

# FUNDED



GRANTS OFFICE

## GRANTS OFFICE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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World-class grants intelligence, at your fingertips

# Politics at Play

## What the FY2011 Budget & Appropriations Mean for Grantseekers

BY CHRISTOPHER HAIGHT, GRAND DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT

Many grantseeking organizations can attest all too well to former Speaker of the House Tip O'Neil's famous quote that "all politics is local." For many public agencies, nonprofit organizations, schools, and other organizations, the decisions made at the state and federal levels extend far beyond their immediate influence or control, yet ultimately impact them the most. The annual budget and appropriations processes at the Federal level exemplify O'Neil's point, as the work conducted with respect to each significantly affects the opportunities, challenges, and prospects for local grantseekers.

The Federal budget process commences once the President submits his budget for the coming Fiscal Year (FY) in early-February. For example, in February of 2011, the President will submit his budget proposal for FY2012, which begins October 1, 2011. Although this proposal is not binding and has no actual affect on fiscal policy, it is an important starting point for budget negotiations and provides insight into the administration's priorities.

The budget is then scored by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), which is the nonpartisan budgetary authority for Congress that estimates the costs and benefits for each piece of legislation. Once these two pieces are available, the House and Senate Budget Committees begin work

on the Federal Budget. The traditional deadline for an official Budget Resolution from Congress is April 15.

The next sequential step involves the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, which set specific funding levels for the various programs and activities of the Federal Government. Typically, twelve appropriations bills are considered each year and, after going through Committee, must be passed by both the House and Senate before the President can sign them into law.

In 2010, this process was never realized as other legislative priorities and partisan gridlock prevented action in passing the annual Budget Resolution and appropriations bills. The most recent effort to pass a \$1.2 trillion omnibus spending bill, an appropriations bill that combines multiple appropriations bills into one, failed after Republicans announced new objections to the inclusion of billions in earmark funding (albeit billions they themselves had a part in requesting). Instead, Congress passed its third Continuing Resolution (CR) of the year, which is a short-term spending bill that authorizes the government to continue spending at the previous year's levels. With the CR due to expire in March, the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress will be charged with tending to

*Continued on page 2*

### *Q&A on Politics, Federal Spending, and Grants*

**1) We're a nonpartisan nonprofit, why should we care what happens in politics? Congressional Representatives and Senators are the only ones capable of authorizing and funding grant programs at the Federal level. Tracking political developments - especially in regards to appropriations - can help inform your funding strategy.**

**2) When will we know the final appropriations for 2011? Currently, all spending is being maintained at 2010 levels (*not* including Recovery Act sums). The current Continuing Resolution in effect expires in March, at which time a new CR or appropriations bills will be necessary to keep the government functioning.**

**3) What happens in the meantime? Government agencies still release Requests for Proposals (RFPs) that open grant competitions. For many of these, you will likely see estimated range of awards with a note that final decisions are dependent on total appropriations made available.**



*Budget, Continued...*

the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress's unfinished business by passing either individual appropriations bills, an omnibus appropriations bill, or a final Continuing Resolution to extend funding to FY2012.

Deciphering exactly what this means for grantseekers isn't exactly clear, as besides being local, politics is also very messy. However, there are some key points that will result as a failure of the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress to pass annual Federal funding.

Firstly, Recovery Act programs that may have had support for continuation under normal Fiscal Year funding appear unlikely to be revived in the short-term. For example, the most recent iteration of the omnibus appropriations bill included \$550 million for the Recovery Act-funded education reform grant program, Race to

the Top. This amount was already well below the \$1.2 billion sought by the Obama administration and now its prospects are even bleaker. Because the CR was passed instead, Race to the Top receives no funding as it was not a part of regular FY2010 appropriations. This further increases the likelihood the program will not be reconstituted, despite its success in inspiring reforms at the state level.

Secondly, any new grant programs authorized under other legislation will not receive the funds to put them into action. The most prominent example of this is the Affordable Care Act (ACA), known more commonly as Health Care Reform. The ACA contained authorizations for more grant programs than any other piece of legislation passed by the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress. With a sweeping majority in the House and

emboldened minority in the Senate, Republicans have already talked of gutting the ACA by refusing to fund its implementation if they cannot outright repeal it.

For now, grantseekers should anticipate the ability to apply for the annual programs that have a long history of support. Popular examples include the Justice Assistance Grants (JAG), Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG), and Enhancing Education Through Technology (EETT). It is more likely that we see these programs maintained in future appropriations and the newest program facing cuts or elimination. Grantseekers should also be aware that as new grant solicitations are announced, they will likely not be able to provide concrete estimates of funds available - making it crucial you develop a comprehensive grant strategy for 2011.

## Fire Prevention & Safety Grants Now Available!

*Early in the new year comes the availability of \$35 million through the Fire Prevention and Safety (FP&S) Grant. These grants are administered each year by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).*

*FP&S offers grants to support activities in two categories: (1) activities designed to reach high-risk target groups and mitigate incidences of death and injuries caused by fire and fire-related hazards ("Fire Prevention and Safety Activity") and (2) research and development activities aimed at improving firefighter safety ("Firefighter Safety Research and Development Activity").*

*The application deadline date is February 4, 2011 with additional information available at [www.firegrants.info](http://www.firegrants.info) and [www.firegrantsupport.com](http://www.firegrantsupport.com).*



*Want to view our latest grants news and alerts? Follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/grantsoffice](http://www.twitter.com/grantsoffice).*

## SOLIDIFYING APPLICATIONS

BY VINCE SIRAGUSA, GRANTS DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT

As the new calendar and fiscal year 2011 begins, many grant programs are being reminded that they are only as valuable as the actual projects they support. Those consistently lacking results often find their government appropriations dwindle, if not dry up entirely. With everyone positioning their stake for a finite, albeit ever-growing level of federal funding, many grantmaking agencies demonstrate their value by leveraging investments in various projects that represent not only immediate community benefits but also the greatest potential for a long-term return on investment. Grantseekers therefore have an opportunity in the new year to strike while the iron is hot. Savvy applicants will likely consider one of the following project components in their FY2011 applications.

To various degrees, grant makers have always targeted applications built around creative ideas, measurable results and project deployment that holds the greatest potential for sustainability. You may have noticed in the last few years that proposals built on collaborative efforts seem almost prerequisite for many grant funders. It is reasonable to expect that a partnership between various project-oriented organizations will facilitate the greatest return on investment. Resources can be shared, purchase duplication can be avoided, and lessons learned can be mirrored by other collaborators.

In much the same way that the value of partnerships should be respected, applicants should not overlook other important training-related details and

questions. How will you extract the greatest benefit from the procured solutions? How will training for that equipment be structured and recorded? Who will be targeted for training and how often? Who will perform the training and how will people know when they are adequately trained? These are some of the issues that should be addressed in a narrative that will help put the grant maker's mind at ease.

Many of us are comforted to know that most job duties allow for a certain degree of "hands on learning" and "learning as you go." While it's difficult to argue this long-term training model as unsuccessful, be aware that grant funders might not be as patient with their timelines. With the average grant performance period of 12-24 months, grant makers want their support to impact the recipient and associated community in real time. Inasmuch as "shovel ready projects" have become buzzwords now part of the grant community's vernacular, training that allows for comprehensive and immediate project deployment continues to warrant additional consideration as well.

Perhaps train-the-trainer methodologies will continue to gain relevance in addressing training needs. This process refers to training specifically tailored for a person who will in turn train others on equipment, software, and educational

materials. While this method is nothing new for some, consider relating the benefits of this process and citing its relevance in your own grant projects. The training efficiency and flexibility offered through this process may help your project and application stand apart from the others.

To explore this point further, we can look at a program like FEMA's Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG). The guidance document states "DHS has determined that the most benefit is derived from training that is instructor-led and hands-on and that leads to a nationally sanctioned or State certification. Therefore, applications focused on national or State certification training, including train-the-trainer initiatives, will receive a higher competitive rating."

Not every program is as clear as AFG with their stated focus on certifications and training. However, as operational needs evolve and process improvements are identified, so too must we explore the possibility of solidifying training methods in response to those needs. Bringing new ideas and innovative approaches to project deployment and training should only help you garner grant support in 2011 and beyond.

***"...Grant makers have always targeted applications built around creative ideas, measurable results, and project deployment that holds the greatest potential for sustainability."***



## Reading Between The Lines: What Exactly Can The Grant Funds Be Used For?

BY CHRIS LAPAGE, GRANTS DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT

A big federal agency just released a new grant that is accompanied by a guidance document filled with 150 pages of content. The guidance document contains all the granular details on the grant program, including instructions for development of the proposal and submission. The guidance document may be referred to by several names, including request for proposals (RFP), request for applications (RFA), and Notice of Funds Availability (NOFA). Based on a quick review of the information, you are considering developing a proposal under this recently released grant program. Considering the size of the guidance document, one would assume that the items and services eligible for purchase with the grant funding are clearly delineated.

In particular, you are looking to fund video conferencing endpoints in order to conduct education/training sessions as well as deliver telehealth services. How do you find out if these expenses are allowable under the grant program? Guidance documents typically have a couple of sections that are an obvious starting point for finding the answer to this question: *Allowable Expenses* (or *Eligible Costs*) and *Funding Restrictions*. If the agency has created a carefully planned program and a well-written guidance document, end-user devices and equipment will be listed either as an allowable expense or a funding restriction.

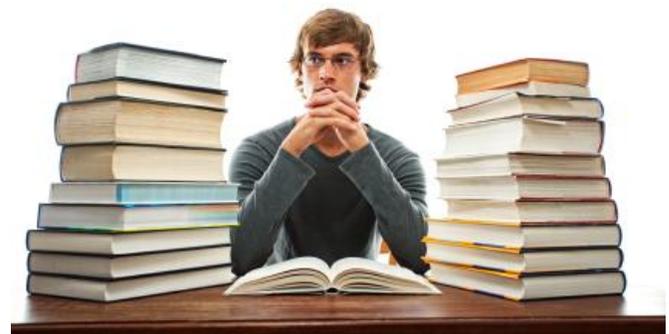
Unfortunately, even when a list of eligible costs are present, often times the guidance document includes a statement indicating that "all other costs consistent with the purposes of this program, as determined by the Secretary [head of the agency administering the program] are allowable."

In some instances, only funding restrictions are catalogued while specific allowable expenses are mentioned in the context of the generic aforementioned statement. In a few cases, the grant guidance will not mention anything specific and simply limit the amount of technology (hardware and software) that can be included in the request (e.g.- no more than 20% of requested funds can be used to purchase hardware and software).

Considering this ambiguity, how can you be sure that the

items/services that you are requesting from a grantor are allowed under the program?

First and foremost, read over the guidance document in its entirety. You may find the answer you are looking for buried in a section of the guidance document that would not make intuitive sense. For example, the reporting requirements section of the grant guidance may contain a statement like "For all video conferencing hardware and software purchased with grant funds, the recipient must document the percentage that these items are used for the project outlined in the proposal." It can be implied from this statement that end-user video conferencing equipment is an allowable expense under the grant program.



If a careful review of the guidance document doesn't turn up an answer, then you should contact the agency staff member assigned to the particular grant program. The contact information will be included in the grant guidance. The staff member may put you on the right track, regurgitate ambiguous details from the grant guidance, or not respond whatsoever. Many federal agencies will post a *Frequently Asked Questions* (FAQs) section on their website to address common themes that may have been left out of the grant guidance or feedback has indicated as ambiguous. If the program is annual in nature, you can research past recipients and reach out to determine if they were able to include the items you want to include. ...Continued on page 5



Reading, continued...

Finally, re-examine the priorities and goals that the grant program intends to address. Unless an item is specifically disallowed, it should be fundable insofar as you can make a strong case in the *Budget Justification* section of the proposal for how it is essential to the project in meeting the goals of the grant program. For example, if the goal of the project is to address health care access issues in rural communities, a strong justification can be made for the use of video conferencing technology in delivering telehealth services to overcome transportation and health professional shortage issues associated with remote areas. In this particular instance, the video conferencing equipment is an essential ingredient to the parameters of the project and the justification is obvious. If the items that you are seeking to include in the budget are ancillary to the project (i.e. non-essential and the justification is a stretch) and the guidance document is ambiguous, then you are better off not to include them considering that it could derail the entire proposal.

In conclusion, while the guidance document is the most important piece you will need in developing a grant proposal, you will be frustrated if you think everything will be addressed in a straightforward manner. When deciding on the specific items/services to include in the funding request, you need to know how to read between the lines and provide solid justification.

## NEED HELP READING BETWEEN THE LINES ON YOUR NEXT GRANT?

Let Grants Office, LLC help your organization research and apply to grant opportunities. We'll work with you to identify the best grant possibilities for your project and help you through proposal development. In the past 12 months, we've assisted our clients win over **\$200 million in grants!**

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The easy, affordable way for nonprofits to get expert research and consultation throughout the year.
- **Grantwriting Services**  
Need help writing your grant? Hire our grants development team to help you through the entire grantwriting and application process.

To get started, contact Meaghan Provost at [mprovost@grantsoffice.com](mailto:mprovost@grantsoffice.com).

## IT'S ALL ABOUT TIMING

Answering your question on planning a timeline for grants

**When is the right time to start researching grant opportunities?** All the time! Your grants development strategy should be an ongoing endeavor. Grants are available throughout the year. Many grants, especially at the Federal level, take extensive planning and project development in order to apply. If you cannot afford to hire your own Grants Manager, try to sign-up on key email lists, such as grants.gov. You can also contact Grants Office to learn about our successful *Get in the Game™* program (see box above).

**What is the typical timeline for a grant?** The timeline varies significantly by the type of funder. The Federal government typically releases a Request for Proposals (RFP) 4 to 6 weeks before the deadline. From the deadline, it can take up to another 6 months before the final grant decisions are announced. State and local funders, such as foundations, usually operate more quickly - often times announcing grants in as little as a month after the deadline.

**How long does it take to write a grant?** For most grants, it's best to start at least 3 weeks before the deadline. This gives your organization enough time to gather input and support from key stakeholders, draft a budget, and go through multiple iterations of your narrative and responses to application questions. The editing process is crucial in order to make sure you have fully addressed every aspect of the grant program; therefore it's important to budget enough time in the grantwriting process!

**What if I miss a deadline to apply?** Unfortunately, a missed deadline will exclude you from this year's grant competition. However, there are many alternative strategies for funding! In the short term, you can re-purpose many of your project details for another grant proposal. In the long term, sign up for email notifications for when the grant opportunity becomes available next year and you'll be well-prepared to apply.



## E-What? Learning More About E-Rate

BY CHRISTOPHER HAIGHT,  
GRANTS DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT



A crucial factor in providing a first-rate 21<sup>st</sup> century education for our students is to ensure they have access to 21<sup>st</sup> century technologies. While technology is certainly no panacea to the education conundrums confronting the United States, it is becoming ever more important that students today know how to use technology effectively as they progress through higher levels of academia and into the workforce.

The Schools and Libraries program, more commonly referred to as E-Rate, is a prime example of how the government assists schools acquire access to technologies many of us now take for granted. Administered by the Universal Services Administration Company (USAC), E-Rate provides tiered-discounts based on poverty levels and location to schools in order to acquire internet access and

telecommunications services. The program has been enormously successful in increasing the availability of affordable internet services to schools, fostering the expansion of new educational opportunities such as distance learning.

Each year, nonprofit K-12 schools and libraries (both public and private) are eligible to apply to USAC to receive discounts that can range from 25% up to 90%. The application process is lengthier than the formulation of a typical grant proposal, including an outline of what services the school or library is seeking, development and approval of a written technology plan, hosting of an open, unbiased bidding period during which vendors may submit bids for services, and the final approval for funding.

This year, USAC also sought to expand

the traditional confines of the E-Rate program in order to make it more responsive to new educational challenges and demands. One such change included the opening of a new competition to allow for extending E-Rate services to off-site locations. Traditionally, E-Rate services could only be used at the actual educational facilities of a school or library. The new Fiscal Year 2011 competition, EDU2011, allowed schools or libraries to extend services to additional facilities - such as dormitories or additional community-based facilities. Although the application period has since closed, it will be important to watch the results of these early recipients to determine if USAC continues an annual competition or incorporates off-site mobile learning more broadly into the general E-Rate program.

USAC also extended the previous year's waiver on the requirement E-Rate funds be used only for purely education purposes. E-Rate recipients may continue to use funds for services beyond the traditional school day, for example, and make services available for community use as well. This recognition of schools as more than mere educational facilities and as community-based anchor organizations is a

...Continued on page 7

### NEW HIGHLIGHTS TO E-RATE IN 2011:

- *EDU2011: Initiates pilot program to allow for expansion of offsite internet access (i.e. for mobile computing devices). Interested entities will have to submit a separate application to be considered, in addition to the standard E-Rate forms and procedures.*
- *Extends previous waiver, permitting schools to grant access to internet for community-use during out-of-school hours.*
- *Funding is increased to \$2,270,250 and subsequently indexed to inflation as measured by Consumer Price Index (CPI).*



*E-Rate, Continued...*

common priority for the Obama administration, and can be seen in its grant programs such as Promise Neighborhoods (which uses education reform as the basis for supporting social services in an effort to address community-wide challenges that affect education).

A third important improvement to the E-Rate program is the new funding determination. Previously set at a flat rate of about \$2 billion each year, the total funding will now be increased to \$2.27 billion and then indexed to inflation to ensure the program maintains its purchasing power.

The E-Rate program is a crucial component of the nation's overall strategy to improve education. At its core, E-Rate is about equipping students with the tools they need to succeed without burdening local budgets even more. Interested schools and libraries should act now to begin the new E-Rate application, with the filing window open between January 11, 2011 and March 24, 2011.

## GRANTS OFFICE INDUSTRY PARTNER SERVICES

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We know where to find them.*

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To learn more about these and other services, including pricing, please contact:

Kathleen Kelly  
Manager of Business  
Development  
(585) 473-1430, ext. 105  
[kkelly@grantsoffice.com](mailto:kkelly@grantsoffice.com)

### Grants Office Helpdesk Support Services

Let the experts at Grants Office help your sales force and clients identify relevant federal, state, and/or foundation grant funding opportunities to purchase your solutions. Grants support includes:

- ◆ Research and Consultation. We'll research grant funding sources for each client project presented to the Helpdesk, summarize the information in a custom *Research Report*, and join your representative and client on a *consultative call* to review the report, answer questions, and discuss the next steps your client can take toward pursuing the grants outlined in the report.
- ◆ Access to our UPstream™ Online Knowledge Base (Per-User contracts only)
- ◆ Tracking and reporting of Helpdesk usage (Per-User contracts only)

### E-Rate Helpdesk Support Services

Let the experts at Grants Office guide you and your K-12 clients through the intricacies of the E-Rate Program, a \$2.27 billion source of telecommunication and Internet funding for schools and libraries. E-Rate support includes:

- ◆ Client eligibility determination, including cost allocation
- ◆ E-Rate discount levels for individual locations
- ◆ E-Rate checklist to guide clients through each step of the process
- ◆ Participation in conference calls with your representative and client to answer specific questions about the E-Rate program and how to pursue it
- ◆ Identification of potential sources of supplemental funding, as necessary.

### Co-Branded Marketing Materials

Let us research and incorporate custom grant or E-Rate information into your sales and marketing messages. Examples include:

- ◆ Grants Guide - What are grants and how to use them to drive incremental revenue
- ◆ Action Plans - How to pursue relevant grant programs
- ◆ Grants on the Go - Summary of relevant grant programs
- ◆ Program Matrix - Top funding sources for your solution sets and/or verticals
- ◆ E-Rate Whitepaper and Guide (for K-12 Applicants or for Service Providers)
- ◆ Podcast or Video-on-demand



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### February 2011 Webcasts

- **February 8, 2011:** Funding Community Policing through COPS Program
- **February 15, 2011:** Grants with a Campus Safety Component, *sponsored by Dell*
- **February 16, 2011:** Show Me the Money: The 2011 Healthcare Funding Landscape, *sponsored by Philips*

### March 2011 Webcasts

- **March 1, 2011:** Funding Interoperable Communications, *sponsored by Tait Radio*
- **March 10, 2011:** Connected Classrooms: Distance Learning & Telemedicine, *sponsored by Cisco*
- **March 29, 2011:** Higher Ed Collaboration with Department of Labor, *sponsored by Dell*
- **March 21, 2011:** Distance Learning & Telemedicine Grant Program for Healthcare initiatives, *sponsored by Cisco*

**Register for upcoming or view previous webcasts at <http://grantsofficeevents.webex.com>**

### April 2011 Webcasts

- **April 5, 2011:** Distance Learning & Telemedicine
- **April 14, 2011:** Justice Assistance Grants (JAG) & Justice Earmarks, *sponsored by Cisco*
- **April 19, 2011:** Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG)
- **April 26, 2011:** Energy Efficiency Funding for Municipalities

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