

May 27, 2015

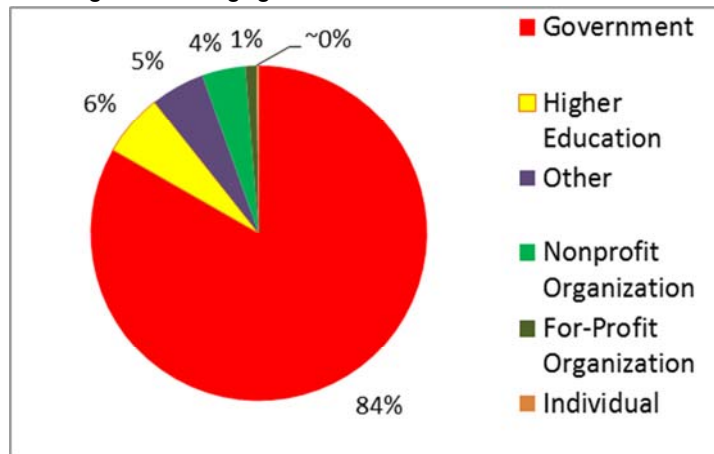
## Tracking Federal Funds to States and Congressional Districts using USAspending.gov

Finding accurate data on federal funds received by states and congressional districts (CD) may present challenges. The official website USAspending.gov is available to the public at <http://www.USAspending.gov> and posts federal agency-submitted data on obligations, including grants, loans, assistance, and contracts. The database will eventually include Treasury Department expenditures data. A redesigned website was launched in March 2015 and includes the following:

- **USAspending.gov** homepage enables search by *Recipient, Awards in Your Neighborhood* (by zip code), and *Awards by State* for the most current FY.
- **Where Is the Money Going, Spending Map** option enables filtering by state, zip, county, CD, and agency. Summary listings of recipients may be displayed one fiscal year at a time back to FY2008. Details of an individual transaction may be viewed by double-clicking on the *Award ID*. Data from transactions displayed may not be downloaded.
- **Advanced Data Search** of *prime* and *sub-award* data allows filtering by various criteria, including CD. Generally, search *place of performance* (where project is located) over *recipient location*. *Results Summary* is given and summary data may be downloaded.
- **Download Center** allows export of full transaction details. Filters limit searches by department or agency (or *All*), state, and fiscal year back to FY2000. CD is indicated in column BJ or AH in spreadsheets.
- **State-level** data include formula and block grant funds (80%-90% of federal grant funding, see **Figure 1**) that may be *passed through* to local jurisdictions or sub-awarded through sub-grants, contracts, or subcontracts (see **Figure 2**).
- **Congressional District** data may be incomplete or inaccurate when comparing several years. Over time, many CD boundaries can change with decennial redistricting, or CD numbers can change. CDs that include state capitals will appear to receive more federal funds because state administering agencies (SAAs) *pass through* funds under block and formula grants for projects throughout the state. Select *place of performance* in Advanced Data Search or Download Center; or search by zip code or county, although these may not align completely with CD borders.

**Figure 1. Federal Grant Dollars, FY2000-FY2015**

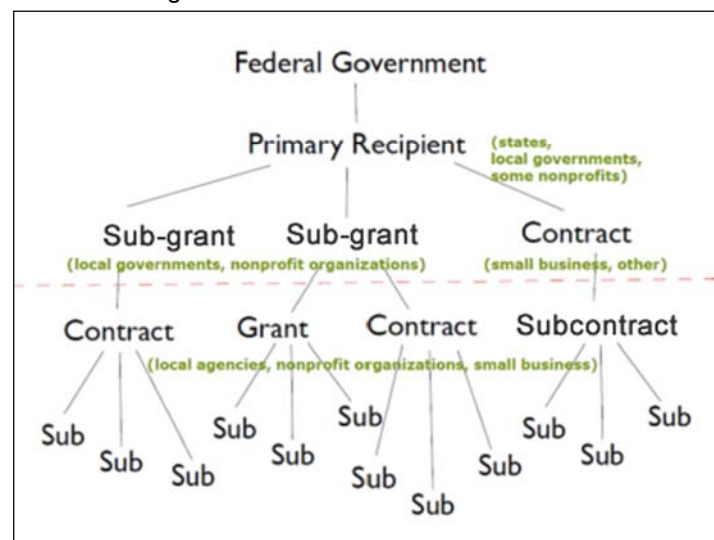
Largest Percentage goes to State, Local Governments



Source: USAspending.gov, Trends, Type of Recipients, FY2000-2015.

**Figure 2. State Administering Agencies (SAAs)**

Sub-grant or Sub-contract Federal Funds



Source: Jerry Brito, George Washington Univ., 2009; and CRS 2014.

**Related CRS Products:** CRS Report R44027, *Tracking Federal Funds: USAspending.gov and Other Data Sources*; and CRS Report IN10101, *Transparency in Grants Administration: Implementing Relevant Provisions of the DATA Act*.

## Key Source: USAspending.gov

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 (FFATA; [P.L. 109-282](#)) required the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to create a public database of all federal funds awarded to the final recipient level. This can be challenging because much federal funding is awarded to states and may then be passed through or sub-awarded to local entities, including nonprofits.

Because of continued data quality problems in USAspending.gov, information in the database may still be incomplete, inaccurate, or misleading (for example, see Government Accountability Office Report GAO-14-476 on data transparency, available at <http://www.gao.gov/assets/670/664536.pdf>).

Under requirements of [P.L. 113-101](#), the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act of 2014 (DATA Act), responsibility for the database passed to the U.S. Department of the Treasury. Over a three-year period, the act requires that Treasury together with OMB set uniform data standards to be used across all federal agencies and to provide additional guidance to agencies for posting data on USAspending.gov.

Treasury launched a redesigned website on March 31, 2015. The current database enables searching data from FY2008 to the present. Various search options enable displays and listings of summary information (see previous page). Users may search by the name of a contractor or grant recipient. An Advanced Data Search allows users to limit results by recipient location, place of performance including CD, or federal contracting or granting agency.

At the Download Center tab, detailed data information can be exported into spreadsheets by prime award or sub-award; by contracts, grants, loans, or “other financial assistance”; by department or agency (or *All*); by state recipient or *place of performance*; and by fiscal year back to FY2000. Spreadsheets downloaded include column indicating an award’s CD (if known): for *Contracts*, see column BJ; for *Grants* and other funding, see column AH.

Current records are added as soon as they become available from federal agencies, generally within 30 days. There may be a longer lag-time with data from the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security, generally 90 days.

## States: Where Awarded or Where Spent

Federal grant or procurement awards may have a *where awarded* or *where spent* component that is not always fully identified in grant or procurement records. Most federal grants funding is awarded to states, which then pass-through funds to eligible recipients elsewhere in the state. Funds may then be further sub-awarded or subcontracted. This sub-level location may be a project’s place of performance as opposed to the initial recipient location.

- For example, a grant award may pass through different jurisdictions in a state (located in different CDs) before reaching the final place of performance.
- Federal grant monies may first go to the state (the state capital, in one CD), then be distributed to a city or county government (in one or more additional CDs), which then may sub-award funds to an organization that spends the money in other CDs.
- Procurement awards may be given to a corporation headquartered in one state (and one CD). The company may spend the money manufacturing the purchased product at one or more of its manufacturing facilities in one or more additional states (and CDs).

## Congressional District Data

Congressional offices should be aware that for some congressional districts, information in USAspending.gov may be incomplete, inaccurate, or misleading.

- Special care should be taken when comparing CD data over time. Due to the redistricting process, the geographic area within the boundaries of a CD in the 114<sup>th</sup> or 113<sup>th</sup> Congress may be partially or wholly different than the geographic area of a CD with the same number in the 112<sup>th</sup> and earlier Congresses. Other geographic search options, such as by zip code or county, could be used to track funds within a CD, although borders may not exactly align.
- Congressional Districts that include state capitals will appear to receive more federal funds because state administering agencies (SAAs) pass through funds under block and formula grants for projects throughout the state.
- Federal grant or procurement funds may pass through various administrative levels (i.e., to states via block grants, then to local jurisdictions including different CDs) before they are actually spent. Choose place of performance rather than recipient location when searching USAspending.gov for awards to a CD.
- Recipients of grant or procurement awards prior to FY2007 were not always identified by CD in federal sources. Departments and agencies are now required under [P.L. 109-282](#) to furnish CD information when they award grants or contracts. Searches of USAspending.gov data prior to FY2007 or exported at the USAspending.gov Download Center may not always include CD.

Congressional staffers who need help searching USAspending.gov may place a request via [CRS.gov](mailto:CRS.gov).

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