



Resources for Grantseekers

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Summary

This report describes key sources of information on government and private funding, and outlines eligibility for federal grants. Federal grants are intended for projects benefiting states and communities. Individuals may be eligible for other kinds of benefits or assistance, or small businesses and students may be eligible for loans. Free information is readily available to grantseekers who generally know best the details of their projects. The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) describes 1600 federal programs, 1000 of them grants, and can be searched by keyword, subject, department or agency, program title, beneficiary, and applicant eligibility. Federal department and agency websites provide additional information and guidance, and provide state agency contacts. Once a program has been identified, eligible grantseekers may apply electronically for grants at the website Grants.gov through a uniform process for all agencies. Through Grants.gov, they may identify when federal funding notices and deadlines for a CFDA program become available, sign up for e-mail notification of funding opportunities, and track the progress of submitted applications.

Since government funds may be limited, the report also discusses sources of private and corporate foundation funding. The Foundation Center is a clearinghouse for information about private, corporate, and community foundations, with collections of resources in every state.

Included in this report are sources of information on writing grant proposals. See also CRS Report RL32159, *How to Develop and Write a Grant Proposal*, by Merete F. Gerli.

Sources described in this report are also included in the CRS website WG02001, *Grants and Federal Domestic Assistance Web Page*, by Merete F. Gerli. Upon request, this website may be added to a Member's home page. For congressional staff, see also CRS Report RL34035, *Grants Work in a Congressional Office*, by Merete F. Gerli.

This report will be updated at the beginning of every Congress.

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Introduction

Congressional offices are often approached by constituents seeking grants for projects, including local governments, nonprofit groups, community organizations, small businesses, and individuals. Though many hope for federal funding, such assistance is often limited and other funding sources such as private foundations should be considered.

Federal grants are not benefits or entitlements to individuals. Grants are intended for projects serving state, community, and local needs. Most federal funding goes to state and local governments, which in turn may make sub-awards to local entities such as eligible nonprofit organizations. Local governments seeking funds for community services, infrastructure, and economic revitalization may be eligible to tap into state or federal funds. Government assistance may also be available for nonprofit organizations, including faith-based groups, for initiatives such as establishing soup kitchens or after-school tutoring programs benefitting entire communities.

For others, such as for individuals seeking financial help, starting or expanding a small business, or needing funds for education, benefits or loans may be available.

- Individuals looking for government benefits (such as for child or health care, housing or energy costs, disability or veterans needs, or “living assistance”) may find useful the website GovBenefits.gov at <http://www.govbenefits.gov>.
- Students seeking financial aid can search Student Aid on the Web at <http://www.Studentaid.ed.gov>.
- To start or expand a small business, the federal government provides help in the form of loans, advisory, and technical assistance. See the Small Business Administration (SBA) website at <http://www.sba.gov> to find programs and state or local SBA offices.

Groups seeking funding for projects need first to determine the most appropriate sources of funds. Because government funds may be limited, sources of private funding should also be considered. State and community foundations may be particularly interested in funding local projects; many projects may require a combination of government and private funding. Local business or foundation funding might be appropriate for supporting local memorials or programs. Community fund-raising may be more suitable for school enrichment activities such as band or sports uniforms or field trips.

For eligible state and local governments and nonprofit organizations, identifying appropriate programs, and then contacting federal and state agencies early in the process, before submitting formal applications, is recommended. State-located federal offices often handle federal grant applications and disbursement of funds. State government departments and agencies also fund projects and administer federal block grants.

Who is Eligible for a Government Grant?

There are many groups or organizations that are eligible to apply for government grants. Typically, most grantee entities fall into the following categories:¹

- Government Organizations
 - State Governments
 - Local Governments
 - City or Township Governments
 - Special District Governments
 - Native American Tribal Governments (federally recognized)
 - Native American Tribal Governments (other than federally recognized)
- Education Organizations
 - Independent School Districts
 - Public and State Controlled Institutions of Higher Education
 - Private Institutions of Higher Education
- Public Housing Organizations
 - Public Housing Authorities
 - Indian Housing Authorities
- Non-Profit Organizations
 - Nonprofits having a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, other than institutions of higher education
 - Nonprofits that do not have a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, other than institutions of higher education
- For-Profit Organizations (other than small businesses)

Some constituents may have seen or heard media advertisements claiming federal grants are available to help them. However, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the nation's consumer protection agency, cautions grantseekers:²

Sometimes, it's an ad that claims you will qualify to receive a "free grant" to pay for education costs, home repairs, home business expenses, or unpaid bills. Other times, it's a phone call supposedly from a "government" agency or some other organization with an official sounding name. In either case, the claim is the same: your application for a grant is guaranteed to be accepted, and you'll never have to pay the money back.

¹ Grants.gov website Who is Eligible for a Grant? at <http://www.grants.gov/aboutgrants/eligibility.jsp>.

² Federal Trade Commission, FTC Consumer Alert, "Free Government Grants: Don't Take Them For Grant-ed," September 2006; at <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/alerts/alt134.shtm>.

But, warns the FTC, these “money for nothing” grant offers usually are misleading, whether you see them in your local paper or a national magazine, or hear about them on the phone. Consumers should beware of paying “processing fees” for information that is available free to the public. Ads claiming federal grants are available for home repairs, home business, unpaid bills, or other personal expenses are often a scam.

Key Federal Sources

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (General Services Administration)

<http://www.cfda.gov>

The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) is the primary source of information on federal grants and nonfinancial assistance programs. Actual funding depends upon annual budget appropriations. For example some authorized federal programs may be described in the Catalog but Congress may choose not to fund them in a certain budget year. Once a program is identified in CFDA, for current notices of funding availability and to apply, see Grants.gov (below). Key features of CFDA include the following.

- Describes some 1,600 federal domestic assistance programs, financial and nonfinancial assistance programs administered by the departments and agencies of the federal government; approximately 1000 of these are grants programs.
- Allows grantseekers to identify federal programs that might provide support for their projects, either directly, or through grants to states and local governments that in turn make sub-awards to local grantseekers.
- Available free to the public, searchable full-text, and updated continuously on the Web.
- Enables searching by keyword; or by other useful browsable listings, such as by subject, by department or agency, by applicant eligibility, by beneficiary, or by other category.
- For each program, describes objectives of the program, eligibility requirements, the application and award process, post assistance requirements, past fiscal year obligations and future estimates, program accomplishments and examples of funded projects, related CFDA programs, and information contacts, including regional or local offices of federal agencies if applicable.
- Links to department and agency websites and to Office of Management and Budget (OMB) circulars affecting program management and record-keeping requirements.
- Includes information on developing and writing grant proposals: provides guidance in formulating federal grant applications, proposal development, basic components of a proposal, review recommendations, and referral to federal guidelines and literature.

Although more easily searchable and continuously updated on the Internet, the printed *Catalog* is available to the public in local government depository libraries in every state; see addresses of libraries at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/libraries.html>.

Grants.gov (via U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)
<http://www.grants.gov>

After grantseekers identify federal programs in CFDA and contact agencies (see section below), they may be directed to the website Grants.gov to apply for federal grants when application announcements for competitive grants become available. The website allows grantseekers to register and download applications for current competitive funding opportunities from all 26 federal grants-making agencies. Grantseekers themselves can check on notices of funding availability (NOFAs) or requests for proposals (RFPs); sign up to receive e-mail notification of grant opportunities; and apply for federal grants online through a unified process. The site also guides grantseekers in obtaining Dun and Bradstreet (DUNS) numbers, required for all federal grants.

To download and submit an application from Grants.gov, registration is required. The site provides a narrated tutorial on how to complete a grant application package and a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) page. Once an application is submitted, grants applicants themselves can then track progress of their application using their unique ID and password. Applications can be identified by CFDA number, funding opportunity number, competition ID, and/or Grants.gov tracking number.

Federal Contacts in States and State Administering Agencies (SAAs)

For eligible state and local governments and nonprofit organizations, after identifying appropriate programs it is recommended grantseekers contact federal and state agencies early in the process, before submitting formal applications. State-located federal offices often handle federal grant applications and disbursement of funds. State government departments and agencies also fund projects and administer federal block grants.

Federal Agency Regional and Local Office Addresses (from CFDA)
<http://www.cfda.gov/CFDA/pdf/appx4.pdf>

Many federal department and agencies have state or regional offices that grantseekers can contact for additional program information and application procedures. For listings, consult CFDA Appendix IV, Federal Agency Regional and Local Office Addresses. Much of the federal grant budget moves to the states through formula and block grants. State, regional, and local federal offices often handle grants applications and funds disbursement. Each federal agency has its own procedures: applicants should call the department or agency in question before applying for funding to obtain the most up-to-date information.

State Administering Agencies

Many federal grants such as formula and block grants are awarded directly to state governments, which then set priorities and allocate funds within that state. For more information on how a state intends to distribute federal formula funds, grantseekers can contact the State Administering Agency (SAA). State government agencies are familiar with federal program requirements, can assist local governments and nonprofit organizations with proposals, and can provide other guidance.

Many federal department and agency websites include SAAs and often the site will have an interactive U.S. map. Grantseekers can click on their state and obtain program and state contact information. A selection of some executive department websites includes the following:³

- Agriculture Rural Development State Contacts
http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/recd_map.html
- National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Partners
http://www.arts.gov/partner/state/SAA_RAO_list.html
- Commerce Offices and Services
<http://www.commerce.gov/statemap2.html>
- Education (ED) State Contacts
<http://www.ed.gov/about/contacts/state/index.html>
- Energy (DOE) State Contacts
http://www.eere.energy.gov/state_energy_program/seo_contacts.cfm
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Grant Regional Office
<http://www.epa.gov/ogd/grants/regional.htm>
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) State Offices and Agencies
<http://www.fema.gov/about/contact/statedr.shtm>
- Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration on Children and Families: State Contacts
http://www.acf.hhs.gov/acf_contact_us.html#state
- Homeland Security (DHS) State Contacts and Grant Award Information
<http://www.dhs.gov/xgovt/grants/index.shtm>
- Housing and Urban Development (HUD) State/Local Offices
<http://www.hud.gov/localoffices.cfm>
- National Endowment for the Humanities (NEA) State Councils
<http://www.neh.gov/whoweare/statecouncils.html>
- Office of Justice Programs (OJP) State Administering Agencies
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/saa/>
- Labor (DOL) Education and Training Administration, State Contacts
<http://www.doleta.gov/regions/statecontacts/>
- Small Business Administration
<http://www.sba.gov/localresources/index.html>
- Transportation, Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Regional Offices
http://www.fta.dot.gov/regional_offices.html
- Veterans Affairs State/Territory Offices
<http://www.va.gov/statedva.htm>

State Single Point of Contact (Office of Management and Budget)
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html>

³ Compiled by CRS from executive department and agency websites.

States often require federal grants applicants to submit a copy of their application for state government review and comment, and many (but not all) have designated a state Single Point of Contact (SPOC). The state offices listed here coordinate government grants development and may provide guidance to grantseekers.

Related Federal Sources

A-Z Index of U.S. Government Departments and Agencies (General Services Administration)
http://www.usa.gov/Agencies/Federal/All_Agencies/index.shtml

To better develop a grant proposal, search a department or agency's home page to learn more about its programs and objectives. The site also includes the following:

- Government Benefits, Grants and Financial Aid
<http://www.usa.gov/Citizen/Topics/Benefits.shtml>
- Grants and Financial Management
http://www.usa.gov/Government/State_Local/Grants.shtml
Covers grants management, federal assistance programs, resources about acquisition and procurement, financial management, and taxes.
- Grants, Loans, and Other Assistance
<http://www.usa.gov/Business/Nonprofit.shtml>
Links to federal department and agency information and services, fundraising and outreach, grants, loans and other assistance, laws and regulations, management and operations, registration and licensing, and taxes.
- Businesses and Nonprofits
http://www.usa.gov/Business/Business_Gateway.shtml
Links to useful sites, including financial assistance, for small business, government contractors, and foreign business in the United States.

Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (FBCI, Office of the President)
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/government/fbci/centers.html>

The FBCI initiative identified federal programs for which faith-based and community organizations may apply. The following FBCI publications may be of help to organizations seeking funds.

- Guidance to Faith-Based and Community Organizations on Partnering with the Federal Government
http://www.whitehouse.gov/government/fbci/guidance_document_01-06.pdf
- Federal Funds for Organizations That Help Those in Need
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/government/fbci/grants-catalog-05-2006.pdf>
Describes some 170 federal programs, many of which can be applied for directly. Some are "formula grants" made available to states and local governments, which in turn award funds to grassroots and local organizations. For those, grantseekers must contact local and state agencies responsible for managing the programs.

- A Guide to Federal Economic Development Programs for Faith-Based and Community Organizations
http://www.whitehouse.gov/government/fbci/EconDevCatalogue_v2.pdf
Presents a categorized listing of sample economic development efforts funded by the federal government, for service organizations interested in strengthening economic projects of individuals, communities, and businesses.

Homeland Security State Contacts & Grants Award Information (U.S. Department of Homeland Security)

<http://www.dhs.gov/xgovt/grants/index.shtm>

Click on map for state allocations and contact information. Most Homeland Security non-disaster grant programs are designated for state and local governments and specific entities such as colleges, etc. Unsolicited applications from individuals are generally not accepted. Includes Urban Area Security Initiative, Citizens Corps, Medical Response System, Operation Stonegarden (border security), and Infrastructure Protection. Assistance to Firefighters may be found at <http://www.firegrantsupport.com/>.

Grants Management Website (Office of Management and Budget)

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/index.html>

OMB establishes government-wide grants management policies and guidelines through circulars and common rules. OMB Circulars are cited in CFDA program descriptions.

Private, Corporate, and Additional Funding Sources

Foundation Center

<http://www.foundationcenter.org/>

Information gateway to the grant seeking process, private funding sources (including national, state, community, and corporate foundations), guidelines on writing a grants proposal, addresses of libraries in every state with grants reference collections, and links to other useful Internet websites. The Center maintains a comprehensive database on foundation grantsmanship, publishes directories and guides, conducts research and publishes studies in the field, and offers a variety of training and educational seminars. Free information on the website includes the following:

- Guide to Funding Research
<http://foundationcenter.org/getstarted/tutorials/gfr/index.html>
- Foundation Finder
<http://lnp.foundationcenter.org/finder.html>
Search for information about more than 70,000 private and community foundations.
- Proposal Writing Short Course
<http://fdncenter.org/learn/shortcourse/prop1.html>
Free tutorial on developing a good grant proposal; also in Spanish, French, and other languages.

- Foundation Center Cooperating Collections
<http://foundationcenter.org/collections/>
Libraries in every state providing the Foundation Directory Online and free funding information for grantseekers.

Community Foundations Locator (Council on Foundations)

<http://www.cof.org/Locator/index.cfm?crumb=2>

Community foundations are often particularly interested in local projects and maintain diverse grants programs.

Funding Sources (Grantsmanship Center)

<http://tgci.com/funding.shtml>

The website provides listings by state of top grantmaking, community, and corporate foundations that grantseekers might consider in identifying likely sources of private foundation funding.

Grants and Related Resources (Michigan State University Libraries)

<http://www.lib.msu.edu/harris23/grants/index.htm>

Government and private grants resources, primarily Web, by subject or group categories, updated frequently. Includes listings for nonprofits, individuals, and businesses.

- Grants for Nonprofits
<http://www.lib.msu.edu/harris23/grants/2sgalpha.htm>
- Grants for Individuals
<http://www.lib.msu.edu/harris23/grants/3subject.htm>
- Funding for Business and Economic Development
<http://www.lib.msu.edu/harris23/grants/2biz.htm>

Grant Proposal Writing Websites

A number of websites provide guidance, tips, and sample proposals. Constituents may also request from congressional offices CRS Report RL32159, *How to Develop and Write a Grant Proposal*, by Merete F. Gerli, which discusses standard content and formats. Websites that may be useful include the following:

- Developing and Writing Grant Proposals (CFDA)
http://12.46.245.173/pls/portal30/CATALOG.GRANT_PROPOSAL_DYN.show
- Grant-Writing Tutorial (Environmental Protection Agency and Purdue University)
<http://www.purdue.edu/envirosoft/grants/src/msieopen.htm>
- Grant-writing Tools for Non-Profit Organizations
<http://www.npguides.org/> (includes sample proposals at http://www.npguides.org/guide/sample_proposals.htm)
- Proposal Writing Short Course (Foundation Center)
<http://fdncenter.org/learn/shortcourse/prop1.html> (also has sample proposals)

- Sample Proposals (SchoolGrants.org)
<http://www.k12grants.org/samples/>
- Selected Proposal Writing Websites (University of Pittsburgh)
<http://www.pitt.edu/~offres/proposal/propwriting/websites.html>
- What Reviewers Look For (College of William and Mary)
<http://www.wm.edu/grants/PROP/reviewers.htm>
- Writing a Successful Grant Proposal (Minnesota Council on Foundations)
<http://www.mcf.org/mcf/grant/writing.htm>

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