



Before Applying for a Federal Grant

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Why a grant?

According to grants.gov, “A grant is a way the government funds your ideas and projects to provide public services and stimulate the economy.” Grants are given for specific assistance-based programs and projects; before applying for a grant, you should have a clear research-based understanding of a problem and how you could solve it with the proper funding. Activities must result in measurable outcomes that benefit more than one individual.

Who is considering applying for the grant?

Although there are many funding opportunities, few of them are available to individuals, and none of them are available for personal financial assistance. Grants.gov states, “We have all seen them; late night infomercials, websites and reference guides, advertising millions in free money.” Don't believe the hype! Most grantors, including federal agencies, award grants to nonprofit organizations, educational groups, government agencies or other legal entities, such as co-ops. Grantors usually prefer organizations with a proven track record. If you have a great idea about solving a problem in your community and are not aligned with an established organization, consider seeking out an existing group to partner with for the application.

Where can I find grant opportunities?

Grants.gov is a common website for federal agencies to post discretionary funding opportunities and for grantees to find and apply for them. Most federal grants are listed on www.grants.gov. In addition to their grant listings, the website has a “learn grants” tab that contains valuable, relevant information about the grant process, and it is a process. Individual states and their agencies, nongovernment agencies, and private foundations are additional sources for funding. In addition to searching online for grants yourself, there are grant search engines, including a Listserv on grants.gov, that identify grants you may be interested in and will notify you by email on a regular basis of available grants.

I've found a grant. What now?

Carefully read the Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) or Request for Proposal (RFP) to make sure that you are eligible to apply for the grant and that you can competently fulfill the reporting or other grant requirements.

How do I get the money?

Federal and other large grantor agency procedures can be a major hurdle for many small or newly formed nonprofits. While some agencies will fund programs up-front, most grants are typically reimbursable grants; you must expend the funds from your own coffers and then submit reports, forms and receipts

to be repaid for your expenses. Some grants allow reimbursement as soon as the funds are spent, while others require you wait until the end of the reporting period, either quarterly, bi-annually or annually. Funds are reimbursed electronically, so your organization must have a bank or credit union account that will accept electronic fund transfers.

What is DUNS?

A non-federal entity is required to have a DUNS number in order to apply for, receive and report on a federal award. A DUNS number is a nine-digit number similar to a Social Security number. It uniquely identifies your organization with the federal government. It requires a taxpayer identification number (TIN) from the IRS and information on your organization. The number is assigned by Dun & Bradstreet, Inc. and may be obtained from the company by telephone (866-705-5711) or online at <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>. There is no charge to apply for this number.



What is SAM?

SAM stands for the System for Award Management. Your newly acquired DUNS number is used to register with SAM. Once you are registered with SAM, the system allows grants.gov to verify your identity, validates the information on your application, and

encrypts the data, which it then shares with the federal agencies' finance offices to facilitate paperless payments through electronic funds transfers in order to reimburse grant expenditures. It also pre-fills the organizational information on your grant applications, saving time when you submit multiple applications. Creating an account is free and can be done at:

<https://www.sam.gov/portal/SAM/##>.

As part of the registration process, you must decide who will be your E-Business Point of Contact (EBiz POC). This individual will oversee all activities for the organization with grants.gov and approve the AOR. The AOR is the Authorized Organization Representative or representatives who are allowed to submit grants on behalf of the organization. Grants.gov says, "the EBiz POC is likely to be your organization's chief financial officer or authorizing official, and there can only be one EBiz POC per DUNS number." After registration, you will be assigned a MPIN or Marketing Partner Identification Number. SAM registration must remain active for all of the grant period. The EBiz POC should log into SAM at least once every 13 months (395 days) to prevent the account from becoming inactive.

Grants.gov registration

After obtaining a DUNS number and signing up with SAM, for federal grants, at least one individual must register as an organization applicant with grants.gov, where you will create a user name and password. Following your registration, grants.gov will notify your EBiz POC to ensure you are authorized to apply and will ask them to confirm

you as an AOR. Once confirmed, you are then able to apply for federal grants.

How long will this take?

In review, before applying for a federal grant, you must:

- 1) have a DUNS number,
- 2) create an account with SAM and
- 3) register to do business with grants.gov.

This is true whether you are applying through grants.gov or directly with the federal granting agency. These registrations should be done far in advance of applying for a grant in order to ensure a timely application process. A DUNS number usually is available within one to two business days but may take up to 30 days to receive. A five-day expedited process is available for a fee of \$50. After registering with SAM, it can take up to seven to 10 days to process and for the application to become active.

For tips on writing a successful proposal, see the companion publication, FS-17-12, "*Tips for a Successful Federal Grant Proposal.*"

References

Agricultural Marketing Service. (2016) *Grant Programs Overview*.

Grants.gov. Accessed 07/28/17.

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