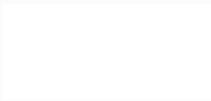




CONGRESSWOMAN

ELISE STEFANIK

Representing New York's **21st** District



Grants and Federal Domestic Assistance Guide

A step-by-step guide to locating and securing federal funding

From the Desk of Representative Stefanik

Thank you for contacting my office regarding funding opportunities that may be available through the Federal Government. I understand that identifying and applying for grants and federal loans can be a difficult and overwhelming task. For that reason, I have created a Grants and Federal Domestic Assistance Guide to help with the complex funding process.

Funding is made available through federal agencies for new and existing projects that address a variety of public needs. I am hopeful this guide will enable you to locate these resources and more easily obtain funding for the betterment of New York's 21st Congressional District.

My top priority in Congress is to serve and represent you, and my office is dedicated to helping you acquire funding in any way we can.

If you have any concerns, please do not hesitate to call us and find out if we can meet your specific needs.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Elise M. Stefanik

Stay Connected

Providing transparency is a key commitment of mine in Congress. This is why you can see all of my votes posted on my Facebook page as well as all of the legislation I am working on my website. In addition, an extensive grant resource guide can also be found on my website at Stefanik.house.gov.

 facebook.com/RepEliseStefanik

 twitter.com/RepStefanik

 youtube.com/channel/UCHvf42C8Vw6QnjwO2L2ukKA

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Applying for Funding: Where to Begin

Applying for federal grants and funding is a complex process that is often time consuming. To simplify this process, it is crucial that you have an in-depth understanding of how it works, and what steps need to be taken to identify funding opportunities and submit an application. It is my hope that this guide will provide you with the information necessary to develop timely and competitive grant applications.

After reading this guide, I am confident you will be able to:

- Determine the type of funding for which your organization may qualify
- Begin the search process and identify funding opportunities
- Develop and submit funding proposals
- Obtain letters of support

As the federal government continues to face fiscal challenges, it is extremely important to submit grant proposals that make your organization stand out from the pool of applicants. Locating funding opportunities that meet your needs is a time consuming process, and creating a strong application takes even more time. For these reasons, it is imperative that you begin the search process as early as possible and pay close attention to all deadlines.

I would recommend that you utilize any and all resources that are available to you throughout the application process. You may find it helpful to reach out to colleagues who have experience in completing grant applications, or to consult with organizations in your region that specialize in developing grant proposals. If you have any questions that are not covered in this guide, please do not hesitate to contact any of my offices at the addresses and phone numbers listed below.

We Are Here to Help

Because each organization has their own unique set of objectives and goals, it is important that all grant research be conducted by the grant seeker to ensure that no critical grant opportunities are overlooked. My staff members are available to offer guidance throughout the process, and will work to provide each grant seeker with the tools needed to create a competitive application.

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88 Public Square
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Determining Eligibility

Before beginning your search and applying for funding, it is necessary to determine your eligibility. Often times, local governments and not-for-profits do not qualify for the same grant opportunities that are available to small businesses and individuals. When considering eligibility, the first step is to identify the type of organization you represent. There are many types of organizations generally eligible to apply for funding opportunities. Listed below are the most common applicants.

- Government Organizations
 - State/Local Governments
 - City or Township Governments
 - Special District Governments
 - Native American Tribal Governments
- 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 Internal Revenue Service
 - Nonprofits that do not have a 501(c)(3) status with the Internal Revenue Service
- For-Profit Organizations (other than Small Businesses)

Determining which category you or your organization falls under will make your grant search much easier. Your organization may fit within multiple categories, which increases the number of funding opportunities available to you. If you are unsure of your eligibility, it can be checked at the following website:

www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-eligibility.html.

Grants for individuals and some organizations are limited at the federal level. Groups and individuals that are often ineligible for federal grants are students, small businesses, and individuals seeking government benefits or assistance. Though these groups may find it difficult to locate opportunities for which they may qualify, there are many programs that have been established to provide assistance.

Students



While students and recent college graduates are usually ineligible for federal grants, the Department of Education offers student loan repayment programs and different educational funding opportunities that can be found by visiting www.studentaid.ed.gov.

Individuals



Individuals submit applications on their own behalf, and do not qualify for grants that are intended for organizations. For personal financial assistance or government benefits, I would recommend visiting www.USA.gov and www.benefits.gov.

Small Businesses



Small business grants are administered by the Small Business Administration (SBA). To find out more information on grant and loan opportunities you can visit www.SBA.gov.

Finding a Grant

After you have determined your eligibility, it is time to begin your grant search. In recent years, the federal funding process has become more streamlined, and most funding opportunities can be found online in either the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance at www.cfda.gov, or at www.grants.gov. These websites serve as databases of current federal funding opportunities, and are updated daily with new requests for applications. It is important to check these databases regularly, as opportunities expire frequently and new ones may become available.

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance

The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA), administered by the General Services Administration (GSA), is the authoritative source on available federal funding for individuals and organizations at all levels. This site also has an exhaustive list of the non-financial assistance that is available at the federal level, and contains detailed descriptions of over 2,000 assistance programs administered by the Federal Government. The CFDA is completely free, and can be reached by visiting www.cfda.gov. I recommend that you make this your first stop in your search for funding.

The GSA has categorized the financial programs from 68 federal agencies and organizations into seven different categories (i.e. formula grants, project grants, direct loans). Through the CFDA, you are able to search by agency, date, category, and keywords. There is also an “Advanced Search” feature that will enable you to narrow down your search results based on the specific needs of your organization. The CFDA provides extensive information on every program in the database, including program descriptions, eligibility requirements, application deadlines, and agency points of contact.

Grants.gov

Another great feature of the CFDA is that it provides a running list of new funding opportunities that are added to the database, as well as a list of programs that are no longer accepting applications and have been removed. Instead of searching the entire database to find which programs have been added or removed since your last search, you are able to simply review these lists. Finally, the CFDA includes an extensive guide for writing successful grant proposals.

Managed by the Department of Health and Human Services, Grants.gov provides standardized information on more than 1,000 different grant programs made available through all 26 federal grant-making agencies. This database can be reached by visiting www.grants.gov, and is a centralized location for grant seekers to both find and apply for federal funding opportunities. After using the CFDA to locate a program for which you are eligible, Grants.gov enables you to review the specific grants each agency is presently awarding through their federally funded programs. While the CFDA is an excellent source for obtaining information about the programs that are administered by the Federal Government, Grants.gov lists what programs are currently accepting applications.

Grants.gov is also where grant seekers must apply for funding through most federal agencies. This is a secure website that is designed to make the electronic application process easier for applicants. To apply for a grant, an individual or organization must register with this website. It is only necessary to register once through this website to submit an unlimited amount of applications.

Funding Through New York State

New York State administers many grant programs, which can all be found at www.grantsreform.ny.gov.

Private Opportunities

**Note: The information below is not exhaustive, and Representative Stefanik is neither affiliated with, nor endorsing, any of these resources. They are provided as a convenience to grant applicant.* In addition to searching for funding through federal programs, there are many private databases and organizations that offer financial assistance to grant seekers.

The most frequently used databases are the Foundation Center, which can be reached by visiting www.foundation-center.org, and the Council on Foundations, which can be found at www.cof.org.

CAUTION

Fraud is becoming increasingly prevalent in the grant industry. If you think you may have been a victim of a government grant scam, file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission.

The Grant Lifecycle

Each grant and funding opportunity follows a linear lifecycle. This includes the creation of the funding program and notification process, the application process, the award making process, and the implementation process. These processes are grouped into three main phases:

- Pre-Award Phase - Funding Opportunities and Application Review
- Award Phase - Award Decisions and Notifications
- Post-Award - Implementation, Reporting, and Closeout

Pre-Award Phase

The pre-award phase is the beginning of the grant lifecycle, which includes the Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) and the submission and review of applications. An FOA contains all the pertinent information and requirements for an applicant to assess their eligibility and interest in the program. Applicants are able to submit proposals during this point in the cycle, which will be reviewed by the awarding agency. During the review process, the following steps are taken by the agency:

- An initial screening is carried out to ensure the application is complete
- Applications are reviewed and assessed for substance
- A financial review of the applicant's proposed budget is completed
- Decisions are made and the awards are announced

Award Phase

When the application review process is completed, the award phase begins, and the awarding agencies send a Notice of Award (NOA) to the selected applicants. A NOA is an official, legally binding issuance of an award. When you or your organization accepts the award, you become legally obligated to carry out the full terms and conditions of the grant.

Post Award Phase

The post award phase includes the implementation of the grant. During this phase, you will be asked to report your progress to the awarding agency and complete all closeout requirements. The federal agency that issues the award will assist you to ensure that your organization complies with the terms and conditions of the grant. The reporting requirements and implementation schedules vary for each grant, so it is important to review the award terms and conditions carefully for this information. While the majority of award recipients implement funding ethically and efficiently, measures taken to monitor this process are necessary to maintain transparency and to prevent fraud and abuse.

The ending of the grant process is called the closeout. To complete a closeout, you must submit final financial and programmatic reports with information requested by the awarding agency. All financial and performance reports required under the grant must be submitted within 90 days after the grant award expires. Once the awarding agency has confirmed that you have completed the required grant work and applicable administrative tasks, the grant is closed out. This process can take several months, and you are typically required to retain your grant records for at least three years from the date of the final expenditure report.

Submitting an Application

Once you have located an appropriate grant program through the CFDA and have found the matching application on Grants.gov or the grantor's website, it is time to begin the application process. The application process, which requires the submission of a grant proposal, can seem tedious and is often time-consuming. Before beginning the application, I would urge you to reach out to the point of contact for the funding program you have selected. This is usually listed on either the CFDA or the Grants.gov websites, but it is sometimes necessary to look at the agency's website for this information. It is important to speak with these representatives before submitting an application, as they have an in-depth knowledge of the program through which you are seeking funds, and are able to offer pertinent information regarding deadlines and the processes that are employed by the agency for accepting and reviewing applications.

Registering on Grants.gov

As stated previously, most agencies require that you submit applications through www.grants.gov. While, at first, you may be overwhelmed by the wealth of information included on the database, Grants.gov has a user-friendly interface that streamlines the funding application process, enabling you to register, download applications from all 26 federal grants-making agencies, and apply for funding in one place. Once you become familiar with Grants.gov, you will be able to take advantage of the special features on the site like personalized e-mail alerts for upcoming deadlines and the opening of new grant cycles.

Registering to apply for grants on Grants.gov includes several steps and different types of registration, which include DUNS*, SAM.gov, and Grants.gov accounts. Grants.gov offers step-by-step tutorials on this process and the entire application process under the "Applicants" tab on their site. It can take 1 to 3 weeks to become fully registered, so please register as early as you can. Do not miss the application deadline because you waited too long to register!

Submitting your Application and Proposal

A successful grant proposal is one that is well-prepared, thoughtful, and concisely packaged. Each proposal should thoroughly explain why your organization requires the grant, how your organization will utilize awarded funds, and what makes your organization deserving of assistance. A proposal should be neat, organized, and void of any spelling or grammatical errors.

If you do not have any prior grant proposal writing experience, it is helpful to attend a grantsmanship workshop to ensure you are submitting a competitive application. Depending on the type of funding you are seeking, there may be further guidance and additional resources made available through libraries and development corporations in your area.

It is highly recommended that you have several people review your application before submission. If you are applying for funding through Grants.gov, it is crucial to review the requirements that are outlined for each application, as these can vary between programs. If you are applying for funding directly through an agency, it is important to reach out to that program's point of contact as early as possible to learn what method of submission the agency requires.

*DUNS Number

Securing a Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number is the first step when registering your organization with Grants.gov. A DUNS number is a unique nine-character number used to identify your organization. The federal government uses this number to track the allocation of federal funds.

Obtaining Letters of Support

Community support for proposals is essential, and letters of support are often part of funding application requirements. Once you have developed a proposal summary, you should begin to identify individuals or groups representing professional, academic, political, and community organizations that may be willing to support your proposal in writing. The type and caliber of community support you are able to display through these letters can establish your credibility, which plays a critical role in the initial and subsequent review phases.

Requests for letters of support should be submitted as early as possible and include the following information:

- The name and description of your organization
- A copy of your proposal summary
- The name and contact information for the head of the granting agency or program
- A sample letter of support

While my office is not involved in any way in the selection of federal funding recipients, I am happy to provide letters of support when appropriate. When requesting a letter of support from my office, please provide my staff with a sample letter of support that includes relevant background information for your organization, as well as a concise description of how this funding will benefit your organization and the community as a whole. All requests for letters of support should be submitted to my Plattsburgh District office at the address listed below.

Plattsburgh Office

23 Durkee Street, Suite C
Plattsburgh, NY 12901
Phone: (518) 561-2324
Fax: (518) 561-2408

Please submit your requests for letters of support to my office at least two weeks in advance of when the application is due. I understand that this is not always possible, and my staff and I are sensitive to the pressure and stress that accompanies the grant application process. If you require a letter of support and are closing in on a deadline, I ask that you please call my staff to notify them.

Tracking Your Application

If you have submitted your application through Grants.gov, you will be able to track its progress through the review process on the website. It is also helpful to reach out to the point of contact listed for the program through which you applied, as they will be able to provide more detailed information about your application.

Application Checklist

- Determine your eligibility for funding by identifying the type of organization you represent. If you are unsure of your eligibility, it can be checked at the following website:
www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-eligibility.html.
- Begin a general search for funding using www.cfda.gov and www.grants.gov.
- After finding a program for which you are eligible, reach out to any listed agency contacts for additional information regarding application deadlines and qualifications. Pay close attention to deadlines and be sure to fully understand all agency requirements.
- Register on www.grants.gov. Grants.gov offers step-by-step tutorials on the registration and application process under the "Applicants" tab on their site. It can take 1 to 3 weeks to become fully registered, so please register as early as you can!
- Develop a grant proposal and request letters of support. When possible, please submit your requests for letters of support to my office at least two weeks in advance of when the application is due.
- Complete a concise, well-organized grant application. Review your application for any errors, and ensure that it complies with all program rules and regulations.
- Submit your application!

I wish you the best of luck with your applications! If you have any questions regarding the funding process, do not hesitate to contact any of my offices. My staff and I stand ready to assist you.

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88 Public Square,
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Additional resources, including much of the information contained in this guide, can be found by visiting my website at www.stefanik.house.gov.
