From Ideas to Impact: Getting Government Grants

April 17, 2024

Commonwealth University – Bloomsburg, Greenly Center

Columbia County

PLACEMAKING INITIATIVE

Hailstone
ECONOMIC

USDA

About This Project

- Rural Placemaking Innovation Challenge

- Columbia County Placemaking Plan

- Implementation Support through September 2024

Learning Objectives

- How to navigate the federal grant application process

- How to read and interpret a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) and program guidelines

- Strategies to align with funding partners

- How to prepare for preparing an application for grant funding

- Typical application components

- Writing Strategies

- Preparing budgets and leveraging funds

- Preparing for compliance and close-out

Agenda

- Federal Grants

- State Grants

- After You're Funded

- Tips for Success

- Q&A

Introductions

What is a Grant?

- Non-repayable funds dispersed by a funding entity:

  - Federal, state, or local government

  - Foundation

  - Educational institution

  - Trust

- Funds are normally awarded to non-profits, local government agencies, or educational organizations for a specified purpose over a specified timeframe.

Uses of Grant Funds

- To fund specific projects

  - Operating support

  - Capital support

  - Program operations

- To support critical initiatives

Navigating the Federal Grant Application Process

Steps in the Process

1. Research and identification
2. Read the guidelines
3. Develop a proposal
4. Budget preparation
5. Submit application
6. Review Process
7. Notification
8. Grant Management
9. Compliance and Monitoring
10. Closure and evaluation of future grant applications and funding opportunities.

Finding Federal Grant Opportunities

- Find the relevant agency

- Visit the agency's website

  - Search for funding

  - Subscribe to agency updates

  - Contact the agency directly

- Search for funding notices

  - www.grants.gov

NOFA (Notice of Funding Availability)

NOFO (Notice of Funding Opportunity)

Informative status

Reminder: Federal agencies d___ __ publish personal financial assistance opportunities on Grants.gov. Federal funding opportunities published on Gr___ gov are for organizations and entities supporting the development and management of government-funded programs ___ projects. For more information about personal financial assistance benefits, please visit Benefits.gov.
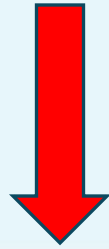
Search Grants | Get Started | Grant Policies | Grant-Making Agencies | Prevent Scams | Community Blog | Twitter Feed | YouTube Videos | User Guide | Support Center

How to Apply for Federal Funding Opportunities

Key steps that will help you in the application process

Are You Eligible for Federal Funding Opportunities?

Determining your eligibility for federal grants is an

Ways to Get Help When Using Grants.gov

Grants.gov offers a wide range of help-focused resources

33°F Mostly clear

Q Search

6:02 AM
3/20/2024

Application Period

- For each funding source, identify if there is an application period.

- Note deadlines for applications

  - Open applications

  - Annual appropriations

  - Special considerations

Reading a Funding Announcement

- Read the **introduction**

- Review **eligibility criteria**

- Understand the **funding objectives**

- Examine **application requirements**

- Look for details on **budget and funding information**

- How will the application be evaluated, i.e. **scoring criteria**

- Look for any additional information – such as **point of contact** and how inquiries/questions can be answered.

- **Date and time for submission** of the application

Typical Application Components

- SF 424 – the official application document

- SF 424-A – budget (non-construction) or SF 424-C – budget (construction)

- NOFA – will stipulate other required federal forms and Certifications (include as attachments)

- Narrative

  - Title page

  - Introduction and background

  - Project description

  - Budget justification – and details

  - Organization information (prove eligibility and capacity)

  - Evaluation plan – Plan for sustainability

- Supporting documents

Scoring and Evaluation

- The funding announcement usually outlines multiple scoring criteria

- In most cases, the criteria are designed to add up to a score of 100, but not always

Commonly Used Scoring Criteria

- **Quality of the project design** – the excellence of how well the proposed project is developed.

- **Quality of project evaluation** – the quality of the evaluation that will be conducted of the proposed project.

- **Need for the project** – The applicant identifies the magnitude or severity of the problem that the proposed project will address.

- **Significance** – the importance of the problem or issues to be addressed.

Commonly Used Scoring Criteria

- **Quality of management plan** – the plan's quality for managing the proposed project.

- **Quality of project services** – quality of the services to be provided by the proposed project.

- **Qualifications of project personnel** – experience of the personnel that will carry out the proposed project.

- **Adequacy of resources** – demonstration that resources are sufficient to carry out the project.

Navigating the State Grant Application Process

pennsylvania
COUNCIL ON THE ARTS

pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

PA
pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY
& ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION

pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR & INDUSTRY

pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

DCNR
pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
AND NATURAL RESOURCES

pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Single Application for Assistance "Single App"

- Use Keystone Login

- Applicant information – contact details, NAICS code, UEI

- Project site location

- Narrative

  - What do you plan to accomplish?

  - How do you plan to accomplish it?

  - How do you plan to use the funds?

  - Projected schedule and key milestones and dates

- Budget

- Addenda

- Certifications

PA

Agency: Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development
Applicant: Web Application #: 10074136
Company:
Program: Keystone Communities Program
Program Fact Sheet   Program Guidelines

Red Diamond (◆) = Required Field.
Blue Diamond (◆) = Conditional Required Field.

Applicant Information

To copy your Registration information into the application, click the "Use Account Information" button below.

USE ACCOUNT INFORMATION

Applicant Entity Type:
- ○ Limited Liability Partnership   ○ Partnership   ◆
- ○ Government   ○ Non-Profit Corporation
- ○ Sole Proprietorship   ○ Limited Liability Company
- ○ S Corporation   ○ C Corporation

Applicant Name: ◆

NAICS Code   ◆

FEIN/SSN Number   ◆

*Please enter SSN/FEIN as 9 digits, no dash.

UEI Number: ◆

Top Official/Signing Authority: ◆

Title: ◆

Let's Take a Break!

You Got Funded! Now What?

Forms from Agency

- Grant acceptance/grant agreement (federal) or award letter/contract (state)

- Financial institution and payment information

- Compliance review requirements (outlined in grant agreement)

- Reporting requirements

Grantee Prepares…

- Project plan

- Reporting information

- Project monitoring

- Information management systems

- Grant administrator

Grant Administration

- Track funding disbursement and reimbursements

- Create realistic and helpful benchmarks

- Create good reporting practices

- Ask if you are incorporating "best practices"?

Grant Close-Out

- Equipment inventory

- Closeout audit

- Unused funds

- Final invoices and reports

- Compliance checks

- Document retention

- Closeout letter

Common Reasons for Not Getting Funded

- Failing to allow enough time to submit via mail or electronically to meet the submission deadline.

- Not following formatting guidelines.

- Not reading the application package in its entirety.

- The proposal was not clear in describing elements (e.g., how it will be managed, monitored, evaluated, or reported).

- Methods are not explained, justified effectively, or not suited to the project.

Common Reasons for Not Getting Funded

- Budget is unrealistic – too high or too low.

- Costs appear to be greater than the benefits described.

- Proposal is hard to read; e.g., long, repetitive, sweeping statements.

- The project is beyond the capacity of the applicant to carry out.

- Failing to proofread.

Tips for Success

Strategic Planning

- Think strategically about what your organization will need:

  - Short term

  - Mid-term

  - Long-term

- Each goal should have a lead person and a potential funding stream

Before Starting Your Application…

- Build your grant writing team (if applicable)

- Gather supporting document

- Develop a grant writing timeline/project plan

- Create a preliminary project budget

- SAM registration/UEI (Unique Entity Identifier)

Sample Grant Project Plan

| Date	Task	Responsibility	Status
1/10/24	Read NOFO	Jessica	Done
1/31/24	Identify Project Partners/Subrecipients	Angela	Done
1/31/24	Participate in Webinar	Jessica and Angela	Done
2/28/24	Prepare Project Budget	Jessica	Done
2/28/24	Prepare Project Narrative	Angela	Done
3/31/24	Prepare Application Forms (list each one)	Jessica	Done
4/15/24	Obtain Letters of Support	Angela	Done
4/15/24	Draft Resolution and Share with Clerk	Jessica	Done
4/30/24	Review Application	Sara	To Be Done
5/15/24	Submit Application	Angela	To Be Done

Align Your Project with Funding Partners

- Research and identify potential partners

- Network and establish relationships

- Develop a pitch

- Customize Your approach

- Offer value and benefits

- Build trust and credibility

- Collaborate and leverage resources

- Follow up and maintain relationships

- Explore different funding models

- Be flexible and persistent

Information to Include in Applications

- Statements that define:

  - Your goals

  - Your starting point

  - Your target for accomplishment

  - How you will measure progress

  - Timetables
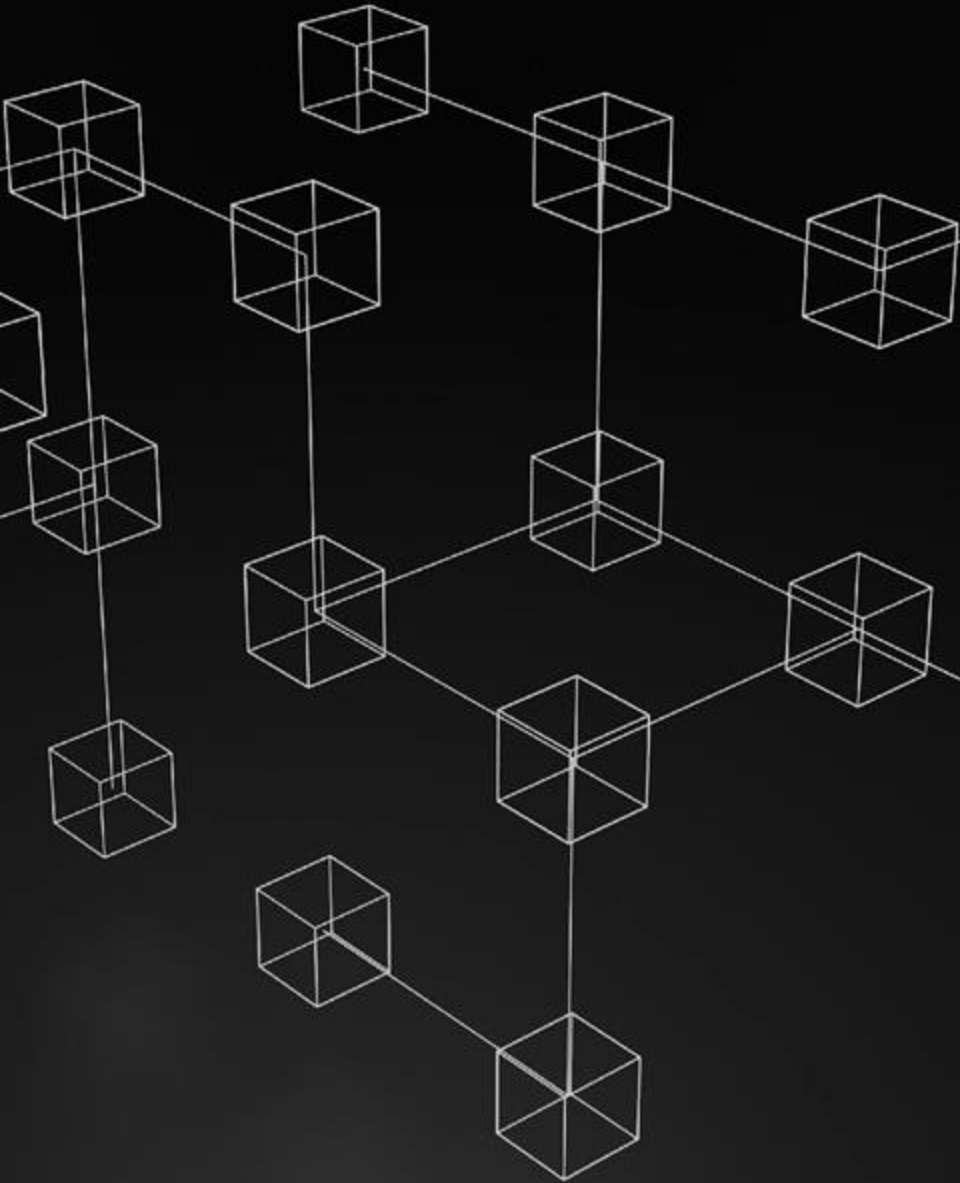
Summary: Successful Approach to Preparing an Application

- The grant proposal should have a clear strategy.

- The proposal identifies the amount of funds, resources, and people needed to accomplish the project's tasks.

- The project has a well-defined purpose and has a defined and realistic timeline.

- There is a basis for evaluating progress and success.

- There is a means for communicating results to stakeholders.

Writing Strategies

- Know the problem you are trying to address.

- Are other organizations/people addressing this problem? If so, what have you learned from their work, and how does this project relate to theirs?

- Will there be collaboration or duplication of tasks or goals?

- What is the principal strategy for resolving the problem, and why is this better than other approaches?

- What resources are needed to implement the initiative?

- What is a realistic timeline for action?

- How will you measure and evaluate project outcomes?

Preparing a Budget

- Review grant guidelines on requirements expected for the budget

- Identify allowable costs

- Develop budget categories

- Estimate costs

- Personnel costs vs non-personnel costs

- Indirect costs

- Draft budget narrative

- Review and revise

- Finalize budget

- Monitor and manage budget (if awarded grant)

Matching Funds Documentation

April 8, 2022

Secretary Peter Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

Re: City of Decatur's commitment to matching funds for the City of Decatur's Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Program Fiscal Year 2022 Grant Application.

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of the City of Decatur, I certify the City's commitment to provide $3,070,000, to match the requested $16,000,000 in RAISE FY22 Grant.

Thank you for your consideration of this application.

I can be reached at (217) 424-2702 for further questions.

Respectfully,

Gregg D. Zientara
City Treasurer & Director of Finance
217 450 2226
gzientara@decaturil.gov

- On company letterhead

- Signed by an authorized representative

- Quantify support

  - Cash

  - In-Kind

- Source and timeframe of funds

- Alternative documentation

  - Award letter

  - Contract

Tips for Preparing Applications

- Follow the suggested formatting guidelines.

- Structure your narrative according to the selection criteria (make it easy for peer reviewers to evaluate your proposal).

- Pay careful attention to the language that you use - be clear, concise, and specific.

- Justify your funding request according to the proposed project activities and check all budget figures for accuracy (keep in mind that costs must be both reasonable and necessary).

- Proofread your proposal.

- Seek feedback and review from others inside and outside your organization.

More Tips!

- Allow plenty of time to prepare. Approximately 25-40 hours are needed for federal applications.

- Read the application package in its entirety.

- If you have any questions, contact the competition manager or refer to the application package.

  - The competition manager is the key program contact responsible for answering inquiries regarding the application process and overseeing all aspects of the grant program through the award phase.

Final Thoughts

- Do NOT wait until the last minute to submit your application.

- If you are submitting an e-application, know the specific deadline date and time.

- Have a fresh pair of eyes read your proposal before submission.

- Ensure all required forms and signatures are included in your application.

Questions

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