

# Grants Guide for New York's Fourth Congressional District



*The Office of US Rep. Carolyn McCarthy*

# Facts About Federal Grants

- ❑ Federal grants are not benefits or entitlements to individuals
- ❑ Most federal funding goes to state and local governments, which in turn sub-award to local entities such as nonprofit organizations
- ❑ There are over 1,000 programs administered by 54 federal agencies available to states, municipalities, and organizations
- ❑ Funds are awarded through a statutory formula or a competitive process
- ❑ Formula grants are usually awarded to states or cities on a noncompetitive basis. Formula grants are usually based on an area's population, poverty, and housing statistics
- ❑ Competitive grant proposals are evaluated to determine which applicants have the potential to meet and exceed the program requirements specified in the grant announcement
- ❑ Federal grants are made available throughout the year
- ❑ Word of funding approval is announced three to nine months following the application deadline

# Who is Eligible to Apply for Federal Grants?

- Governments
  - State Governments
  - Local Governments
  - City of Township Governments
  - Federally recognized Native American Tribal Governments
  - Territorial Governments
  
- Educational Institutions
  - Independent School Districts
  - Public and Private Institutions of Higher Education
  
- Public Housing Authorities
  
- Nonprofit Organizations
  
- Individuals (Student Pell Grants)
  
- Small Businesses to start of expand (generally loans, not grants)

# Types of Federal Grants

- Discretionary or Project Grant
  - For specific purposes
  - Competitive
  - Fixed amount of time and for a specific service
  - Year-to-year availability is not guaranteed
  
- Formula Grants: allocation to states based on standardized formulas such as population, unemployment, other demographics
  - Non-Competitive
  
- Block Grants
  - Funding for broad governmental functions into a single program
  - Allocated by formula
  - State and local recipients decide best use of money
  - Examples: Community Development Block Grants, Social Services Block Grants, Local Law Enforcement Block Grants

# Finding Federal Grants

## ❑ Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA)

[www.cfda.gov](http://www.cfda.gov)

The CFDA is published twice a year by the General Services Administration. CFDA describes over 1,000 federal grants and non-financial aid programs executed by the federal government's departments and agencies. CFDA helps users identify programs meeting their specific funding needs to improve coordination and communication between the federal government and state and local grant applicants.

Searching programs by keywords is suggested for first time users, although the site does allow browsing by subject, federal department or agency, or recipient categories to identify specific programs.

## ❑ Grants.gov

[www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov)

Federal agencies and departments are required to post grant opportunities and notices on grants.gov. Grants.gov posts funding notices from over 1,000 federal grant programs and provides a uniform application process for all federal grant opportunities.

# Finding Federal Grants

## □ U.S. State and Local Gateway

[http://www.usa.gov/Government/State\\_Local.shtml](http://www.usa.gov/Government/State_Local.shtml)

USA.gov gives state and local governments easy access to federal government information.

The site includes federal partnership links for states, city management, counties, legislatures, governors, cities and mayors.

## □ Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy's Website

[www.carolynmccarthy.house.gov](http://www.carolynmccarthy.house.gov)

The Grants Resources area of my website provides information about grant opportunities and updates from federal departments and agencies.

I also distribute a Grant E-newsletter every other week. This E-newsletter features new grant opportunities, and also highlights organizations within the 4<sup>th</sup> Congressional District that have recently received funding from a federal agency.

# How My Office Can Help

- Provide notification of grant announcements and requests for proposals suiting your organizations funding needs
- Review grant proposals and provide tips to develop strategies for pursuing federal, state, corporate, and private foundation grants
- Provide a letter of support for your application
- Track submitted grant proposals and requests

# Tips for Preparing a Grant Proposal

- ❑ **Follow Directions!!!** The most common reason a proposal is rejected is failure to follow the grant guidelines provided by the grant making agency or organization
- ❑ Address all project elements mentioned in the grant announcement and program guidelines
- ❑ Explain the goals and objectives of your request in specific terms. Use clear, concise language. Avoid rhetoric and jargon. Include details such as how you will recruit staff, select work sites, reach those needing help, etc. Include a timeline and benchmarks for completing important phases of the project. Define the measureable outcomes you seek to achieve.
- ❑ Explain why this project is needed in your community. Use examples and statistics to demonstrate this need. Testimonials from the private sector and those benefitting directly from the project are effective.
- ❑ Indicate other funding sources. Grants are awarded to projects that will continue once the grant funding expires. Strong financial support from third parties indicates the project will be sustainable.

# Tips for Preparing a Grant Proposal

- ❑ Focus on the needs of those the project serves, not the needs of the organization facilitating the project.
- ❑ Anticipate challenges. Explain how potential barriers to the projects success will be addressed and overcome.
- ❑ Double check your budget proposal numbers. An inaccurate or unrealistic budget proposal hurts your credibility with potential funding sources. A budget proposal must address all of the projects objectives and plans
- ❑ Describe a process of evaluation to measure the success of the project. Define the measurement objectives in quantitative terms.
- ❑ Be consistent. Make sure terminology and objectives remain the same throughout the proposal
- ❑ PROOFREAD, PROOFREAD, PROOFREAD! Errors in grammar and spelling have doomed many worthy grant proposals.

# Components of a Successful Grant Proposal

- ❑ Executive Summary: Brief summary of the proposed project in the form of a cover letter at the beginning of the proposal. Best if written after the proposal is developed.
- ❑ Introduction: Include biographies of key staff, organization goals, philosophy, history, success stories, other funding sources, and information establishing the organization's credibility and legitimacy relating to the objectives of the grant maker.
- ❑ Statement of need: Focus on issues the grant will address and why these issues are important to your community. The statement should include the purpose of the proposal, direct beneficiaries, others indirectly affected, current methods used to address the problem, sustainability strategies, and a plan for solving the problem. Include data about the issues causing the problem in your community. Examples and statistics are effective methods for demonstrating the need for the grant.
- ❑ Sustainability : Detail a strategy for funding the project once the grant expires and describe other resources necessary to ensure the success of the project

# Components of a Successful Grant Proposal

□ Budget Proposal: Justify all project expenses and be consistent with the proposal narrative. Include salaries of project staff, workspace and equipment, and insurance costs. Be realistic in your cost estimates.

Prepare the budget according to what you believe will be needed to accomplish the work. Remember, budgets are your best projections of what the work will cost at the moment you prepare the proposal.

□ Evaluation: The evaluation should answer the following questions: How will you know when your project objectives will be achieved? What methods will be used to reach these conclusions? Will you conduct the evaluation or hire an independent evaluator.

Your method for evaluating outcomes will demonstrate your understanding of the differences between project activities and objectives, thus giving your project greater credibility in the eyes of proposal reviewers. The expected outcomes of the project should be measured quantitatively. Keep the evaluation process flexible in case it needs revision at some point during the project.

# Before You Submit Your Proposal

- Find a third party to review the proposal for clarity and errors. Many reviewers will disregard a proposal at the sight of an error.
- It is always a good idea to have a personal contact with the program specialist listed in the grant application guidelines. The specialist is the one person who knows exactly what the agency is looking for in regards to grant applications.
- Make sure the proposal is presented professionally and in accordance with the grant application guidelines. An attractively presented application package will make a good first impression with reviewers.
- Make sure forms are signed by the appropriate officials of your organization. A missing or misplaced signature can disqualify your proposal from consideration.
- Allow enough time and postage when mailing your proposal and make sure the application package is addressed to the parties specified in the application guidelines.
- CONTACT MY OFFICE! I am more than happy to support funding requests

# After Submitting Your Proposal

- ❑ Prepare to wait three to nine months for a decision on whether your proposal was accepted
- ❑ Should your application be accepted, be prepared to adhere to regulations regarding how you can draw funds. You may be required to establish an accounting system to meet federal standards on submitting periodic reports on how grants are spent.
- ❑ Should your proposal be rejected, learn from the experience. Contact the program specialist to ask for specific comments on why your proposal was not accepted. This constructive criticism will increase your chances of receiving a grant the next time you apply. In many cases, proposals are turned down simply due to an abundance of qualified applicants

# Private Grant Resources

Occasionally, a grant request is better suited by a private or corporate foundation. Here are a few online resources for finding foundations:

☐ The Foundation Center: <http://foundationcenter.org/>

The Foundation Center provides information on all aspects of grant seeking including information on hundreds of philanthropic organizations, guidelines for preparing grant proposals, and links to other useful websites.

The Long Island Community Foundation: <http://www.licf.org/>

The Foundation supports efforts starting, changing, or accomplishing specific and concrete objectives addressing the needs of those disadvantaged, economically or otherwise.

The New York Community Trust: <http://www.nycommunitytrust.org/>

Established in 1924, the Trust distributes millions to charitable organizations throughout the world with a particular focus on New York City, Long Island, and Westchester County. The trust offers grants in four areas: Arts, Education, and the Humanities; Children, Youth and Families; Community Development and Environment; and Health and People with Special Needs.

# Tips for Applying for Private and Corporate Grants

- Learn as much as possible about the grant making organization before applying.
- Make sure your request falls within the organizations priorities and philosophy.
- Request a copy of the foundation's annual report and review a listing of its recent grant awards. Make sure your request "fits" with its giving philosophy.
- Many grant making organizations require a letter of introduction or intent before inviting formal grant requests. Find out an organizations guidelines before preparing a formal proposal.
- Never "drop-in" on a grant making organization and request a meeting. Call to make an appointment before approaching a grants officer.

Please don't hesitate to contact my staff with any questions:

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Good Luck!