

 A Grants Office Publication

FUNDED

MAY 2019 | VOLUME 9 | ISSUE 2

FOUNDATION SEEKING FOR GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Is It Worth My Time?

Deciding Whether you Should
Pursue a Particular Grant

Pick Yourself Up & Try Again

What to do after your Grant
Request has Been Denied

PLUS! SUMMARY INFO ON 4 EXCITING
GRANT OPPORTUNITIES!

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6



14



ON THE COVER

In this issue, we offer advice for those local government agencies with hard to finance projects falling outside the usual scope of the state or federal grant funding landscape. We provide tips and tricks for pursuing private funders, as well as strategies on how to make proposed local government initiatives more appealing to this diverse-interest base.

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IN THIS ISSUE

05 FUNDED PROJECT HIGHLIGHT
SNAP Process and Technology
Improvement Grants (PTIG)

06 FEATURE
Deciding Whether you Should
Pursue a Particular Grant

09 FUNDED PROJECT HIGHLIGHT
Comprehensive Opioid Abuse Program (COAP)

10 COVER STORY
Foundation Seeking for Government Agencies

14 FEATURE
What to do after your Grant
Request has Been Denied

19 FUNDED PROJECT HIGHLIGHT
EPSCoR Research Infrastructure
Improvement Program Track-1

19 GRANTS EDUCATION CORNER
Getting To Know Grants.gov Workspace

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

DEAR READERS,

In this issue of FUNDED, we take a step back from the moment-to-moment coverage of the changing grants landscape to review some of the foundational tools of grantseeking... including tips on grantseeking from foundations.

In this age of easy information and powerful search tools, it's often the case that we have too many grant prospects rather than too few, and sorting out the best use of your grantseeking resources can be a challenge. To help address that problem, Chris LaPage starts us off with strategies for evaluating the fit of a particular grant to your agency's needs and your vision for your project.

Ashley Schultz then guides us through the challenging process of obtaining foundation grants for government projects. It can happen, though it may require some collaborative project development. You may also find that you can leverage the connections you've made and data you've created through this process to go after bigger federal grants later on.

Not to be outdone, Elizabeth Evans provides a go-to strategy for failing up when your proposal is rejected – an experience that every grantwriter encounters, usually fairly soon into their grantwriting journey. Taking action after a rejection not only keeps your proposal alive, but it can also help forge valuable long-term relationships with funders that pay dividends well into the future.

Be sure to check out the grantscasts our team will be presenting on, or review some of the replays of past events on topics you find interesting. As always, if you have comments, feedback, corrections, or topics for future issues, feel free to drop me a line at: mpaddock@grantsoffice.com.

I hope you enjoy this issue of FUNDED as much as we've enjoyed bringing it to you!

Sincerely,
Michael Paddock
Editor and Publisher,
FUNDED



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SNAP PROCESS AND TECHNOLOGY IMPROVEMENT GRANTS (PTIG)

PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

SUMMARY

SNAP Process and Technology Improvement Grants (STIG) support efforts by State agencies and their community-based and faith-based partners to develop and implement projects that focus on improving the quality and efficiency of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) operations and processes. In FY 2019, priority consideration will be given to projects that address:

- Improve and/or Modernize Notices: Proposals targeted towards this priority area will aim to improve and/or modernize client notices.
- Improve Customer Service: Proposals targeted towards customer service will implement projects that improve the client's experience.
- Improve the Application and Interview Process: Proposals targeted towards this priority area should focus on training Eligibility Workers to enhance conversations that occur during household interviews.

FNS welcomes other projects that support these priorities. FNS also highly encourages applicants to propose innovative ideas to solve both common and unique problems. Proposed activities should clearly align to these priorities/objectives in the Activities/Indicators Tracker in Section V.

SNAP Process and Technology Improvement Grants do not support projects that devote more than 25 percent of the requested grant funds to outreach activities, such as informational materials, pure application assistance, screening/pre-qualifying applicants, or whose purpose is to attract SNAP applicants. Further, funds are explicitly for new projects and shall not be used for the ongoing cost of carrying out an existing project.

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible applicants are the 53 State agencies that administer SNAP; State or local governments; Agencies providing health or welfare services; Public health or educational entities; and Private nonprofit entities such as community-based or faith-based organizations, food banks, or other emergency feeding organizations.

DEADLINE

Applications are to be submitted by June 10, 2019. A similar deadline is anticipated annually.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/fy2019-snap-process-and-technology-improvement-grants>



SNAP PROCESS AND TECHNOLOGY IMPROVEMENT GRANTS (PTIG)

FUNDED PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Atlantic County will invest grant funds in improvements to its phone management system by employing robo-calls, SMS, Interactive Voice Response (IVR), and skills based phone routing to provide more self-service options and better customer service to its clients. These improvements are designed to significantly enhance the County's ability to capture key metrics in accordance with BPR principles, automate tasks where possible for self-service information, and ultimately reduce churn. Additionally, temporary staff members will be employed to take calls as existing staff currently tasked with processing and filing using a paper based case management system is retrained.

FUNDED ORGANIZATION

Atlantic County, New Jersey

PROJECT TITLE

SNAP Program Office Upgrade

AMOUNT FUNDED

\$746,131

FOR MORE AWARD INFORMATION

<https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/snap/FY17-PTIG%20Grantees-Award-Summaries.pdf>

ORGANIZATION WEBSITE

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/fy2019-snap-process-and-technology-improvement-grants>



Is It Worth My Time?

DECIDING WHETHER YOU SHOULD PURSUE A PARTICULAR GRANT

By Chris LaPage

When developing a grant proposal, it often feels like at every turn there is a decision to make or an obstacle to overcome. However, a critical first question that many seekers fail to properly consider (but is perhaps the most important decision in the entire process) is – whether we should pursue this specific grant program or foundation funder at all? Beginners may not have the tools to adequately evaluate the “fit” of a given funding opportunity, while some more experienced individuals are instead guided by a “throw it at the wall and see what sticks approach”. Truly competitive grant seekers, though, are the ones that are intentional. Being deliberate and selective in the grant programs and funders that your organization pursues allows you to maximize your most precious commodity: your time. It also decreases the odds of rejection and risk of “giving up on grants completely” after multiple failed attempts. With that in mind, we encourage you to consider the following before you decided to take the plunge on a given grant opportunity.

SQUARE PEGS DO NOT FIT INTO ROUND HOLES

First and foremost, you must be sure that your project is a fit for the grant program and meets the priorities laid out by the funder. Too often folks are so eager to secure funds that they build a specific project around a funding opportunity instead of finding the right grant for your existing organizational priorities and key projects. This approach can lead to situations where the project may be a fit for the grant program, but it no longer matches the needs and capabilities of the applicant organization. Said simply, don't try to put square pegs in round holes. Once you are sure you have a funding opportunity in line with your organizational mission and project ideas, you can tailor the project and proposal to meet the expectations of the funder. Anywhere from one-third to half of all grant applicants are rejected because their projects do not align with the priorities of the grant program to which they applied. Thus, ensuring project fit goes a long way towards making your proposal competitive.

COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

Would you take a job where you make \$200 per week, but it costs you \$250 for transportation and related expenses? Of course not. Nobody would sign up for such a scenario where it costs you \$50 more to work every week than you are earning! And yet, there are times when grant writers are tasked with finding external funding sources with no guidelines or parameters attached. So, they seek out every little pot of money they can find and put in an application on behalf of their organization. The problem is that sometimes grant programs may actually “cost” the applicant organization more than they realize. Consider the effort required to submit a proposal, implement the project, and comply with any back-end reporting that is required if awarded. At the very least, your organization should conduct a bare-bones cost-benefit analysis on any grant application you are undertaking. When factoring in the cost of your time to develop the proposal, the effort of your colleagues that are contributing, and the staff costs associated with the reporting requirements, consider: is that \$3,000 grant a boon or net loss for our organization? And don't forget to think about indirect costs that may be associated with the effort, such as fringe benefits, gas and electricity, and office space that may not be directly reimbursable through the grant program.

TIME COMMITMENT

Grantseeking requires an honest assessment of your time, workload, and general organizational capacity. Federal grants can be quite complex and will require coordination among colleagues to track down information from various sources, both internal and external to the organization. There may be several potential grant programs open at the same time and people will stretch themselves to make sure they get a proposal in to every funder. In my experience, I would rather folks take the time and energy to knock one application out of the park rather than submitting four subpar proposals to different funders. In other words, don't bite off more than you can chew. Many grant programs are cyclical and if you don't have the time to submit a quality proposal this round, then use the extended runway to prepare an application for their next cycle. If there are several grants open simultaneously where you can position competitive projects, then you could consider hiring an external consultant to assist with the grant writing. Just don't forget to evaluate the costs of outside help as part of your cost-benefit analysis.

DUE DILIGENCE

Finally, there is no substitute for rolling up your sleeves and doing your due diligence on the grant program and the funder. Leverage the grant program guidance document, funder website, program contacts, as well as all other available resources to find out as much as possible about the funder and the grant opportunity ahead of time. This can only help your chances for success. One of the most important things you can do is check the past awardees of the specific grant program, or the funder in general. Make sure they are funding similar organizations to your own. For instance, a foundation may say they support education generally, but when you look at the list of awards, all of the awards have been made to institutions of higher education. If you are a K-12 school district, this may not be the best funding option to consider. Similarly, a large federal grant may be set up to primarily benefit safety in K-12 schools, but awards are made primarily to the local police departments that will be helping secure the school rather than the districts themselves. Program contacts may be able to give you a heads up on whether they like your project before you even apply, especially in the foundation grant space. In some cases, they may even be able to tell you how many applications they receive on average each cycle versus the number of awards granted to help you assess your chances of success.



IN CONCLUSION...

The key to successful grantseeking is to be strategic. Before diving head first into a grant application, it is vital that you consider whether it is even worth your time. Evaluating project fit, funding levels, time commitment, and past funding history will go a long way in ensuring you are putting your best foot forward. More than that, you can rest assured that WHEN you win the award, the payoff will be worth the time, energy and costs put into the application and reporting.



COAP ODMAP STATEWIDE EXPANSION & RESPONSE GRANT PROGRAM

PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

SUMMARY

The ODMAP Statewide Expansion and Response Grant is designed to support statewide adoption of ODMAP as well as support the development of highly coordinated public safety, behavioral health, and public health responses to the data, focusing on “hot spots” and trends of concern. Competitive applications will include their most populated counties in the proposed project. For many states and territories, this is most efficiently accomplished by feeding data from the state-level EMS data collection system through an API, but applicants are welcome to offer a solution that makes sense in the context of the current state/territory data environment.

States, territories, regions, or communities with existing data tracking systems that capture fatal and nonfatal overdose data can apply to serve as demonstration sites by agreeing to make existing data available through ODMAP. Applicants that have partially or fully implemented ODMAP are encouraged to apply. Applicants proposing implementations that make use of an API to feed existing data will be prioritized in the review process. If using an API, transmission delays from the local agency to the state database may occur. Applicants with time delays of 14 days or less from overdose will be prioritized.

Applicants must commit to implementing the following activities:

1. Adopt ODMAP statewide. For purposes of this solicitation, statewide adoption is defined as capturing fatal and nonfatal overdoses identified by first responders for at least 80 percent of the counties in the state in ODMAP. The most competitive applicants will demonstrate their capacity to achieve statewide adoption within 6 months of the grant award.

2. Establish public safety, public health, and behavioral health partnerships in a minimum of five communities located in the state. The primary goal of this solicitation is to support cross-sector partnerships that are structured in such a way that local communities can make meaningful use of the data collected through ODMAP to deploy interventions targeting specific geographic areas or high-risk individuals. BJA and the CDC are explicitly looking for applicants that propose to actively use the data.

3. Support the selected local communities in identifying ways to use the data collected through ODMAP to deploy public health, behavioral health, and public safety interventions to address specific geographic areas or high-risk individuals. As noted previously, the primary goal of this solicitation is to support cross-sector partnerships that are structured in such a way that local communities can make meaningful use of the data collected through ODMAP to deploy interventions targeting specific geographic areas or high-risk individuals.

ELIGIBILITY

Applicants are limited to state agencies or territories. Applicants with existing data tracking systems that capture fatal and nonfatal overdose data can apply to serve as demonstration sites by agreeing to make existing data available through ODMAP. Applicants that have partially or fully implemented ODMAP are encouraged to apply.

DEADLINE

Applications are to be submitted by June 27, 2019.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

https://www.coapresources.org/Content/Documents/Funding/ODMAP_Statewide_Expansion_and_Response_Grant.pdf



COMPREHENSIVE OPIOID ABUSE PROGRAM (COAP)

FUNDED PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Division of Mental Health and Addiction (DMHA) will hire and train a Forensic Telemedicine Grant Coordinator to ensure that the grant goals will be met, including all aspects of coordination with the BJA TTA providers. The Grant Coordinator will provide daily oversight of the Indiana Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA): Telemedicine Grant and all activities related to the agreement operations including fiscal and personnel management, supervision and guidance to the high-risk community providing treatment services, preparing reports and overseeing the development of the project specific procedures and standards of practice. This grant is funded by the BJA for three years to expand prevention and education efforts while also promoting treatment and recovery for individuals with opioid use disorders. The position will be integral in building a solid foundation for sustaining an effective, integrated method for improved access to and quality of opioid treatment and recovery support service systems. This position will spend no less than 50% of their time dedicated to this project per week. The role will be housed within the Division of Mental Health and Addiction, reporting directly to the Forensic Treatment Service Program Manager. The Division intends to hire the role upon receipt of the award. It is the goal of this project to provide telemedicine in such a capacity that Fayette County, Indiana is able to reduce the frequency of opioid abuse.

FUNDED ORGANIZATION

Indiana Criminal Justice Institute

PROJECT TITLE

Technology-Assisted Treatment Expansion in Fayette County, IN

AMOUNT FUNDED

\$560,010

FOR MORE AWARD INFORMATION

<https://www.bja.gov/funding/Category-2-awards.pdf>

ORGANIZATION WEBSITE

https://www.bja.gov/ProgramDetails.aspx?Program_ID=72



FOUNDATION SEEKING FOR GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

By Ashley Schultz

As a Grant Funding Consultant for local government agencies, I spend most of my days focusing on funding streams that originate from taxes collected by the federal government. This includes both competitive solicitations hosted directly by federal agencies and formula programs distributed to individual state agencies as pass-through funding. As government giving tops \$600 billion in grants annually, these programs offer plenty of funding to keep the Grants Office team very busy!

From time to time, however, we see a project that doesn't nicely fit into a state or federal grant giving program. Perhaps a small city wants to add smart street lights and free public Wi-Fi to its downtown areas. Or a local parks department wants to improve security for outdoor gatherings and events. Or maybe a police department wants to purchase food, supplies, and a vehicle for a new K9 unit. Each of these projects can put forward a compelling need statement, assemble meaningful partnerships, and form a well-rounded budget - but they don't quite align with the state and federal funding streams we know and love. At this point in the grant-seeking process, I like to turn local government agencies towards regional family foundation and corporate foundation funding. Before the chorus of detractors and skeptics starts up, let me assure you that foundation dollars *can* be awarded to government groups!

All foundations and charitable trusts are required to submit grant award information to the IRS annually. Foundation Center makes these forms available for public view at: <http://foundationcenter.org/find-funding/990-finder>. Upon selecting an organization, search available documents for a page titled "Grants and Other Assistance to Organizations, Governments, and Individuals in the United States."

PRIVATE DOLLARS FOR PUBLIC AGENCIES

It is true that a vast majority of private foundations skip over government agencies when creating their criteria for giving. This decision is not necessarily because the board disagrees with a Mayor's politics, or because they don't appreciate the local fire department. More often than not, the choice to not distribute to government groups is due to some complex tax argument offered by the foundation's accountant. But there are numerous exceptions to this rule – and finding that needle in a haystack funder can be worthwhile for a small government initiative, particularly if there are no viable state or federal funding sources available.

The quickest way to determine if a foundation funder supports municipal projects is to check their eligibility page. If the agency does not list this information – or does not have an active program website – consider calling the program manager for more details. You may also review recent 990 tax forms submitted by the foundation for more insight. These documents are freely available online and list recipients of all grants for each foundation in the past calendar year. Beyond confirming eligibility, 990 forms are useful in learning other details about the foundation - including the types of projects supported and the typical range in dollar amounts awarded to each agency.

Below are a few of our favorite private funders who regularly support government initiatives:

- **Bloomberg Philanthropies: Mayor Challenge:** This program provides funding and expert guidance for cities to develop bold, innovative ideas to solve their most urgent problems. Interested applicants should contact the foundation to learn more about in-person “Idea Accelerator” workshops, which are designed to help city leaders strengthen idea development by drawing upon existing resources in the community.
- **Lowe’s Community Partners Grant Program:** This program provides funding for projects deemed high-need in communities where Lowes operates. This includes building renovations, grounds improvements, technology upgrades, and safety improvements. Applications are accepted in the Spring and Fall, annually.
- **State Farm Foundation, Good Neighbor Citizenship® Grants:** This program provides funding to government agencies in two main program areas: (1) Community Safety Grants; and (2) Community Development Grants. Grant applications for 2020 will be accepted September 1, 2019 through October 31, 2019.
- **Target Community Engagement Fund (CEF):** This program provides funding to public safety agencies located within 100-miles of a Target store or distribution center to support crime prevention projects, programs, and events. Interested applicants should contact their nearest Target store or distribution center’s Assets Protection team to get started.
- **Wells Fargo Corporate Giving:** This program supports activities that benefit low- to moderate-income families, while bolstering projects that keep the communities strong, diverse, and vibrant. Application deadlines vary by State. Interested applicants should contact their nearest Wells Fargo location for more information.

Don’t stop your search for private funding with this list. More grant dollars are available from corporate entities, regional foundations, and family trusts. To learn about private funding in particular areas, the Grants Office team uses websites such as Foundation Center (<https://fconline.foundationcenter.org/>) to search through financial resources available in specific counties and/or metropolitan areas. *NOTE: Foundation Center is a paid, subscription-based website, but local colleges or community libraries often provide free access to the public.*



Funding through state and federal government sources can be a great resource for projects that have the rapt attention of Congress - from reducing public safety impacts of the opioid crisis to increasing access to transit and housing for low income residents. Government projects that fall outside the scope of these traditional funding streams often face an uphill battle in securing grant funding.

LEVERAGING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS FOR EVEN MORE FUNDING

If a private funder is supportive of your project idea but unable to gift funds directly to a government agency, consider adding a nonprofit organization to your grants team. Agencies with a 501(c)3 designation are eligible for most all foundation funding sources - thus ensuring that the gift satisfies any concerns held by that pesky accountant hung up on tax codes.

Grant partnerships between governments and nonprofit organizations usually operate in one of two fashions:

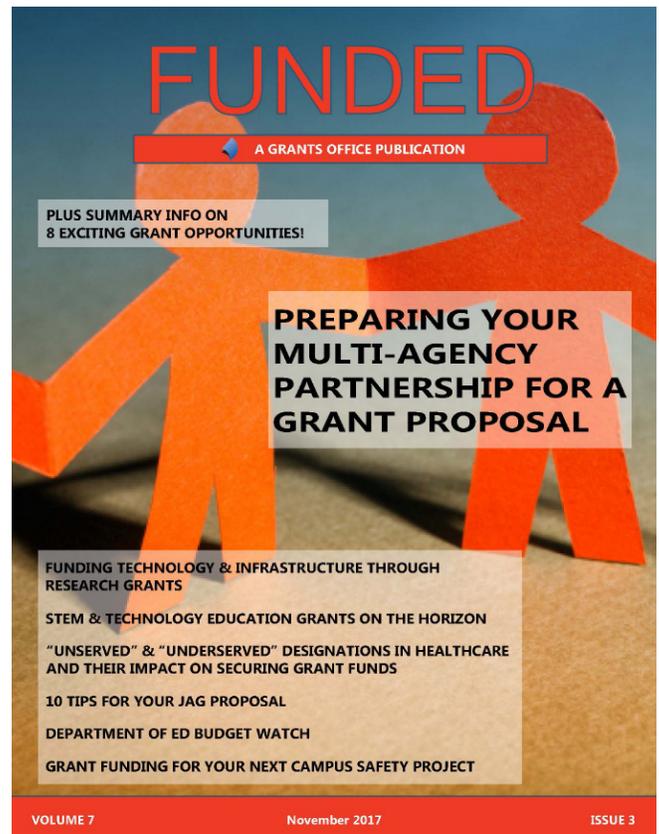
- The nonprofit agency acts as a pass-through agent for the government. This type of partnership exists solely to exchange money between groups. Most, if not all, program activities are handled by the government applicant - thus requiring minimal effort from the 501(c)3 partner; or
- The nonprofit agency and government group host the project as a joint venture. In this type of partnership, both parties assume responsibility for program activities - potentially sharing sites, staff, and program funding to fully execute their proposed idea.

In both instances, evidence of your grant partnership should be made immediately clear to the private funder. Include a brief description of your collaboration with any initial outreach to the funder, then expand upon these details if a full proposal is requested. When necessary, draw up a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to further clarify each partner's specific list of duties in relation to your grant fundable project.

Want more information on how to form a partnership for your next grant proposal? Check out our recent FUNDED feature article for valuable tips at: <http://grantsoffice.com/Portals/0/funded/issues/FUNDEDNov2017.pdf>

CONCLUSION

So the next time project planning comes to a grinding halt due to a lack of state or federal funding - consider adjusting focus to private funders! These agencies are often more than willing to support projects in communities where their board members and employees live and work. What's more, corporate foundations and family trusts often have easier application requirements than their public grant funder counterparts and rolling deadlines. It's a win-win! We definitely encourage you to consider how the team could make these dollars a critical part of your local government's grant seeking efforts next year.



PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

Charter Schools Program (CSP): GRANTS TO DEVELOPERS FOR THE OPENING OF NEW CHARTER SCHOOLS

SUMMARY

The major purposes of the Charter School Program (CSP) are to expand opportunities for all students, particularly traditionally underserved students, to attend charter schools and meet challenging State academic standards; provide financial assistance for the planning, program design, and initial implementation of public charter schools; increase the number of high-quality charter schools available to students across the United States; evaluate the impact of charter schools on student achievement, families, and communities; share best practices between charter schools and other public schools; encourage States to provide facilities support to charter schools; and support efforts to strengthen the charter school authorizing process.

CSP—Grants to Charter School Developers for the Replication and Expansion of High-Quality Charter Schools (Developer Grants) are intended to support charter schools that serve early childhood, elementary school, or secondary school students by providing grant funds to eligible applicants for the replication and expansion of high-quality charter schools.

ELIGIBILITY

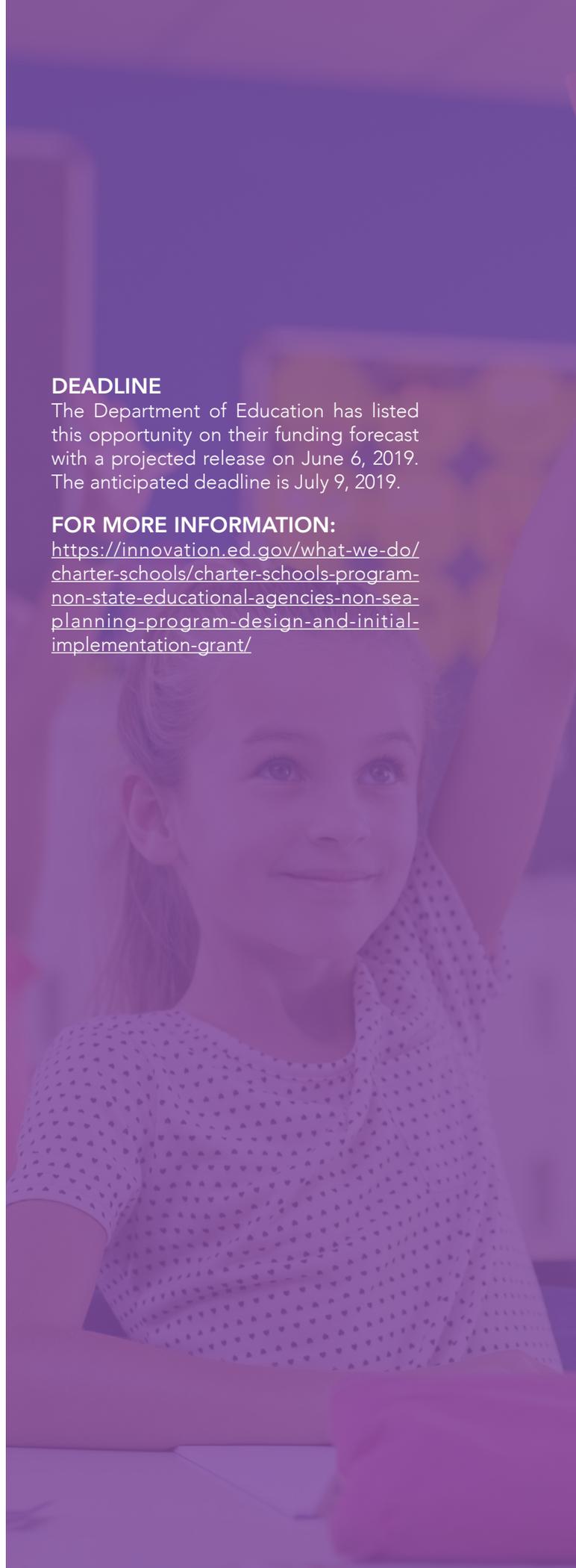
Eligible applicants are developers that have applied to an authorized public chartering authority to operate a charter school and have provided adequate and timely notice to that authority. Further, eligibility for a grant under this competition is limited to charter school developers in States that do not currently have a CSP State Entity grant under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Eligibility in a State with a CSP State Educational Agency (SEA) grant under the ESEA, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) is limited to charter school developers applying for grants for the replication and expansion of high-quality charter schools and only if the Department has not approved an amendment to the SEA's approved grant application authorizing the SEA to make subgrants for replication and expansion.

DEADLINE

The Department of Education has listed this opportunity on their funding forecast with a projected release on June 6, 2019. The anticipated deadline is July 9, 2019.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

<https://innovation.ed.gov/what-we-do/charter-schools/charter-schools-program-non-state-educational-agencies-non-sea-planning-program-design-and-initial-implementation-grant/>





Pick Yourself Up & Try Again

WHAT TO DO AFTER YOUR GRANT REQUEST HAS BEEN DENIED

By Elizabeth Evans

So your grant proposal got rejected? Ooof, that hurts. But just like when you were younger and learning how to ride a bike: it's time to pick yourself up, dust off those knees, and try again! Any seasoned grant professional will tell you that rejection is part of life. And while the data for predicting proposal acceptance rates is spotty, at best, many grant seeking organizations set an arbitrary acceptance rate goal for their measure of grant seeking success.

According to 2004 survey data of nearly 900 foundation grantmakers, the more funding a foundation provided in grants and the higher the number of applications received, the less likely it was to fund 50% or more of the applicants. For instance, of respondents with less than 50 proposals to review, only 38% funded at least half of the applicants. Respondents with more than 1000 proposals to review, in contrast, funded at least half of all applicants 11% of the time. The findings, detailed in Foundation Center's "Foundation Growth and Giving Estimates, 2004 Preview" are more than 15 years old but the last, most comprehensive look giving trends across all foundation grant makers in the US. Other numbers more recently bandied about in grant writing professional groups (although lacking in longitudinal evidence) include "one-third", or "one in 10" as the average foundation acceptance rate.

Interested in learning more from the "Foundation Growth and Giving Estimates, 2004 Preview" report? Check out: <http://foundationcenter.issuelab.org/resource/foundations-today-growth-and-giving-estimates-2005-edition.html>

The state and federal funding landscape can often be even more competitive. Depending on the grant opportunity as many as 45% (School Violence Prevention Program Grants, Department of Justice) or as little as 13% (Humanities Initiatives at Community Colleges Grant Program, National Endowment for the Humanities) of applicants might be awarded. The funding agency offering the opportunity may also impact the level of competition. For instance, the HHS recently noted on a webcast that only 6% of proposals were accepted agency-wide during the 2018 funding cycle. The point is, is that rejection is common in the grant seeking world. Yet, this doesn't mean you shouldn't keep trying!

So what can you do when you receive that rejection letter? Read on for some of our best tips to help you get back on the horse and try again.

THANK THE FUNDER

Demonstrating gratitude isn't something that should only be done while courting a funder or if you have been awarded a grant. It might feel awkward, but this is something that you should absolutely do even if they say no! Your response to their denial needn't be lengthy, but acknowledgment that you received the notice and understand that they faced a difficult decision shows the funder a gracious, professional correspondence that they won't see from most (if any) of the other rejected applicants. Saying thank you also leaves the funder with a positive impression of your last exchange rather than the emotionally draining task of having to have say "sorry." Done well, this small but vital step can leave the door open for future conversations (i.e. relationship building) with the funder.

Dear [PROGRAM CONTACT]:

On behalf of [YOUR ORGANIZATION'S NAME], I want to thank you for the opportunity to apply to [GRANT OPPORTUNITY NAME]. We appreciate the time that you and others at [FUNDING ORGANIZATION'S NAME] took to consider our request and understand that you faced many difficult decisions. I will plan to follow up with you soon to explore ways our organization can improve its proposal and better align to your organization's needs in the future.

Warm regards and thank you again,
[YOUR NAME]

ASK FOR THE REVIEWER'S COMMENTS IF THEY HAVEN'T ALREADY BEEN SHARED

Speaking of leaving the door open to future discussions, one of those early conversations should be to request the reviewer's comments for your submission. For grant programs provided via public dollars (i.e. from state or federal agencies) your proposal's comments may be sent automatically with the notice of award status. If this is not the case, however, first contact the program officer for these records. If she or he is unable to help, you can instead file a request under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) to gain access to these documents. Note that not all funders will maintain or be willing to share these records, though. Privately sourced grant dollars (i.e. those from foundations) are not subject to FOIA regulations and are under no obligation to provide this information. That said, you should still ask the foundation funder if they are willing to share any feedback about your proposal or project idea.

Don't consider the rejection a failure, but instead an opportunity to learn. If the funder doesn't have written proposal feedback, but is willing to chat about why your

proposal was not selected, consider asking some of these three questions to start: (1) Were there any specific weaknesses that you noted with our idea? (2) Is there anything we can do to more adequately address your concerns? (3) May we resubmit this proposal for the next funding cycle? Let the conversation flow organically from there, and reflect upon their responses. Understanding why your proposal was rejected enables you to address those problematic aspects and improve your project for the next application.

Finally, remember, upon receipt of proposal feedback to again thank the funder for being willing to help your organization grow and improve the project idea. This is not a time to complain or debate their rationale for rejection; you are gathering information. Put yourself in the program officer's shoes and understand that they have to say "No" as often as, if not more than, they get to say "Yes" to applicants. Show them courtesy so that, again, you are leaving them with a positive impression of your organization.

STAY ON THE FUNDER'S RADAR

For state and federal grant funders, a pre-existing relationship with an applicant doesn't necessarily mean that the organization is any more or less likely to be awarded a grant. The same is not true when it comes to foundation grant funders though. In fact, for many foundations they may feel more comfortable making an award to an organization they have already been in contact with compared to someone who submitted a proposal out of the blue. Even so, while a pre-existing relationship with a funder is not essential for grant seeking success (with state, federal, or foundation opportunities), it certainly cannot hurt to try to build a rapport.

If you didn't already know the program officer prior to applying, now is the time to make a connection. Confirm that the funder does allow for applicants to contact them, and if so, never, ever waste an opportunity to develop your relationship. Even if the program officer doesn't have the final say over which proposals are or are not funded, he or she can still be a valuable resource (and potentially advocate) for your organization internally within the funding agency. Make a point to check in with the funder periodically throughout the year, not just when you have a question or other proposal development need. If it doesn't conflict with the funding organization's code of ethics, consider providing them tickets to your next event. Alternatively, add them to the mailing list to receive a copy of your organization's annual report.

Initiating small but thoughtful touchpoints throughout the year can endear you to a funder and demonstrate that they mean more to you than just a potential source of funding. This relationship building might even lead to introductions to other funders as well! If the funder wasn't able to accept your proposal this round, but has supported your organization in the past – one question you might posit is: Do you know of any other funders that might be interested in our project?

TRY AGAIN

This is the most important step. When funders deny your proposal, it could have been for any number of reasons: too many strong applicants with proposals that scored higher, a required attachment was missing from the proposal package, your program evaluation plan was lacking adequate detail, etc. However, just because your proposal was denied this time, doesn't mean that the funder doesn't like your organization or idea. Unless expressly stated by the funder (likely because you proposed a project far outside the bounds of their interests), don't think of the rejection letter as a "No", but instead a "Not yet."

Take some time to ruminate on the reviewer's comments or program officer's feedback. If you're having trouble understanding their critiques or if you weren't able to access these materials – share the proposal and original application instructions with a trusted friend or family member who is willing to give you some tough love. Its very easy to lose the forest through the trees when working towards something day in and day out, but getting an outside set of eyes that is unfamiliar with the project can help point out areas of weakness or other aspects that funders might find concerning. Don't wait until the next proposal window opens to begin addressing challenge areas in your proposal either. The work you do now might be enough to strengthen and resubmit the idea to a different funder with a closer application window!





REMEMBER THAT IT'S A NUMBERS GAME

While there are a number of grant seeking aspects that you can anticipate and prepare for – such as expected deadlines, priorities, even project award amounts – there is one element that is completely outside of your (and the funder's) control: the number of applications received. As the total funding available and the number of expected awards to be granted are fixed numbers, the key variable that has the largest impact on a grant program's "competitiveness" is the number of organizations who have thrown their hat into the ring for consideration. For instance, if a funder has 100 awards to grant and gets only 200 applicants, they could feasibly fund 50% of all projects. However, if the next year they receive 1000 applications for that same funding bucket of 100 available awards, they can now only realistically make grants to 10% of applicants. While variance in the number of applications received for a newer grant opportunity is common, know that established grant programs should have historical data available about the number of applications received compared to the amount of grants made. This data can often help set expectations for the likelihood of success when you go to reapply.

ALL OF THIS SAID...

because as grant professionals, we know not to put all of our proverbial eggs in one basket – one proposal rejection isn't going to be the death of our project idea. A "go-wide" strategy actually increases the likelihood of a project or organization receiving an award. In fact, "The 2019 State of Grantseeking Survey Report" shows that applying to at least three grant opportunities per year significantly increased the frequency of proposal acceptance. For organizations that only submitted one proposal per year, 25% were not funded. However, of organizations that submitted between 3 and 5 proposals per year only 6% were unsuccessful. This success rate was even higher for organizations that were more active. Only 2% of organizations that submit 6 or more proposals annually didn't win at least one award. So just because your proposal wasn't accepted this time, remember: try and try again – you're only increasing your odds for success!

Curious to hear what other grant applicants had to say about their recent efforts? Check out "The 2019 State of Grantseeking Survey Report": <https://grantstation.com/state-of-grantseeking>

EPSCoR RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM TRACK-1

PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

SUMMARY

The mission of EPSCoR is to advance excellence in science and engineering research and education in order to achieve sustainable increases in research, education, and training capacity and competitiveness that will enable EPSCoR jurisdictions to have increased engagement in areas supported by NSF.

The Research and Education Program is the central piece of the RII Track-1 proposal. The intellectual merit and broader impacts of the proposed activities provide the rationale for the requested infrastructure investments that, in turn, enhance the overall research capacity and competitiveness of the jurisdiction. These proposals are unique in their jurisdiction-wide scope and complexity; in their integration of individual researchers, institutions, and organizations; and in their role in developing the diverse, well-prepared, STEM-enabled workforce necessary to sustain research competitiveness and catalyze economic development.

Each jurisdiction must establish and utilize an EPSCoR steering committee that works closely with leaders in academe, government, and the private sector. The committee will identify potential R&D improvement strategies and activities that are consistent with the S&T Plan and most likely to advance the development of a nationally competitive academic R&D capability. The strategies for academic R&D capability are expected to promote activities in support of EPSCoR program goals.

Successful proposals provide sound platforms and opportunities for enhanced academic R&D competitiveness of a jurisdiction's colleges and universities, including implementation mechanisms that have a high probability of realizing stated goals and objectives and pragmatic plans for generation of sustained non-EPSCoR support. It is expected that the infrastructure improvement strategies will enable targeted research areas to become viable for securing new sources of future non-EPSCoR funding.

ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility is based on two primary considerations:

- A jurisdiction's demonstrated commitment to develop its research foundation and to improve the quality of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) research conducted at its universities and colleges,
- A jurisdiction's most recent three-year history of research funds awarded by NSF relative to the Foundation's total research budget for that same period.

DEADLINE

Letters of Intent are to be submitted by July 2, 2019. Applications are to be submitted by July 30, 2019. Similar deadlines are anticipated annually.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=503429



EPSCOR RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM TRACK-1

FUNDED PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The initiative for Materials Assembly and Design Excellence in South Carolina (MADE in SC) promises to break new ground in advanced materials design. The project will combine computational and experimental methods to design materials with specific desirable properties. The project will advance fundamental knowledge of complex materials while simultaneously working toward the development of products with valuable commercial applications, such as improved lasers, water treatment, and regenerative medicine. The project will make major investments in South Carolina's research capacity, acquiring state-of-the-art instrumentation and computing capabilities and hiring seventeen new faculty researchers at institutions across the state. In parallel with its research agenda, MADE in SC will also work to improve Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education capacity in South Carolina through college curriculum improvements and professional development activities for high school teachers.

FUNDED ORGANIZATION

University of South Carolina at Columbia

PROJECT TITLE

Materials Assembly and Design Excellence in South Carolina: MADE in SC

AMOUNT FUNDED

\$8,267,809

FOR MORE AWARD INFORMATION

https://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/showAward?AWD_ID=1655740&HistoricalAwards=false

ORGANIZATION WEBSITE

<https://www.sc.edu/>

GRANTS EDUCATION CORNER

GETTING TO KNOW GRANTS.GOV WORKSPACE

In early 2018, Grants.gov launched Workspace. Workspace is a shared, online environment to collaboratively complete and submit federal grant applications. It provides a standardized way to apply for federal grants and many of the 26 federal grantmaking agencies use Workspace as their main method for accepting grant proposals. Haven't had a chance to familiarize yourself with Workspace yet? We've compiled our top 3 favorite tutorial resources here:

Workspace Overview Website: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html>

Becoming a Workspace Wizard Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=0G3LPyksICg

Workspace FAQs: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-faqs.html>

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UPCOMING WEBCASTS:

Securely Mobilize State & Local Public Safety Officers

Date & Time: Tuesday June 4th, 2pm ET

Sponsored by: VMware, Carahsoft

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Find more replays at: <http://www.grantsoffice.info/webcasts.aspx>



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