

Foundations and Corporate Grants

Congressional offices may suggest other funding possibilities to grantseekers as alternatives or supplements to federal grants. Funding from private or community foundations or corporate grants might also be used for securing federal grants that have requirements for nonfederal cost share, otherwise known as “matching” requirements.

¹³ For example, the state-level SPOC list from August 2024 can be found at <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/SPOC-list-as-of-August-2024.pdf>.

Grantseekers might begin by identifying state, regional, or local foundations. These may have a greater interest in local projects than do larger foundations mainly concerned with programs of national significance. Direct corporate giving might also be explored. Corporations sometimes support local projects in areas where they have their headquarters or operations. In the case of either foundations or corporations, finding a contact and communicating with the potential grantor may be a useful next step.

Candid (formerly the Foundation Center and Guidestar) serves as a clearinghouse of information on private philanthropic giving and may be used to identify private funding sources. Candid's website, <https://candid.org/>, includes extensive information about private funders, IRS Form 990 filings from nonprofit organizations, and a number of guides to private and corporate funding sources. Candid's website also includes web and in-person trainings, many of which are free, including an "Introduction to Proposal Writing." For example resources, see:

- ***How do I find potential grant-makers for my organization?***
<https://learning.candid.org/resources/knowledge-base/how-can-my-organization-find-other-grantmakers-or-potential-grantees-working-in-our-areas-of-interest/>
- ***How do I approach a foundation and build a successful grantee-funder relationship?***
<https://learning.candid.org/approaching-foundations/272058>
- ***What is crowdfunding?***
<https://learning.candid.org/what-is-crowdfunding/278307>

Candid also maintains a national network of partners in each state, with print and digital resources available free to the public (often at university or public libraries). To identify public access to Candid, see <https://candid.org/resources/candid-near-you/>. At these libraries or other public locations, grantseekers may search the Foundation Directory database by field of interest, foundation location, and other categories, to produce lists of possible funding sources for projects.

Other websites that provide free listings of foundations include the Council on Foundations' "Community Foundation Locator" and the Grantsmanship Center's "State Grant Resources" page, which for each state lists "top," corporate, and community foundations. Congressional offices may send constituents state listings from these websites.

For more information on private, corporate, and additional funding sources, see CRS Report RL34012, *Resources for Grantseekers*.

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