

# FUNDED

NOV 2024 | VOLUME 14 | ISSUE 4



## **Congressionally Directed Spending: Where are the Funds Going and How are They Being Used?**

Also: A look at the OMB's Uniform Guidance, tips for drafting a strong budget justification, a guide to Digitization grants, funding opportunities for special education, cybersecurity, rural areas, and more!



# In This Issue

Stay One Step Ahead: Grant Research Tools You Should Be Using.....	4
K-12 Special Education Funding: A Balancing Act of Federal, State, and Private Sources .....	6
ETMMID: Stepping-up Technology Implementation.....	8
Comparative Analysis of the Canada Growth Fund and the Inflation Reduction Act .....	9
A Practical Guide to Digitization Grants .....	11
Congressionally Directed Spending: Where are the Funds Going and How are They Being Used? .....	13
Congressionally Directed Spending .....	24
The Ins and Outs of the OMB’s Uniform Guidance .....	25
The FCC’s Schools and Libraries Cybersecurity Pilot Program .....	28
Funding Physical and Cyber Security Needs for Nonprofit Organizations .....	29
Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) .....	30
Invited to Apply: What it Means for Federal Grants .....	31
An Overview of Healthcare Funding in Rural Areas .....	32
Tips for Drafting a Strong Grant Proposal Budget Justification .....	33
Building an Intentionally SMART & Technology-Rich Project for Grant Seeking.....	36

# Letter From the Editor

We begin this issue of FUNDED with a helpful article and an exciting pre-announcement. The article by **Marc Smithers** provides a tech-savvy approach to searching for funding opportunities using free and readily available tools. The article also mentions an exciting **new platform for grant research and proposal management** that Grants Office will be launching in January 2025. More on the platform – including the official Launch Day and associated festivities – will be forthcoming in the weeks ahead.

Our cover story from **Liz Shay** provides an excellent update on congressionally directed spending, AKA earmarks, AKA pork-barrel spending. It was on, then it was off, and now it's back with a vengeance, and it's potentially worthwhile to include in your grants development planning for 2025 and beyond.

We've also included several timely articles that may be of interest to those of you from specific functional areas. For those in K-12, **Christina Fernandez's** article on special education funding for K-12 is a good example of that, as is **Sam Rawdon's** piece on the new FCC Schools and Libraries Pilot Program. For those in healthcare, **Amber Walker** has penned an update and overview of healthcare funding focused on the often underserved rural areas of the country. And for those in the nonprofit sector looking for cyber and physical security funding – sometimes hard to make a case for to foundation grantmakers - **Meghan Jacobsen** provides some specifics on the DHS Nonprofit Security Grant Program.

For everyone in the grants world, we've stocked this issue with articles that are broadly applicable in a wide variety of contexts as well. For those interested in technology funding, **Amanda Day** has provided a survey of the top grants for document digitization and archiving, while **Sandy Trowbridge** and **Shannon Day** have zoomed out even further with pin-to-your-wall-worthy articles on creating a strong budget justification and strategies for winning an invitation to apply to some of the most labyrinthine – but potentially lucrative – federal grant programs.

Add to that updates on what's happening in Canada and we've got an issue we're really proud to bring to you and may even be worth sharing with colleagues. It's digital, of course, so you can give it away as much as you'd like and still keep your own copy.

Be sure to check out the timely and informative **Grantscasts** our team will be presenting on or review 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](mailto:mpaddock@grantsoffice.com).

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

Sincerely,

*Michael Paddock*  
Editor and Publisher,  
FUNDED



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# Stay One Step Ahead: Grant Research Tools You Should Be Using

**Dr. Marc Smithers, Grants Development Associate**

One of the most disappointing moments in the life of a grant researcher is reading about grant awards for an opportunity that you never heard about but would have been a perfect fit for an organization's needs and the funding cycle is now closed. Even though it is impossible to stay on top of all of the opportunities available to organizations due to the sheer number of grantmaking organizations at the federal, state, and foundation levels, it is difficult for grant writers and researchers to ignore the sense that perhaps there is a better way to stay informed on these issues so that future opportunities do not slip through the cracks. To ease some of that frustration, here are three steps that those who work with grants can take to work smarter and not only stay updated on grant opportunities but also help build long-term funding pipelines by staying current on funding trends.

## BEGINNER LEVEL: SIGN-UP FOR LISTSERVS

The most direct and easiest way to keep up with grants that your organization may be interested in is to go directly to the departments and foundations that you are pursuing funding through and sign up for any email newsletters or listservs that they publish. Most grants professionals already sign up for Grants.gov alerts but fewer have identified specific sites or departments from which they also receive daily or weekly alerts. While alerts like Grants.gov give you a sense of current opportunities, signing up for news from the Department of Justice or your state's Department of Education not only alerts you to potential funding opportunities and their awards but can also give you a broader sense of funding trends and future investments that they may make. These sites will often publish press releases about the approval of bills that will eventually result in grant opportunities or stories of funded projects which can give your organization a sense of the kinds of programs that are being funded by the grantmaker, setting you up well for preparing a future proposal that aligns with the previous awards made by that funding organization. Identify a handful of state agencies or foundations that you may pursue funding through in the future and do a quick web search to see how you can receive regular updates from them directly to your email.

**JANUARY 2025**

**GRANTS OFFICE**  
empowering communities

## Grants Research & Proposal Management Platform

Join our  
**Community of Grantseekers**  
to join in the Launch Day festivities!

From  
Grants Office

## ADVANCED LEVEL: USING GOOGLE ALERTS TO TRACK WEB TRAFFIC

Once you are comfortable with basic listservs, a more advanced but still relatively easy way to automate some grant research tasks is by utilizing Google alerts. Instead of constantly going back and forth to Google to see if grant cycles have opened or if awards have been announced, a grant researcher can set up a Google Alert for a set of keywords that notifies you when a piece of news you are tracking makes its way onto the web. At [google.com/alerts](https://www.google.com/alerts), users can set up an alert for almost anything that they want to keep tabs on. If, for instance, you are waiting for the awards to be announced from the National Science Foundation, you can create an alert for the “National Science Foundation award” and have it emailed to you as soon as something is posted or as a daily digest. Users can get even more technical and create Boolean phrases that return results that fit even more specific criteria, like “National Science Foundation” AND “cybersecurity” OR “artificial intelligence.” Only results that include both the NSF and cybersecurity or artificial intelligence will be emailed to the user. You can even do site-specific updates by putting in the alert, “site:” and then the website you want to track. Whatever you choose to track, however, be sure to be as specific as possible so that you are only alerted to the most pertinent information. Your overall goal is to filter out as much noise as possible so that you are attuned to the opportunities that are most applicable to your organization’s needs.

## GENIUS LEVEL: USE BROWSER EXTENSIONS FOR SITE MONITORING

For professionals seeking even more precision and control, web browser extensions provide next-level monitoring for grant opportunities. Whether you use Firefox, Chrome, Opera, or any of the other myriad browsers available, you likely have various extensions installed to enhance your web browsing experience like ad-blockers or privacy screens. Web monitors like Distill or PageProbe are examples of site monitoring extensions that allow users to follow real-time changes to entire websites or just parts of a single web page without the need to visit the site. Some state departments, for instance, publish all of their grant opportunities on a single website but do not offer listservs or daily digests or these opportunities. Using a web monitoring browser extension can allow a user to identify parts of this website and get real-time updates via a desktop alert or email when parts of this site are changed, such as a deadline extension or a change to notice of funding opportunity guidance. Monitoring these sites eliminates some of the guesswork around these opportunities, particularly from smaller foundations or local government agencies.



With any tool, it is imperative that grant seekers exercise cyberawareness! Be sure to download or install only software from trusted or vetted sources onto your devices. Malicious actors can spoof or use email attachments, and extensions as a back door to your sensitive info. Make sure you exercise caution whenever utilizing these tools and that you also have robust cybersecurity solutions in place to protect your devices.

A grant professional should always be on the lookout for funding opportunities as they arise, but our time is limited. Through utilizing a few smart tools, the work of scouring the various opportunities throughout the federal, state, and foundation-level landscape can be a bit more manageable. Using the right tool can help grant professionals use their time most effectively by engaging more in the hard work of identifying the right opportunity and crafting the most competitive proposal.

## SUPER GENIUS LEVEL: GRANTS OFFICE’S NEW PLATFORM

Coming in January 2025, Grants Office will be launching a completely new grants research and proposal management platform. There will be multiple levels of access, including a free version with a robust suite of useful features, and paid options that will be indispensable for everyone involved in grantseeking. Stay tuned for more on this as we approach Launch Day in January.

# K-12 Special Education Funding: A Balancing Act of Federal, State, and Private Sources

**Christina Fernandez, Grants Development Consultant (K-12 Education)**

Special education funding in the United States continues to be a complex, evolving landscape shaped by decades of legislation, advocacy, and shifting priorities. Beginning with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, students with disabilities were guaranteed a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). This law prohibited discrimination based on disability and laid the groundwork for future legislation. By ensuring that students with disabilities had access to education and accommodations, the act marked a turning point in the public school system's approach to special education.

Building on this, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, later renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990, formalized the requirement that schools provide FAPE to students with disabilities and introduced the concept of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). The IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to more than 8 million (as of school year 2022-23) eligible infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities.<sup>1</sup> Today, annual funding levels vary widely throughout the country, depending on the priorities of the state. This article will provide an overview of what the public and private grant funding landscape looks like for special education and what we can expect to see in 2025 and beyond.

## FEDERAL FUNDING

IDEA continues to be the primary federal law governing special education. Through IDEA, there are two main funding buckets: Formula and Discretionary. Formula grants are allocated to states based on the amount of IDEA funding they received in FY 1999. If there is more money available for a given year compared to the previous year, additional funding is calculated based on

the state's total number of children (ages 3-21) with disabilities and the total number of children living in poverty. Formula funding to states must be passed down to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to help cover the cost of special education and related services, ensuring that schools can implement the requirements set out in IEPs. A portion of these grants also support early intervention services for children under the age of three who may be at risk of developmental delays. Moreover, Discretionary grants are awarded through a competitive process to state educational agencies, institutions of higher education, and other nonprofit organizations to support research, technology and media services, state personnel development, parent training, and information centers.<sup>2</sup> Typically, funding for these programs becomes available in the Spring with a deadline in the Summer.



Annual competitive federal grant programs such as Education Innovation and Research (EIR) and Educational Technology, Media, and Materials for Individuals with Disabilities Grant Program, can provide additional funding for projects serving students with disabilities.

While federal funding plays a significant role in supporting special education, it only covers a portion of the total costs. The federal government originally committed to funding 40% of average per-pupil spending to help cover expenses related to special education services, though, in practice the federal share is currently only at about 11%. This shortfall places additional pressure on state and local governments to fill in the funding gaps.

1. <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/about-idea/#IDEA-Purpose>

2. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep/programs.html>

## STATE FUNDING

State funding for special education varies dramatically, reflecting different legislative priorities, population needs, and approaches to funding allocations. According to the Education Commission of the States, there are 7 common funding mechanisms states generally use when funding special education.<sup>3</sup> Below are the three most common funding models states use:

- **Multiple Student or Single Student Weights Funding:** Most states use multiple student weight as their funding mechanism to account for students who might cost more to educate based on factors like severity of disability or resources needed. This ultimately leads to allocating more funds for students with greater needs. Other states use Single student Weight systems which provide funding for each student with a disability. Under this model, funding is weighted the same for each student regardless of needed resources.
- **Census-Based Funding:** In some states, it is assumed that each district has the same percentage of students with disabilities, rather than the actual number of students receiving services. This method can lead to underfunding in areas where disability rates are higher than anticipated.
- **Resource-Allocation Funding:** Under this model, the state distributes resources instead of dollars based on the number of students requiring special education services. For example, a state may provide one teacher and one aid for every student who may need individualized support. The motive behind this is to accurately reflect specific expenses associated with special education.

In addition to formula-based funding, states can also provide competitive funding opportunities to support specific project-based programming. These competitions can vary widely depending on the availability of funds and the state's priorities.

## PRIVATE FUNDING

In addition to public funding, private foundations have become an increasingly important source of grant funding for special education initiatives. Foundations such as the Learning Disabilities Foundation of America, Dorothea Haus Ross Foundation, the Charles Lafitte Foundation, and many other smaller regional organizations are dedicated to serving students with disabilities and promoting educational equity. These private funds are either distributed through a closed application process or through open competitions, and are used to support research and innovation in special education practices, teacher training, technology development, and inclusive classroom environments. The flexibility of private funding allows for innovative programs and tailored solutions



to meet the needs of these students and provide them with support for long-term success.

## LOOKING AHEAD

As we look to the future of funding for special education, several trends are likely to shape this landscape. At the federal level, there are currently ongoing discussions about increasing IDEA funding to align with the original 40% commitment more closely, through legislation like the IDEA Full Funding Act. However, achieving this goal will require significant legislative and budgetary changes to the formula being used to calculate state allocations. In the meantime, federal funding increases to IDEA are modestly being made through the annual appropriations process.

State-level funding will continue to vary widely, with some states exploring new models to ensure a more equitable distribution of resources for special education. This may include adjustments to current funding formulas, especially as states respond to the growing needs of these students post-pandemic.

Private foundation funding will likely continue to support innovation in special education, particularly in areas like technology development and teacher training. As educational technology continues to evolve, these grants may play an essential role in expanding access to tools that can help students with disabilities succeed in the classroom.

Overall, the K-12 special education funding landscape is shaped by a combination of federal, state, and private sources, each playing a unique role in supporting the education of students with disabilities. As funding models continue to evolve and adapt, ensuring that all students have access to the services they need remains a critical priority for educators, policymakers, and advocates alike.

3. <https://www.ecs.org/k-12-special-education-funding-state-profiles-archive/>

## Funded Project Highlight

# ETMMID: Stepping-up Technology Implementation



## FUNDED ORGANIZATION

Rector and Visitors of the University of Virginia

## PROJECT TITLE

“Project VERIFY”

## AMOUNT FUNDED

\$2,500,000

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The primary focus of **Project VERIFY** (Value Added Through **E**-Coaching, **R**eflection, **I**nstructional Technology, **F**eedback, and **Y**ou) is to support school leaders (e.g., principals, instructional coaches, and teacher leaders) in providing professional development (PD) and data-based feedback to teachers of students with disabilities.

Through this work, elementary school leaders will be using the Capturing Observations and Collaboratively sHaring Educational Data (COACHED) app to support educator implementation of academic vocabulary instruction to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. The goal of Project VERIFY is to develop, test, and disseminate a scalable multimedia professional development process that supports the needs of school leaders, teachers, and outcomes for students with disabilities

## FOR MORE AWARD INFORMATION

<https://education.virginia.edu/research-initiatives/research-centers-labs/research-labs/supporting-teachers-through-coaching-observations-and-multimedia-education-students-disabilities/project-verify>

## ORGANIZATION WEBSITE

<https://education.virginia.edu/research-initiatives>



# Comparative Analysis of the Canada Growth Fund and the Inflation Reduction Act

Stephanie Cesar, Grants Development Consultant (Canada)



The global push toward sustainable economic growth and environmental protection has led countries to introduce robust financial policies and programs. Two significant initiatives are [Canada's Growth Fund \(CGF\)](#) and the United States' [Inflation Reduction Act \(IRA\)](#). Both aim to boost economic development and address climate change, but they do so in different ways and with distinct scopes.

## WHAT IS THE CANADA GROWTH FUND?

The Canada Growth Fund (CGF) is an initiative launched by the Canadian government to stimulate economic growth and drive investments in green technology, infrastructure, and innovation. Announced in budget 2022, the CGF is part of Canada's broader strategy to transition to a low-carbon economy. It aims to attract private sector investments by de-risking projects through tools such as loan guarantees, co-investments, and equity financing.

The CGF's primary objectives are to:

- Reduce emissions and achieve Canada's climate targets. Canada's goal is to reduce national greenhouse gas emissions to 40-45% below 2005 levels by 2030.
- Accelerate the deployment of key technologies, such as low-carbon hydrogen and carbon capture and storage (CCS)
- Help Canadian businesses scale up and create jobs

- Encourage the retention of intellectual property in Canada
- Capitalize on Canada's abundance of natural resources

## WHAT IS THE INFLATION REDUCTION ACT?

The U.S. Congress passed the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) in August 2022. It is a landmark piece of legislation aimed at reducing inflation, lowering healthcare costs, and making significant investments in clean energy and climate resilience. The IRA is the most substantial climate legislation in U.S. history, with a strong focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, promoting renewable energy, and ensuring energy security.

Key components of the IRA include:

- Significant investments in clean energy technologies, such as wind, solar, and nuclear power.
- Incentives for electric vehicle (EV) adoption and infrastructure development.
- Support for domestic manufacturing of clean energy components and materials.
- Measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 40% by 2030, compared to 2005 levels.
- Provisions to lower prescription drug prices and extend health insurance subsidies under the Affordable Care Act.

## SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE CANADA GROWTH FUND AND THE INFLATION REDUCTION ACT

### 1. Climate and Environmental Focus

Both the CGF and the IRA are designed to promote investments in clean energy and reduce carbon emissions. They prioritize climate change mitigation through funding and policy support for green technology and renewable energy projects.

### 2. Encouragement of Private Investment

The CGF and IRA leverage government funding to attract private investments. They use financial tools such as tax incentives, loan guarantees, and direct investments to reduce risks for private investors and encourage participation in green projects.

### 3. Economic Growth and Job Creation

Both initiatives aim to stimulate economic growth by creating jobs in emerging industries such as renewable energy, electric vehicles, and green infrastructure. They recognize the economic potential of transitioning to a low-carbon economy.

## DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE CANADA GROWTH FUND AND THE INFLATION REDUCTION ACT

### 1. Scope and Scale

The IRA is broader in scope compared to the CGF. While the primary focus of the CGF is driving investments in clean technology and reducing emissions within Canada, the IRA covers a wider range of areas, including healthcare, tax reform, and overall economic stability in addition to clean energy and climate action.

### 2. Legislative Framework

The IRA is a comprehensive piece of legislation passed by the U.S. Congress, covering various sectors and funding programs. In contrast, the CGF is a targeted investment fund within the Canadian government's broader economic and environmental strategy. Compared to the CGF, the IRA has a more extensive legal and regulatory framework.

### 3. Funding and Budget

The IRA represents a historic investment of over \$369 billion in climate and energy initiatives over the next decade. In contrast, the CGF is initially capitalized with a commitment of \$15 billion from the Canadian government, with additional private sector investment anticipated. The difference in funding reflects the varied scale and scope of each initiative.

### 4. Healthcare Provisions

The IRA includes specific measures to lower healthcare costs. The CGF, on the other hand, does not have a healthcare component and is solely focused on economic growth and climate action.

## CONCLUSION

The Canada Growth Fund and the Inflation Reduction Act are two significant initiatives aimed at fostering sustainable economic growth and combating climate change. They are both examples of how nations can leverage policy and investment to drive the transition to a low-carbon future. While they share common goals, such as promoting clean energy investments and reducing emissions, they differ in their scope, scale, legislative framework, and specific provisions. Understanding these similarities and differences is crucial for stakeholders as they navigate the evolving landscape of green finance and sustainable development.



# A Practical Guide to Digitization Grants

**Amanda Day, Grants Development Consultant (State and Local Government)**

Document digitization is the process of transforming physical documents and materials into digital formats, which can then be managed and accessed electronically. This process can be achieved through manual methods, such as scanning documents, or through automated software solutions, and other technologies to convert physical items into digital form. Digitization enhances efficiency by allowing easy storage, retrieval, and sharing. This leads to improved organization and reduces physical storage needs. In addition, digitization improves data security, accessibility, and collaboration. Imagine having all critical documents readily available in an organized and structured environment, being able to access and share them in seconds. While digitization projects can be expensive, grant funding can assist organizations such as libraries, museums, colleges, and government agencies in collecting and digitizing records and collections.

Grant funding for digitization projects comes from several different sources. First, the [American Rescue Plan: State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds](#) are available for a variety of improvements to infrastructure, access to government programs and services, and delivery of government programs and services. These funds can be used by local governments to digitize records for improved public access, disaster recovery, improved security, and to create a centralized document storage area.

For the preservation of historical records, the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) provides funding through programs like [Publishing Historical Records in Collaborative Digital Editions](#) and the [Access to Historical Records: Archival Projects Program](#). These grants fund projects that will significantly improve online public access and use of historical records collections such as documents, photographs, digital records, and analog audio. Projects may focus on broad historical events in U.S. history, including African American, Asian American, Hispanic American, and Native American history, such as politics, social reform, business, military, arts, and other aspects of the national experience. The purpose of the grants is to ensure easy access to historical documents and records that tell the American story.

Benefits of digitizing documents	
Accessibility	Digitized documents can be accessed by authorized employees from any location and at any time, whether they are in the office or working remotely.
Security	Critical digital data is safeguarded, significantly reducing the risks of unauthorized access, theft, accidental loss, and damage. Additionally, digital documents can be encrypted during processing to restrict access to sensitive information.
Retrieval	Document digitization simplifies information retrieval by replacing stacks of paper files with organized digital records.
Collaboration	Digitizing paper documents enhances collaboration by making it easier to manage and share files across different departments and employees, regardless of their location.
Compliance	Many organizations face regulatory requirements that require the retention of certain documents for specified periods. Digitizing paper documents helps meet these requirements by maintaining accurate record-keeping processes, ensuring secure data storage, and providing better control and tracking.
Money Savings	Document digitization helps organizations save money by reducing the need for costly office storage space, minimizing the time spent managing and searching for documents, and eliminating expenses related to printing and shipping physical files.

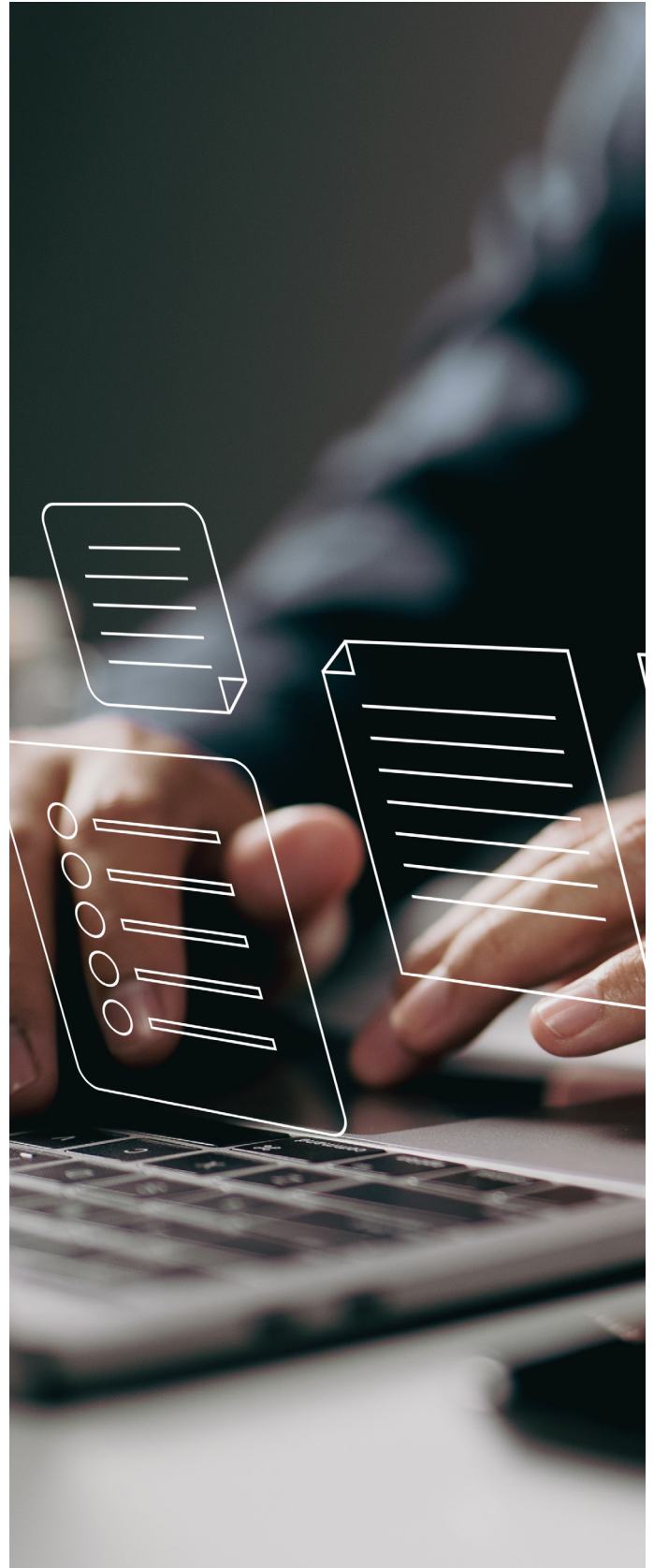
The Institute of Museum and Library Services makes funds available to museums and libraries for digitization initiatives. Programs like [Museum Grants for African American History and Culture](#) and [Museums for America](#) assist in the preservation of museum and library collections and archives. This can help safeguard delicate artifacts and documents from excessive handling and ensure the preservation of historical materials for future study.

For enhancing court systems and criminal history records, the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) offers funding through programs such as the [NICS Act Record Improvement Program \(NARIP\)](#) and the [National Criminal History Improvement Program \(NCHIP\)](#). These programs are designed to improve the accuracy, usefulness, and interstate accessibility of criminal history and related records, supporting national record systems.

Colleges and universities are also eligible for grant funds to preserve and care for their humanities collections. Funding is available through the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) from programs like [Preservation Assistance Grants](#) and [Humanities Collections and Reference Resources](#) grant. These programs encourage applications from small community colleges, Hispanic-serving institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, Native American tribes, and Native Alaskan and Native Hawaiian organizations for the conservation of historical documents and artifacts.

Document automation minimizes the risk of expensive human errors and streamlines workflows, enhancing efficiency and productivity. Digitizing and indexing records into searchable databases allows for retrieval in just a few seconds rather than weeks. A well-designed document management system improves the accessibility of essential documents and records, delivering faster access to critical information. Additionally, document management systems facilitate effortless collaboration through advanced document sharing, approval, and editing capabilities. And most importantly, document digitization allows organizations to centralize data in one secure digital location, minimizing the risk of security breaches.

Grants are crucial in advancing digitization by providing financial support to cover costs associated with these projects. Additionally, grants encourage collaboration among institutions, encouraging partnerships that leverage shared resources and expertise. By easing financial limitations, grant funds enable organizations to pursue digitization projects, thereby improving organization, accessibility, and the preservation of cultural heritage. By leveraging digitization grants like the ones mentioned, organizations are safeguarding and preparing their documents and materials for the future.



## COVER STORY

# Congressionally Directed Spending: Where are the Funds Going and How are They Being Used?

**Dr. Liz Shay, Senior Grants Development Consultant**

Congressionally directed spending (also known as community project funding or earmarks) are line items in the United States federal budget specifically requested by individual legislators. There was a 10-year moratorium on these appropriations, but that ran out in 2021. Proponents of congressionally directed spending argue that it creates a more transparent appropriation process and enables local jurisdictions to more directly request and receive funds for their specific needs. Others believe that congressionally directed spending is wasteful or corrupt. Regardless of how you feel about this type of funding, they are a part of the current federal funding landscape and should be considered carefully when looking for support for your project.

In this article, we will explore the fiscal year 2024 congressionally directed spending landscape. We will evaluate where the funds are going and what types of projects they are predominantly funding. We will also reflect on where we are in the fiscal year 2025 funding congressionally directed spending process.

Interested in seeing where we currently are in the congressionally directed spending process or just want to know about the process without the data analysis? Check out the section towards the end of this article.



## RULES FOR CONGRESSIONALLY DIRECTED SPENDING

Since its return in 2021, congressionally directed spending must follow specific rules. Individual chambers may impose additional rules on requests from their members, and rules change a bit from year to year, but in general:

- Total funding for congressionally directed spending must not exceed one percent of discretionary spending.
- For-profit entities are ineligible for congressionally directed spending.
- Requests must be submitted in writing and are for specific projects in specific locations.
- Requests must be published on the Congressman's website quickly after they submit the request.
- The Government Accountability Office audits a sample of the enacted congressionally directed spending and reports the findings to Congress.

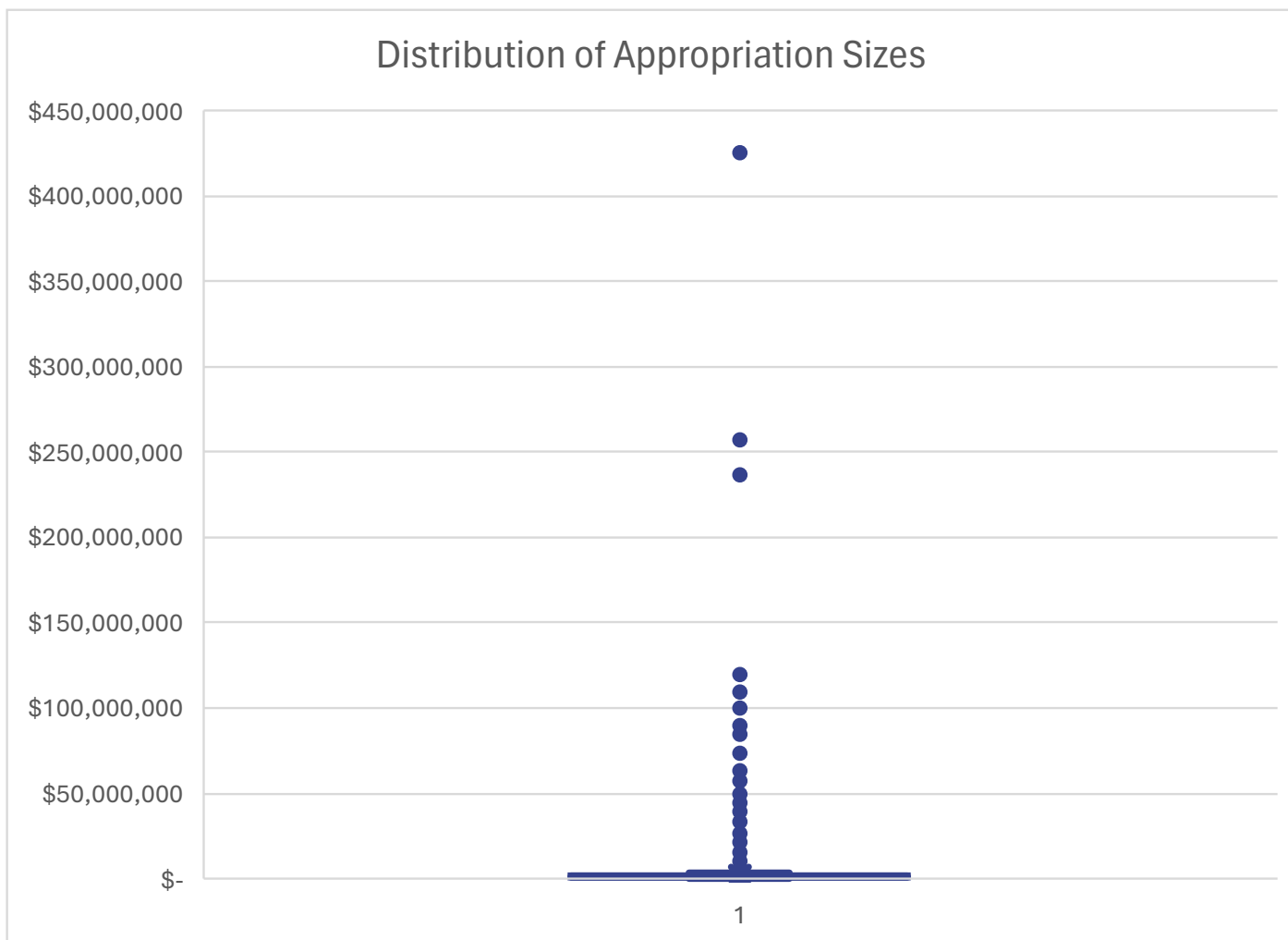


Figure 1: Distribution of appropriation sizes. 1st quartile: \$500,000, 2nd quartile: \$975,000, 3rd quartile: \$1,750,000.

## OVERVIEW OF FISCAL YEAR 2024 CONGRESSIONALLY DIRECTED SPENDING

In total, 8080 congressionally directed spending appropriations were made in the fiscal year 2024 budget, adding up to a total of \$15,749,801,025. Individual awards vary from \$8000 to \$425,000,000 with an average of \$1,949,233 and a median of \$975,000.

As seen in Figure 1 (and from the difference between the average and the median), the appropriations are very skewed. More than half of the awards made are under \$1,000,000 (4088 awards), with about 2% of awards less than \$100,000 (193). Less than 5% (368 awards) are over \$5,000,000.

The three largest awards, which are quite significant outliers, are:

1. \$425,000,000 to the Army Corps of Engineers (Civil) for South Florida Ecosystem Restoration, requested by Representative Mast (R-FL).
2. \$257,423,000 to the Army Corps of Engineers (Civil) for a new Soo Lock in Sault Sainte Marie, MI, requested by Representatives Bergman (R-MI) and James (R-MI).
3. \$236,800,000 to the Army Corps of Engineers (Civil) for the Chickamauga Lock on the Tennessee River in Tennessee, requested by Representative Fleischmann (R-TN).

The small awards are mainly for recreational and community programming activities, including computer classes, activities for at-risk youth, and focused law enforcement equipment efforts. These awards are spread throughout the country and were requested by a mixture of Members of Congress from both chambers.

## GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF FISCAL YEAR 2024 CONGRESSIONALLY DIRECTED SPENDING

In fiscal year 2024, congressionally directed spending was appropriated to organizations and projects in 49 of the 50 states (all except North Dakota), the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and three territories (Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, US Virgin Islands). To better understand where the funding is going, we first divided the analysis into regions of the country (taken from National Geographic Education).

From Figure 2, we can see that the Southeast is the predominant recipient of appropriations by amount (\$5,444,013,061, 34.57%), although the number of awards they received is more equal to other regions (2023, 25.04%). A driving factor for this discrepancy is the large \$425,000,000 award in Florida, described above, accounting for almost half of all monies going to projects in that state. The Northeast shows the opposite pattern, with a smaller part of the total appropriations by value (\$2,857,639,756, 18.14%), but a higher number of awards (2132, 26.39%). This finding is largely driven by Pennsylvania and New Jersey, who rank relatively high on number of awards, but do not rank as highly on amount of those awards. The other regions show similar patterns for appropriations amount and number of awards. The relatively small portion going to the Southwest makes sense since there are only four states in that region, three of whom have relatively small populations (and therefore fewer House of Representatives members).

**Regions of the country (taken from National Geographic Education) are defined as:**

**Northeast:** CT, MA, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT

**Southeast:** AL, AR, DC, DE, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, PR, TN, SC, VA, VI, WV

**Midwest:** IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH, SD, WI

**Southwest:** AZ, NM, OK, TX

**West:** AK, CA, CO, GU, HI, ID, MP, MT, NV, OR, UT, WA, WY)

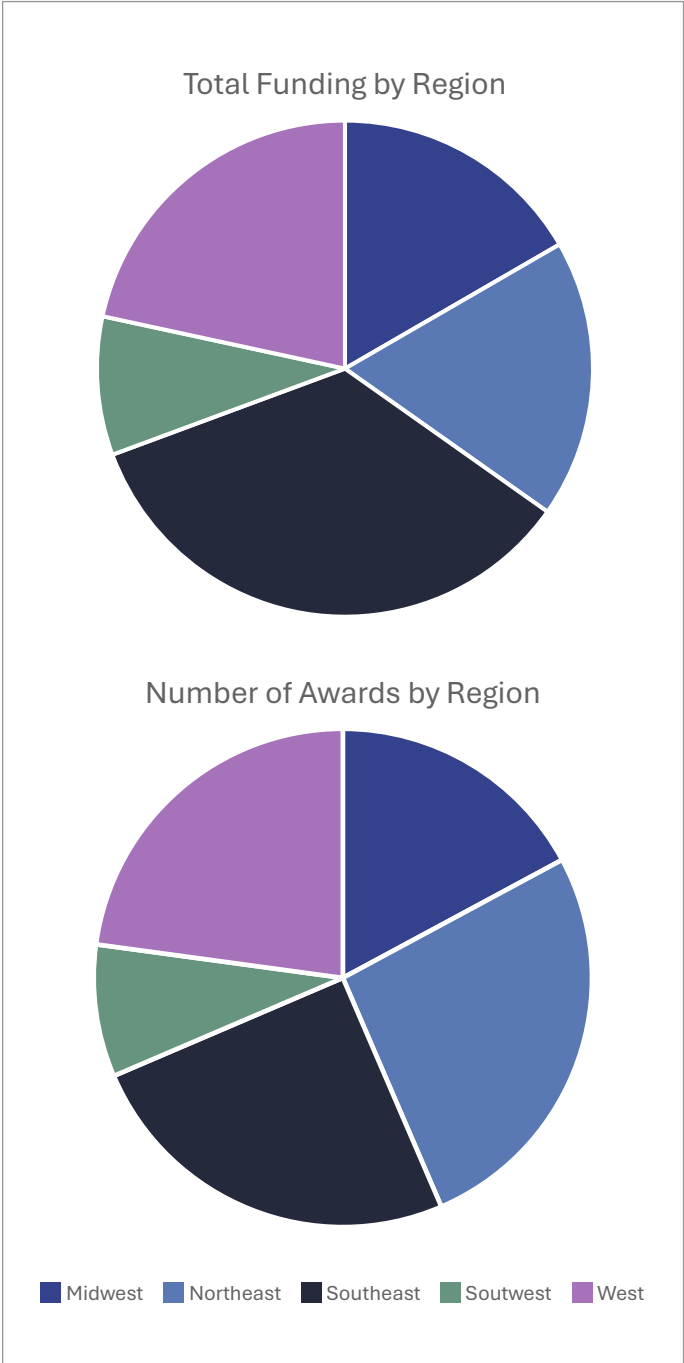


Figure 2: Congressionally directed spending by region of the United States.

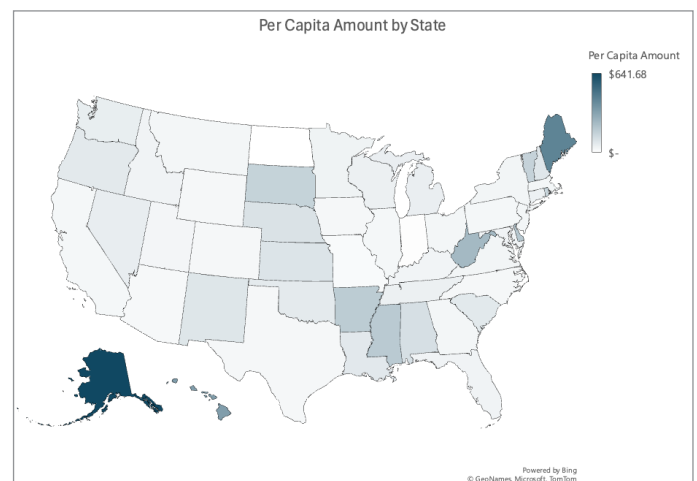
Top 5 States by Amount		Top 5 States by Number of Awards	
State	Amount	State	Number of Awards
California	\$1,054,328,785	California	760
Florida	\$890,563,676	New York	453
Texas	\$780,469,045	Pennsylvania	385
New York	\$652,786,000	Texas	329
Maine	\$601,567,322	Illinois	314

**Figure 3: Top 5 states by total appropriations amount and number of awards.**

Unsurprisingly, as shown in Figure 3, states with high populations are more likely to have more in total congressionally directed spending appropriations. The outlier in this list of top 5 is Maine, with a high amount in appropriations but a small population (we will explore this more in the next section). The states with the highest number of appropriations seem to be driven by a mixture of population size (with larger populations, therefore, having more Members of Congress to submit requests) and seniority of their Congressional representatives (with Members of Congress who have been there for longer having more political power to get their requests approved).

Unsurprisingly, Alaska shows up as a huge outlier in terms of per capita total appropriations (\$641.68 per capita), as shown in Figure 4. This finding is largely driven by their exceptionally large area with significant needs. Maine is the other significant outlier (\$431.01 per capita). This large award amount for their population is mainly driven by the requests from Senator Collins (R-ME), which we will discuss in the section below. The third highest per capita total appropriations is in Hawaii (\$340.77 per capita), which has similar challenges to Alaska. Although there is less total area in Hawaii, the terrain and high amount of water create significant complications that attract the attention of Members of Congress. The final state over \$200 per capita is West Virginia (\$243.91 per capita). These awards are almost exclusively driven by Senators Manchin (I-WV) and Capito (R-WV), which we will discuss in the section below.

On the other hand, North Dakota had no congressionally directed spending in fiscal year 2024. None of the Members of Congress representing the state even submitted requests. Indiana is the other big outlier on the low end, with only \$4.09 per capita. Similar to North Dakota, this low number is related to a lack of requests for congressionally directed spending. Only two members of the House of Representatives from the state (Representatives Carson (D-IN) and Mrvan (D-IN)) submitted requests (28 of the 30 requests were approved). The other seven House members and two Senators did not submit any requests for fiscal year 2024.



**Figure 4: Per capita total congressionally directed spending amount by state. Population numbers are taken from US Census Vintage 2023 estimated numbers. Apologies to the territories, which are not shown for clarity.**



## MEMBERS OF CONGRESS DISTRIBUTION OF FISCAL YEAR 2024 CONGRESSIONALLY DIRECTED SPENDING

Individual members of Congress have varying political power, as well as varying areas that they represent. House Representatives are limited to 15 congressionally directed spending requests in each fiscal year, while Senators do not have these limitations. All of these factors come into play when we look at who had the most approval for their congressionally directed spending requests.

As can be seen in Figure 5, the total funding between the two chambers is quite similar (\$7,595,723,548 for the House and \$7,172,317,000 for the Senate). Just under \$1 billion goes to projects that were requested by members of both chambers (\$981,760,477). Despite House Representatives being limited to 15 requests each, their higher total number of members overcomes this difference in rules, with the House having more than half of all approved requests (4356). Roughly 40% of approved requests are from the Senate (3405), with the remainder being requested from both chambers (319). The differences between the two charts show that the Senate as a whole has larger approved requests, despite the three largest outlier awards all coming from House Representative requests.

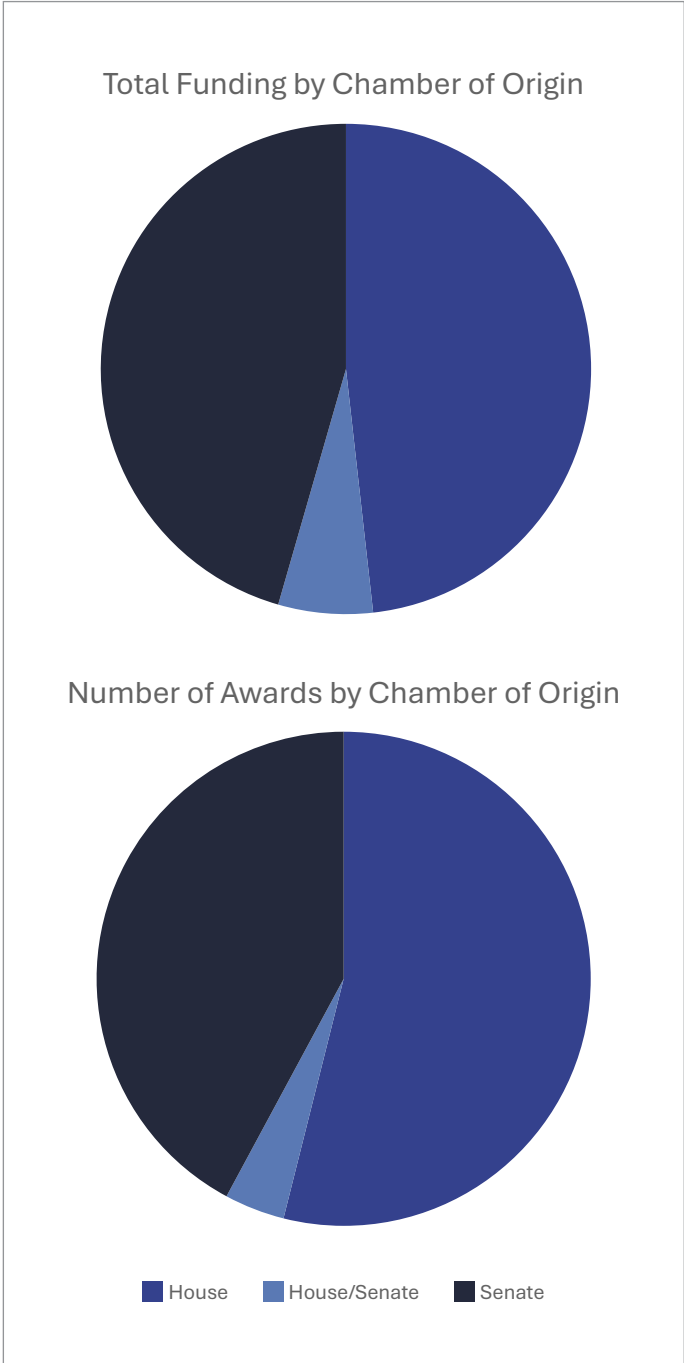


Figure 5: Congressionally directed spending by Congress chamber.

Top 5 House Members by Amount	
Member	Amount
Mast (R-FL)	\$436,000,000
James (R-MI)	\$283,198,303
Bergman (R-MI)	\$273,689,000
Fleischmann (R-TN)	\$273,330,940
Crawford (R-AR)	\$201,567,000

**Figure 6: Top 5 House Representatives by congressionally directed spending amount. House Representatives are limited to 15 requests per fiscal year.**

The top 5 House Representatives by total appropriations (Figure 6) are not a surprise, based on the largest funded projects in fiscal year 2024. Four of these representatives are accounted for with the three large outlier projects we discussed before, all of which are infrastructure projects under the Army Corps of Engineers (Civil). As a reminder, these are:

1. \$425,000,000 to the Army Corps of Engineers (Civil) for South Florida Ecosystem Restoration, requested by Representative Mast (R-FL).
2. \$257,423,000 to the Army Corps of Engineers (Civil) for a new Soo Lock in Sault Sainte Marie, MI, requested by Representatives Bergman (R-MI) and James (R-MI).
3. \$236,800,000 to the Army Corps of Engineers (Civil) for the Chickamauga Lock on the Tennessee River in Tennessee, requested by Representative Fleischmann (R-TN).

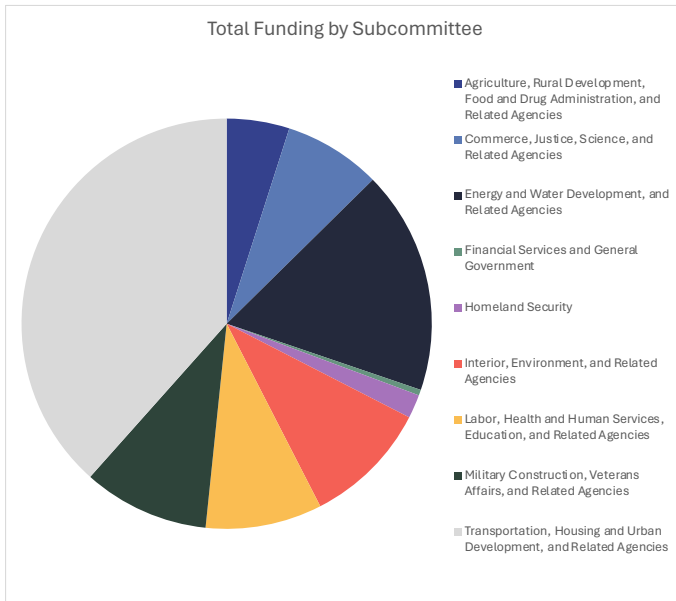
Crawford (R-AR) also has a large infrastructure project, although his was broken into two pieces (one for construction and one for operations & maintenance, both with the Army Corps of Engineers (Civil)), for the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System, totaling \$187,537,000. Fleischmann (R-TN) has been in the House for several years and is on the Appropriations Committee, so he was well-positioned to advocate for this large project. Mast (R-FL) has also been in Congress for several years and could develop relationships to help advocate for this project. He had only minimal approved requests outside of this one, so this project was the priority for negotiations during the federal budget process. Bergman (R-MI) and James (R-MI) similarly had this single infrastructure award drive much of their awarded congressionally directed spending. They are both new Congressmen, but we could speculate that James' (R-MI) highly contested election in 2022 may have helped with other Republicans advocating for this project to try to help him keep his seat in the 2024 election.

Top 5 Senate Members by Amount		Top 5 Senate Members by Number of Awards	
Member	Amount	Member	Number of Awards
Collins (R-ME)	\$577,580,000	Manchin (I-WV)	228
Murkowski (R-AK)	\$463,670,279	Capito (R-WV)	227
King (I-ME)	\$453,591,043	Van Hollen (D-MD)	193
Graham (R-SC)	\$396,868,195	Murkowski (R-AK)	185
Britt (R-AL)	\$365,759,000	Cardin (D-MD)	170

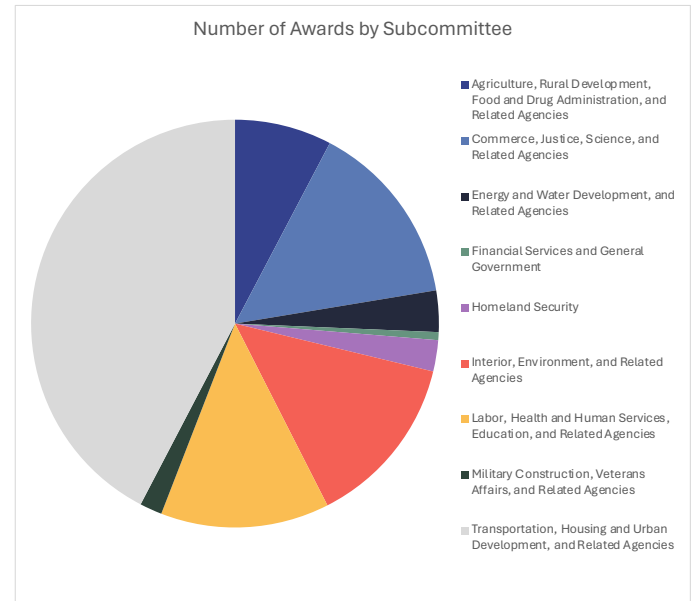
**Figure 7: Top 5 Senators by congressionally directed spending amount and number of awards.**

Looking at the top 5 Senators by total appropriations amount (Figure 7, left column), we see mainly senior senators who are on the Appropriations Committee. The exception is King (I-ME); however, his high total amount is almost totally driven by co-requests with Collins (R-ME), who is Vice Chair of the Appropriations Committee. The majority of the funding approved for each of these Senators comes from large infrastructure projects to support their states.

Although we could not do this analysis with the House members due to their cap of 15 requests/member, we can explore the number of awards approved for different Senators. The top 5 Senators by number of awards (Figure 7, right column) is a bit more surprising. Manchin (I-WV) is anticipated on this list. He holds significant political power due to his lack of party affiliation, which allows him to get many of his requests for congressionally directed spending approved to help secure his vote. Capito (R-WV) submitted many co-requests with Manchin (I-WV), resulting in a high number of awards. Murkowski (R-AK) also has significant seniority and her role on the Appropriations Committee. Van Hollen (D-MD) and Cardin (D-MD)'s inclusion on this list seems to be largely driven by their requesting process. Ultimately, each of them submitted well over the average number of requests (they each had over 400 submissions, with the average a bit under 200). This approach seems to have been successful in getting more appropriations for projects within their jurisdictions, even if the total amount of funding may not have been very high relative to other Senators.



**Figure 8: Congressionally directed spending amounts by subcommittee. Different committees had different rules about what types of requests they would accept.**



**Figure 9: Congressionally directed spending number of awards by subcommittee. Different committees had different rules about what types of requests they would accept.**

## PROJECT TYPES OF FISCAL YEAR 2024 CONGRESSIONALLY DIRECTED SPENDING

Individual appropriations subcommittees are involved with determining the final list of congressionally directed spending appropriations that will be included in that section of the budget. Each year, the exact set of subcommittees that will accept congressionally directed spending requests, as well as which accounts (and therefore which types of projects), are included changes. In fiscal year 2024, there were nine committees taking requests, each with varying numbers and types of accounts.

As is shown in Figure 8, the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies subcommittee had the highest total funding. This large percentage results from a mixture of a lot of community development projects (discussed more below) and some infrastructure projects. Those types of projects are large and require significant funds to complete the initiatives. The smallest subcommittee by awards is also not surprising, the Financial Services and General Government subcommittee. There were only a few congressionally directed spending awards made out of this subcommittee, most of which went through the National Archives & Records Administration for digitization of collections.

Exploring the data by the number of awards from each subcommittee (Figure 9) does not result in too many changes. There are a lot of awards coming out of Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies. Again, there are a lot of community development projects from this subcommittee, which are a priority for congressionally directed spending efforts. The biggest shift is for Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies. This subcommittee made a relatively large number of awards that are relatively small for each award. This is due to the nature of the projects from those agencies, which can often be accomplished with smaller budgets. A lot of the larger awards from this committee were in Health Resources & Services Administration, which we discuss more below. Energy and Water Development, and Related Agencies also had a huge shift between the two charts, with relatively few awards that are each very large. These projects, as we see with many of the awards in Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies, are mostly infrastructure projects. In this case, the infrastructure projects have to do with water supply, which results in extremely expensive efforts due to the scale and complexity of these projects.

Top 5 Accounts by Amount		Top 5 Accounts by Number of Awards	
Account	Amount	Account	Number of Awards
Community Development Fund	\$3,289,034,336	Community Development Fund	2407
Highway Infrastructure Programs	\$1,884,176,687	Highway Infrastructure Programs	690
Army Corps of Engineers (Civil): Construction	\$1,673,409,000	State & Tribal Assistance Grants: Clean Water State Revolving Fund	546
Health Resources & Services Administration	\$890,788,000	Office of Justice Programs: Byrne JAG Program	475
Army Corps of Engineers (Civil): Operation & Maintenance	\$860,527,000	State & Tribal Assistance Grants: Drinking Water State Revolving Funds	461

**Figure 10: Accounts by congressionally directed spending amounts and number of awards.**

When we look at the accounts level (Figure 10), we can see more about which types of projects are most funded as part of congressionally directed spending. The biggest category by both the amount and number of awards is the Community Development Fund. This program is the broadest domestic development assistance program across federal funding, coming from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The most popular funding mechanism within this larger program is the Community Development Block Grant, which is a long-running and popular program for a variety of community development initiatives. Congressionally directed spending allows communities to work towards these initiatives more quickly. The visibility of the completed projects may also help their popularity with Members of Congress. The Highway Infrastructure Programs also had many awards and a large total amount of appropriations. This funding supports capital projects for roads and other transportation efforts. Similar to the Community Development Fund, this account also supports large-scale, visible efforts with immediate community impact, making it another popular focus for Members of Congress.

The two Army Corps of Engineers (Civil) accounts are unsurprisingly in the top 5 accounts by amount. These projects are large-scale, complex efforts that require significant funding to

build and maintain. Most of these awards are going to projects such as dams, canals, and aquatic protection and restoration efforts. The Health Resources & Services Administration awards are mainly to health clinics and institutes of higher education for facilities and equipment to improve patient care or the training of the next generation of healthcare providers. These projects are relatively expensive because of the construction/renovation aspects. The final three accounts not discussed previously for their high number of awards (State & Tribal Assistance Grants: Clean Water State Revolving Fund, Office Justice Programs: Byrne JAG Program, and State & Tribal Assistance Grants: Drinking Water State Revolving Funds) are all long-standing programs that were often distributed through entitlement allocations before the return of congressionally directed spending. Members of Congress have chosen to request specific projects under these funds, likely to influence portions of the funds that would otherwise pass through the states, resulting in additional decision-making at the state level. These requests allow the Members of Congress to have a bit more influence on the use of funds, prioritizing projects that are ready to move quickly.



## CURRENT STATUS OF FISCAL YEAR 2025 CONGRESSIONALLY DIRECTED SPENDING

As of the time of publication, the fiscal year 2025 federal budget has not yet been passed. However, the congressionally directed spending process started even before the fiscal year 2024 budget was passed in late March 2024. Members of Congress receive requests from organizations within their jurisdiction and then make decisions about which ones to submit as a formal request. The specific rules for each chamber of Congress vary, however, there are a few overarching rules that apply, which we discussed earlier in this article:

- Total funding for congressionally directed spending must not exceed one percent of discretionary spending.
- For-profit entities are ineligible for congressionally directed spending.
- Requests must be submitted in writing and are for specific projects in specific locations.

- Requests must be published on the Member of Congress's website quickly after they submit the request.
- Members of Congress must certify that they and their immediate family members do not have any financial interest in the requested projects.
- The Government Accountability Office audits a sample of the enacted congressionally directed spending and reports the findings to Congress.

The Senate puts minimal extra requirements on its members. However, the House has listed some additional requirements for fiscal year 2025 for their members:

- No memorials, museums, or commemoratives can receive congressionally directed spending
- Department of Housing and Urban Development Economic Development Initiative funding can only go to governmental entities and public institutions of higher education. This category includes the Community Development Fund.
- Members can submit no more than 15 requests across all subcommittees.

Subcommittee	Senate Deadline	House Deadline
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies	May 8, 2024	May 3, 2024
Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies	May 9, 2024	May 10, 2024
Energy and Water Development	May 15, 2024	May 3, 2024
Financial Services and General Government	May 9, 2024	House members may not submit to this subcommittee for fiscal year 2025
Homeland Security	May 15, 2024	May 3, 2024
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies	May 15, 2024	May 10, 2023
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies	May 14, 2024	House members may not submit to this subcommittee for fiscal year 2025
Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies	May 8, 2024	May 3, 2024
Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies	May 13, 2024	May 10, 2024

**Figure 11: Congressionally directed spending deadline requests by subcommittee and chamber of Congress. Note: Defense; Legislative Branch; and State, Foreign Operations, & Related Programs did not accept requests for fiscal year 2025.**

Deadlines for Members of Congress request submissions also varied by chamber (Figure 11). Individual Members of Congress set their deadlines for when they want submissions from organizations seeking funding to allow time to prepare their submissions by these deadlines. House members were not able to submit to the Financial Services and General Government or Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies subcommittees this year. The Defense; Legislative Branch; and State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs subcommittees did not accept requests from either chamber in fiscal year 2025.

In fiscal year 2024, approximately 1/3 of Senate requests and 90% of House requests were approved. This percentage difference is likely driven by the restriction of the House to no more than 15 requests for each member, while the Senate

members could submit as many requests as they liked. In fiscal year 2025, there are 22,345 requests in the Senate (as of July 7, 2024) and 5250 requests in the House (as of June 28, 2024). These request counts include individual requests from projects that were co-requested by multiple Members of Congress. These numbers are a bit higher for both chambers this year, so it is possible that congressionally directed spending will be a bit more competitive for this fiscal year 2025 cycle, pending focus on funding amount versus number of awards by the members.

Individual subcommittees are currently developing the budgets for their divisions. Part of this process will also include tentative lists of congressionally directed spending appropriations. Changes may be made as subcommittee-proposed budgets are reviewed by the full Congress and changes are requested before approval votes.

## NEXT STEPS FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION WITH CONGRESSIONALLY DIRECTED SPENDING

Congressionally directed spending can be a great way to get funding for your project. This funding may move faster than applying directly through the related grant programs from the relevant federal funding agencies, although you do have to wait for the federal budget cycle to start to apply. There are a few things that your organization can do now to be ready to apply for congressionally directed spending:

1. Ensure your project is aligned with one of the subcommittees and accounts that accept congressionally directed spending requests. This exact list varies from year to year, but you can get a sense of the programs that may be relevant by exploring previous years' congressionally directed spending guidelines. You can find the fiscal year 2025 guidance for each chamber at the following links:
  - a. Senate: The Fiscal year 2025 guidance is found [here](#).
  - b. House: The Fiscal year 2025 guidance is found [here](#).
2. Build relationships with your Members of Congress. If you have existing relationships with one or more Members of Congress, reach out and let them know about your organizational needs and what you are hoping to accomplish. If you are a non-profit organization, particularly if you are interested in Community Development Fund requests, you may want to cultivate your relationships with your Senators in particular in case the restrictions put on House member requests hold for fiscal year 2026. If you don't have relationships with your Members of Congress and you aren't sure who they are, you can identify them [here](#). Make sure to consider if a particular Congressman is up for re-election this November!
3. Identify priorities of relevant Members of Congress. Each Member of Congress has particular focus areas of interest. Determine the alignment of your project with those priorities and have discussions with their teams about the impact of your project and why they should care. Also, consider how well-positioned they are to advocate for your project's eventual inclusion in the federal budget. The strategy they use for selecting projects to request also varies, so consider what has been successful in the past for project types (like we explored above) as places where your organization may be the most successful.
4. Once you have identified one or more Members of Congress that you hope will request funding for your project, reach out to their offices and learn more about procedures for submitting your project to them formally. Keep in mind that their deadlines for submission to the subcommittees are usually in late April or early May, so they will need information before that from your organization.
5. Continue to refine your planned project description. Be prepared to share all the details about what you hope to do, what the impact will be, how much it will cost, and why Congress should care.

Congressionally directed spending is an opportunity for important community projects to be funded directly as line items in the federal budget. Although there are long timelines for requesting and hopefully receiving these funds, it may be more direct than trying to apply through individual grant programs from federal agencies. If your organization has a relevant project and good relationships with your Members of Congress (or can form them), congressionally directed spending can be a great opportunity to fund critical projects.

## Program Snapshot

# Congressionally Directed Spending



## SUMMARY

Congressionally directed spending (also known as community project funding or earmarks) are line items in the United States federal budget that are specifically requested by individual legislators. Eligible organizations may apply to their Congress members to request that their projects be submitted for consideration.

For fiscal year 2025, House of Representatives members were able to request congressionally directed spending for the following budget subcommittees:

- Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
- Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
- Energy and Water Development
- Homeland Security
- Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
- Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies
- Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies

Senate members were able to request congressionally directed spending for all the above subcommittees as well as:

- Financial Services and General Government
- Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies

## ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility varies by specific subcommittee, account (program), and chamber of Congress. In general, requests must be for projects led by non-profit or public sector organizations. Discuss specific circumstances with relevant Congress members to determine relevance and eligibility.

## DEADLINE

Deadlines vary by subcommittee and chamber of Congress, although most deadlines for Congress members were in May 2024. We anticipate a similar deadline in 2025 for the fiscal year 2026 budget. Individual members may set earlier deadlines for organizations within their jurisdictions.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

### Senate:

[https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/fy2025\\_appropriations\\_requests\\_general\\_guidance1.pdf](https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/fy2025_appropriations_requests_general_guidance1.pdf)

### House of Representatives:

<https://appropriations.house.gov/member-requests/fy25-member-request-guidance>



# The Ins and Outs of the OMB's Uniform Guidance

**Elizabeth Evans, Manager of Research and Consultation**

Last month marked the start of the U.S. federal Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) new set of rules directing the majority of federal grantmaking to nonprofits; education institutions; state, local, or tribal government agencies; and others. These rules, colloquially known as the Uniform Guidance, were first established in December 2013. Originally a consolidation of several federal rulemaking circulars, the Uniform Guidance's policies have been periodically adjusted over the last 20 years. The most recent of these updates took effect on October 1, 2024.

You can read the Office of Management and Budget's new Guidance for Federal Financial Assistance here: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/04/22/2024-07496/guidance-for-federal-financial-assistance>.

Broadly speaking, these latest revisions aim to reduce barriers to federal grant seeking – a historically complex and convoluted process. The OMB had 4 objectives in support of this goal:

1. Incorporation of new statutory requirements and administrative priorities,
2. Reduction of burden for grant seekers and the funding agencies,
3. Clarification of language to prevent misinterpretation by agencies and grant seekers, and
4. Simplification of language to increase comprehension among the general public.

After much internal debate and time for public comment, in April of 2024, the OMB released the final set of rules for what the new Uniform Guidance would entail. Highlights include:



## SIMPLIFICATION OF NOFOS

The language and structure of the content in any Notice of Funding Opportunity will be simplified to be more accessible to those without extensive grant experience. Eligibility lists will include examples of eligible applicants (e.g., labor unions as a type of nonprofit organization). Basic information about the grant must be listed at the top of the announcement and the overall length of NOFOS has been limited.

## EMPHASIS ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & INCLUSIVITY IN GRANTMAKING/SEEKING

Both grant makers and grant seekers will be encouraged to solicit stakeholder input in the design of programs and projects. Grant-making agencies have been encouraged to diversify their cadre of proposal reviewers when selecting merit-based projects. Further, grantmakers can no longer restrict applicants to only submitting their narrative requests in English.

## EXPLANATION OF ROLES

The “Non-federal Entity” designation has been replaced with the newly defined “Recipient” and “Subrecipient” roles. Clear definitions for what constitutes a “Pass-Through Entity” and confirmation that they must accept any subrecipient’s federally negotiated indirect cost rate.

## CLARIFIED COST PRINCIPLES & INCREASED BUDGETARY THRESHOLDS

The de minimus (guaranteed minimum) rate for indirect costs has been raised from 10% to 15% and the threshold for modified total direct costs has been doubled to be \$50,000 for each subaward. Further, the capitalization threshold for equipment has been increased from \$5,000 to \$10,000 minimum per item. Minor revisions for what is considered an allowable cost towards employee fringe benefits, travel costs, and entertainment expenses have been made. It has also been confirmed that costs for project evaluation (i.e. data collection, storage, and security) are allowable as an organizational cost either directly or indirectly.

## REVISED AWARD PAYMENT PRACTICE & GRANTEE PROCUREMENT STANDARDS

Grant-making agencies are only to leverage reimbursement mechanisms for the distribution of funds when financial requirements for advanced payment are unable to be met. Instead, the upfront payment of grant awards is encouraged. Updates for awardee procurement practices, including conflict of interest provisions have also been made. The requirement of specific steps to affirm consideration of socioeconomic factors in purchasing decisions has been removed, although review is still encouraged.

## SPECIFIED REQUIREMENTS FOR GENERAL REPORTING, AUDITS, & MONITORING OF SUB-AWARDEES

Additional details on the required documentation, frequency, and scope of reporting expectations have been provided. Agencies are to eliminate reports or requests for data that are not necessary for determining project efficacy. The value threshold for grantee retention of unused supplies upon project completion has increased from \$5,000 to \$10,000 before they are required to sell the unused items and return those funds to the federal government. Further, the minimum dollar requirement for a single audit has been raised from \$750,000 to \$1,000,000.

Going forward, the OMB's new version of the Uniform Guidance may be found within Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). Federal agencies are now required to follow these rules for any new awards granted from October 1, 2024, forward. That said, some agencies may be slow to update wording on their NOFOs or otherwise institute these changes, particularly if they are host to thousands of opportunities.

In the interim, the best thing grant seekers can do is to triple-check the NOFO for any grant they are applying to over the next calendar year and respectfully contact the program officer at the funding agency if they notice any discrepancies. Grant-seeking organizations will also need to ensure their own internal policies are amended to account for these changes. Whether you're a veteran or a novice grant professional – a grant writer or award administrator – it might be time to revisit Title 2 of the CFR (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2>) to review the latest changes in greater detail.

Is this the first time you're learning about the OMB's Uniform Guidance?

Title 2 of the CFR outlines the administrative requirements, cost principals, and audit requirements of all federal awards.



## Visit our **FREE** “Guidance for Grantseekers Resource Library”

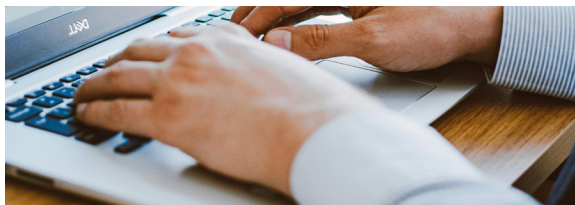
Our FREE Guidance for Grantseekers Resource Library includes a series of short videos, designed to arm you with expert knowledge and confidence for the journey ahead.

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- A listing of the agencies for which you have submitted grants
- A listing of the grant programs for which you have been a proposal reviewer, if any
- 2 writing samples (preferably narratives from successfully funded projects)

# The FCC's Schools and Libraries Cybersecurity Pilot Program

Sam Rawdon, Grants Development Associate (K-12 Education)



For several years, schools and libraries have been the target of cyber threats that compromise their networks and data. The Cyber Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) labels these organizations as “target-rich, cyber poor,” and do not always have the necessary resources to implement proper online defenses. Attacks ranging from stealing personal information to causing humiliation and distress online to individuals and organizations have unfortunately become more commonplace and have been on the rise. In fact, according to Forbes Magazine, there was a 72% increase in data breaches in 2023.<sup>1</sup> To deter these efforts by malicious actors, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) released a Report and Order on June 11, 2024, outlining specifics for their **Schools and Libraries Cybersecurity Pilot Program**.

The main purpose of the program is to collect the necessary information to better understand how Universal Service Funds (USF) can be leveraged to provide cyber safeguards for schools and libraries. The program is being regulated by the Universal Service Administration Company (USAC), which also administers the very popular E-Rate program that supplies funding for broadband and connectivity efforts. Running concurrently and similarly with E-Rate, the three-year pilot program provides up to \$200 million in support to eligible schools, libraries, and a consortium of schools and libraries to cover the costs of a wide variety of cybersecurity services and equipment. These include advanced and next-generation firewalls, endpoint protection, identity protection and authentication, and monitoring, detection, and response (MDR) solutions.

The application process is in two stages: the first step, which ran from September 17 to November 1, 2024, required applicants to

evaluate their cybersecurity needs by:

- Establishing participation goals and objectives.
- Identifying risks or threats the pilot program can assist with mitigating.
- Determining their cybersecurity expertise and experience.
- Naming a designated cybersecurity officer or senior staff member.
- Indexing which services and equipment to invest in.

If selected, participants in step two are required to elaborate further on the details they provided in step one of their applications, specifically centered around their cybersecurity experiences. This includes describing the status of their current cybersecurity posture, or a measure of their comprehensive cybersecurity strength and ability to defend themselves against cyber threats. It also includes what prevention and mitigation actions are being taken to manage and address cyber risks, as well as giving a history of any cyber threats and attacks faced within one year of the application date. Any current cybersecurity training efforts or rules and additional cybersecurity challenges (for example, lack of funding or insufficient organizational knowledge) are also required to be elaborated on.

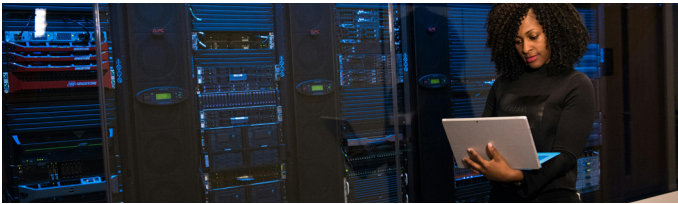
So, what can participants expect after all is said and done? A Public Notice announcing accepted schools, libraries, and consortiums will provide the next steps. This notice includes information about the bid solicitation process and procurement procedures for the requested cybersecurity solutions and services. Following the competitive bidding process, participants can submit their requests and, if approved, will receive a Funding Commitment Decision Letter (FCDL). Then, participants, as well as vendors, can begin the requests for reimbursement process.

To help under-resourced schools and libraries stave off the growing threat of cyber-attacks, the FCC's Schools and Libraries Cybersecurity Pilot Program will be a vital resource for these agencies to utilize to better prepare themselves in the event of a cybercriminal or hacker attempting to compromise their data and networks. These agencies who are familiar with the E-Rate program will find the process relatively straightforward, however, should be well-prepared to address critical areas such as their current cybersecurity posture, current action steps taken to manage these types of threats, provide information on historical cyber threats or attacks faced within the past year, and elaborate on procedures and training currently implemented at their organizations. Participants can also anticipate a competitive bidding and procurement process that is like E-Rate. This pilot program is a highly important first step in providing much-needed protections to schools and libraries most vulnerable. For more information about the program, visit the program website at <https://www.fcc.gov/cybersecurity-pilot-program>.

1. From “Cybersecurity Facts: Facts and Figures You Should Know” by Mariah St. John (Forbes Magazine, Aug. 28, 2024); <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/education/it-and-tech/cybersecurity-statistics/>

# Funding Physical and Cyber Security Needs for Nonprofit Organizations

Meghan Jacobsen, Grants Development Associate (Community Services)



For many nonprofit organizations, most of their revenue is dedicated to funding the services that support their mission-driven work. Additionally, donors often prefer to contribute directly to these programs, leaving limited resources for other critical expenses, such as physical and cybersecurity. To address this gap, the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) was established in 2004, specifically targeting nonprofit organizations at higher risk of domestic or foreign attacks due to their ideology, beliefs, or mission. These organizations may include places of worship, faith-based charities, educational and medical institutions, or any other nonprofit facing increased threats due to their beliefs or purpose.

## WHAT IS NSGP?

The Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) is administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as a pass-through grant. FEMA allocates funding to each state, and the states are responsible for managing the grant process. NSGP consists of two components: NSGP-Urban, for applicants located in urban areas designated by the Department of Homeland Security, and NSGP-State, for all other applicants. In the fiscal year 2024, \$454.5 million in funding was available across all 50 states. Individual grants can be up to \$150,000 per site, with a maximum of three sites, allowing for a total award of up to \$450,000. Application deadlines differ by state.

## WHAT WILL NSGP FUND?

The Nonprofit Security Grant Program will fund a multitude of security initiatives in both physical security and cybersecurity. These funds can be used for planning, training, equipment, maintenance, contracted security personnel, and management and administration fees.

Some examples of allowed equipment costs include:

Cybersecurity:

- Hardware and Software
- Authentication Devices

- Host Level and Network Level Security
- Encryption
- Security Management

Physical Security:

- Security Cameras
- Alarm Systems and Sensors
- Physical Access Control
- Personnel Identification Systems
- Impact Resistant Doors and Gates

For a full list of allowable costs, please visit <https://www.fema.gov/grants/tools/authorized-equipment-list>.

## APPLYING FOR NSGP FUNDING

If your organization has never pursued funding before, the first step is to act toward becoming grant ready. For a quick video tutorial on best practices on gearing your organization up for grant readiness, please visit <https://www.grantsoffice.com/Grants-Intelligence/Guidance-for-Grantseekers>. These videos offer actionable steps and best practices on your journey towards pursuing NSGP and other grants.

While application requirements may vary by state, some universal components include a site assessment, your organization's mission statement, and the Investment Justification (IJ). A site assessment will identify security vulnerabilities and determine what is needed to address them. Be sure to save all vendor quotes and notes throughout this process, as they will be necessary for the proposal. Your mission statement summarizes your organization's purpose, values, and goals. The IJ is especially important, as it is the scored portion of the proposal and outlines how your funding requests will address the vulnerabilities identified in the site assessment.

If you are a nonprofit organization at heightened risk of a domestic or foreign attack, the Nonprofit Security Grant Program is an opportunity you should consider exploring. By providing much-needed funding for physical and cybersecurity enhancements, the NSGP helps protect these vulnerable organizations, allowing them to continue their work safely. As threats continue to evolve, the NSGP ensures that nonprofits, regardless of size or location, can access the support necessary to safeguard their operations and the communities they serve.

## Program Snapshot

# Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP)

## SUMMARY

The NSGP provides funding support for target hardening and other physical security enhancements to nonprofit organizations that are at high risk of a terrorist attack. The program seeks to integrate the preparedness activities of nonprofit organizations with broader state and local preparedness efforts. The NSGP also serves to promote emergency preparedness coordination and collaboration activities between public and private community representatives as well as state and local government agencies.

Allowable NSGP costs include:

- Planning
- Equipment - Eligible costs must focus on facility hardening and physical & cybersecurity enhancements. This equipment is limited to select items, which can be found in the federal application guidance and the DHS Authorized Equipment List (AEL) at: <https://www.fema.gov/grants/tools/authorized-equipment-list>
- Training & Exercises
- Maintenance and Sustainment
- Contracted Security Personnel
- Management and Administration (M&A) fees - Costs directly relating to the management and administration of IBSGP funds, such as financial management and monitoring. M&A costs may not exceed five percent (5%) of the total grant award.

## ELIGIBILITY

Awards are made to State Administrative Agencies (SAAs). The SAA must pass through 100% of NSGP allocations to eligible nonprofit organizations.

Eligible nonprofit organizations must be: (1) Designated as a 501(c)3 agency; and (2) Determined to be at high risk of a terrorist attack by the Secretary of DHS. Applicants to NSGP-UA must also be located within one of the FY2024 UASI-designated Urban Areas.

## DEADLINE

Deadlines vary by state.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.fema.gov/grants/preparedness/nonprofit-security>



# Invited to Apply: What it Means for Federal Grants

**Shannon M. Day, Senior Grants  
Development Consultant**

When browsing through Grants.gov, you find a grant perfectly aligned with what your organization is trying to accomplish. Say you work in a university's criminal justice program and want to research police practices. You find a seemingly perfect grant, but as you read the eligibility..." Only applicants that received an official invitation letter from NIJ are able and eligible to apply." This "invitation-only" status is a common frustration for grant seekers. So, how do you crack that elusive list and get your foot in the door?

First, let us break down some of the various types of invitations:

- [Emergency Funding](#) is provided for emergencies in which state and local resources are inadequate to protect the lives and property of citizens and/or to enforce criminal law. These funds help offset the costs of an adequate response to an uncommon situation.
- [Administrative Funding Adjustments and Continuation Funding](#) are grants that allow applicants to continue working on funded projects.
- [Pre-applications and Concept Papers](#) are used by funders to "narrow down" a field of applicants. Successful applicants are then invited to submit a full application.
- [Phased Grants](#) are similar to the above but are generally more complex. Phase One is usually an open competitive opportunity, and recipients are invited to apply in Phase Two.
- [Cooperative Agreements](#) are funding opportunities in which the funding is tailored to meet a specific mission. The funding agency plays a more active role in determining project priorities and recipients and is also more directly involved with the recipient in project implementation.
- [Training and Technical Assistance Grants](#) are provided for recipients to support organizations within their field of expertise. These initiatives may be for specific grant programs or specialized missions of the funder organization.
- ["Microgrants"](#) are similar to the above, but the awarded funds are administered by the recipient and awarded to sub-applicants.



Building strong relationships, demonstrating expertise, and staying informed are essential to increase your chances of being invited to apply for federal grants.

Networking with government officials, program officers, and other grantees is crucial. You should attend industry conferences, workshops, and webinars to connect with potential collaborators and learn about upcoming grant opportunities. Having an elevator pitch prepared for those moments when you need it is always a good idea! Reach out to invited applicants and ask how they did it. Joining relevant professional organizations can also expand your network and provide valuable resources.

Demonstrate your organization's expertise and alignment with federal priorities. Highlight your experience, capabilities, and track record of success in the field. Clearly articulate how your project aligns with the goals and objectives of the federal agency. You will increase your chances of being considered for grant invitations by showcasing your qualifications and commitment.

And finally, staying informed and flexible is crucial. Join grant funders' email subscription lists so you do not miss any potential opportunities. You may be able to pivot to another competitive grant opportunity. This is often the first step those invited to apply take in their funding journey.

While finding an otherwise perfect "invitation-only" grant can be discouraging, there are steps you can take to improve your chances of future invitations. You may position yourself and your organization for success with persistence, preparation, and patience.

# An Overview of Healthcare Funding in Rural Areas

Amber Walker, Grants Development Associate (Healthcare)



A major trend in healthcare funding is establishing equity in access to services. This is being realized through service expansions to medically underserved and rural areas across the country. Federal entities, such as the Center for Disease Control and Health Resources Services Administration, the State Offices of Rural Health, and an increasing number of Private and Corporate Foundations are making commitments to support rural health. The rural population is a particular focus for many grant opportunities because of its vulnerability and potential lack of resources, including an increasing number of rural hospital closures. Rural communities have special considerations like high rates of poverty, high rates of maternal and infant mortality, high rates of opioid use and rates of death from substance misuse, healthcare insurance status, and overall access to health services that need to be accommodated. Funders are not only focusing on the symptoms but also the root causes of health disparities. Social determinants of health are non-medical factors that influence and affect health outcomes. Things like access to education, healthy food, education, housing, and other outside forces shape how individuals receive care.

There is a significant focus on strengthening overall health networks in rural areas. Grants like the **Rural Healthcare Services Outreach Program** and the **Delta Health Systems Implementation Program** administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration aim to improve population health outcomes. The Rural Healthcare Services Outreach Program does so by supporting the development of consortiums delivering services in rural areas and the Delta Health Systems Implementation Program does so through intensive, multi-year technical assistance to eligible healthcare facilities located in the Mississippi Delta Region.

To address some of the special considerations for rural populations mentioned above, the Health Resources and Service Administration has developed a series of grants forecasted to be available fall 2024 and early 2025. The **Rural Communities Opioid Response Program-Overdose Response** will support prevention efforts, treatments and recovery services for the substance use disorder crisis in rural areas. The tragic rise of maternal and infant mortality, especially in rural communities, has influenced the creation of **Rural Maternity and Obstetrics Management Strategies Program**. The purpose of this program is to improve access to and delivery of maternity and obstetrics care in rural areas.

Rural specific grant opportunities at the state level are becoming more common as well. Grants like the **Rural Hospital Innovation Grant** administered by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and the **Texas Rural Hospital Broadband Infrastructure Program** administered by the Texas Department of Agriculture are two examples of how states are alleviating some of the financial burden felt by rural hospitals. Opportunities such as these help rural hospitals to deliver the best care to their patients and communities.

Foundations are another avenue for rural facilities to find relief. Entities like the Centene Foundation have established grant programs that are available to nonprofits working in the areas of healthcare access including social determinants of health, social services, or education as it relates to health.

There are many more online resources to further your search for rural community funding opportunities at the federal, state and foundation level. One of the most comprehensive sites that rural organizations can leverage is [ruralhealthinfo.org](https://ruralhealthinfo.org). This website provides an extensive list of active rural health funding opportunities and other useful information for grant seeking organizations, such as a complete list of state office of rural health websites and contact information. If your organization is interested in learning about rurality and eligibility for federal rural health opportunities, you can visit [Defining Rural Population | HRSA](https://www.hrsa.gov/ruralhealth).



# Tips for Drafting a Strong Grant Proposal Budget Justification

Sandy Trowbridge, Grants Development Associate



Budget justifications (sometimes referred to as budget narratives) are a key component of standard grant applications. Most grant applications will also include a cover page, executive summary, needs statement, project narrative, itemized budget, assorted appendices, and other supporting documents. These application components will vary slightly across funders. For example, for the budget portion of an application, some funders may request a complex budget spreadsheet to be accompanied by a detailed budget justification while others may ask for a simple one-page outline of your planned activities and projected total expenses. Some funders limit the budget justification length to a specified number of pages, whereas many other funders will not place a page limit on this section. Some funders may list specific budget categories to be used, while others will leave line-item organization up to your discretion. As such, it is important to pay close attention to the guidelines of the specific funder and solicitation that you are working on and follow those instructions exactly. What follows is some general advice to keep in mind when tackling the budget justification portion of your grant application, regardless of which funder you are applying to.

One thing to highlight is the fact that budgets and budget justifications are core parts of any grant application. They should not be an afterthought and ideally should be tackled early in the process instead of being left to the end. This approach will not only strengthen your budget and budget justification but also your project narrative. The budgeting process forces you to think through each activity in a level of detail that allows you to price it out. And doing so early on allows you to build some of this detail into the project narrative. It also confirms whether what you are proposing to do is financially feasible within the grant's budget ceiling and period of performance. If not, knowing this

sooner rather than later gives you more time to modify the project plan as needed. At the heart of it, grant applications are monetary proposals. You are asking for money from a funder to conduct specific mission-driven activities, so prioritizing budget development early on in your grant application drafting process is a good practice to follow.

## WHAT IS A BUDGET JUSTIFICATION?

A budget justification is a companion to the budget. While the budget spreadsheet identifies all line-item costs required to implement the proposed project, the budget justification provides a narrative explanation of each itemized cost. The key is that this explanation describes both how the costs included in the budget were calculated and why each cost is required to successfully implement the proposed project.

Put simply, the project narrative describes your proposed project in words, the budget describes your proposed project in numbers, and the budget justification describes your proposed budget in words (again, with that added focus on explaining how costs were estimated and confirming why these expenses are needed to carry out the activities detailed within the project narrative). Looking at your budget justification in this way highlights the importance of alignment between all of these proposal components. Your goal is to leave reviewers with absolutely no question as to what it is you plan to do (the specific project activities as detailed in the project narrative), how you plan to do it (what resources will be required to implement those activities within a certain timeframe as detailed in the budget), and ultimately why you need the funding requested through your grant application to be successful in your proposed efforts (as detailed in the budget justification).

## WHAT DOES A BUDGET JUSTIFICATION LOOK LIKE?

To further highlight the importance of this alignment, let us consider a simplified example. Our budget notes that we are requesting \$23,025 for travel, and our project narrative notes that “Project team members will present annual project results at the Education Conference in Washington, D.C...”, and “Project team members will conduct annual focus groups with educators and employers throughout the state....”. Here you can see how the need for a specific cost, like travel, may be implied in the project narrative, and a cost included for this in the budget, but the financial implications may still not be readily apparent to the reviewer. The reviewer might read the project narrative and budget sections and still wonder why we need such a large amount of money for travel. And this is where the budget justification shines. It allows us to expound a bit further so that the reviewer is left with no question as to what our plan is and how specifically we arrived at \$23,025, with the goal that they ultimately agree that all proposed costs are reasonable.

Going back to the definition of a budget justification, we need to make sure that we describe both how the costs included in the budget were estimated and why each cost is required to successfully implement the proposed activity detailed within the project narrative. In the example below, the sentences in blue show how we have estimated the costs, and the sentences in green show why each cost is required. You will note that we are specific with our calculations - showing all of the math that was done to arrive at the overall Travel budget category estimate. We also use the same language that was used in our project narrative, making it easy for reviewers to cross-compare the two application sections. Our project narrative noted that “Project team members will present annual project results at the Education Conference in Washington, D.C.... “ and our budget justification points to that activity. To take this one step further, if your activities are numbered in your project narrative (for example, if the presentation of annual project results at the Education Conference is noted as Component 6 in the project narrative), you can then refer to “Component 6” when costing this out in the budget justification to further aid in highlighting alignment between these application components.

### Example Budget Justification - Travel Section

Travel: \$23,025

We have allocated a total of \$23,025 over five years for conference and project activity travel.

Conference travel is budgeted at \$2,460 per trip per year to allow for **two project team members (the Project Director and Research Lead) to travel from Kansas to Washington, D.C. each year of the five-year project period to present project results at the annual Education Conference. Per trip costs include airfare (\$600/flight x 2 people), three days of lodging (\$225/person x 2 nights), and meals and incidentals (\$60/person x 3 days), totaling \$2,460. \$2,460/trip x 5 years = \$12,300.**

Additionally, \$2,145 is budgeted each year for project team members to conduct focus groups associated with the career pathways research program. We anticipate **two project team members (the Research Lead and Research Assistant) spending 6 days per year (each year of the five-year project period) traveling throughout Kansas state conducting focus groups. Travel costs include mileage for 1,000 miles per year (x \$0.535 per mile), lodging for 2 people (\$95/person x 5 nights), and per diem for 2 people (\$55/person x 6 days). Annual travel costs = \$2,145. \$2,145/year x 5 years = \$10,725.**

Total conference travel of \$12,300 plus total project travel of \$10,725 equals \$23,025 in total travel costs.

## HOW TO GET STARTED WHEN DRAFTING A BUDGET JUSTIFICATION?

When drafting a budget justification, it is helpful to start by reviewing the grant solicitation and wrapping your head around the requirements of the funder. Do they provide a specific template? Do they note any page number limitations? Do they require the inclusion of specific budget line items?

Once you have a handle on this, then start drafting the budget justification side by side with your budget by working through the documents line by line and writing out a narrative explanation for each cost. While doing this, have your project narrative up on the screen as well (if that has already been drafted) for additional context and so that you can appropriately cite specific activity numbers or narrative sections. This will make it easier for the reviewer to track all of the connections and also make sure that all activities noted in the project narrative have an accompanying cost included in the budget. As updates continue to be made to the project narrative as the project scope is refined throughout the process, make sure to reflect all of these changes in the budget and budget justification as well.

The budget justification should address each of the major cost categories in your budget (things like personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, materials, supplies, other direct costs, and indirect costs), as well as any additional categories required by the funder. So, make sure to outline the budget justification in the same order and with the same section headings as your budget. This approach helps both in the writing process and eventual readability and clarity for reviewers.

Additionally, with each section, spend time anticipating the reviewer's questions and providing detailed answers so that they are not left wondering and are less likely to follow up for additional information or simply not fund your project altogether due to lack of clarity. Sometimes this means drafting, then stepping away for a time, and then coming back with fresh eyes or asking a colleague with no familiarity with the project to review it and give feedback. Any questions they have would likely be echoed by reviewers, so it is better to answer those upfront.

## HOW TO REVIEW A BUDGET JUSTIFICATION?

Once your budget justification has been fully drafted, go back through and ask yourself a few questions as detailed in the following budget justification review checklist. If the answer to all these questions is "yes", then have confidence that your budget justification is in good shape. If one or more is "no", then know it is worth revisiting and further refining.

### Budget Justification Review Checklist

#### Clear

- Is it easy to read?
- Is it concise?
- Does it spell out any acronyms or explain any jargon?

#### Organized & Reasonable

- Does it follow the same order as the budget?
- Does it use the same headers as the budget?
- Does it include only costs that are allowable, reasonable, and allocable?

#### Specific

- Will reviewers be able to easily determine and understand how each budget number was calculated?
- Does it clearly explain why each cost is needed to implement the project?

#### Aligned

- Do the project narrative, budget, and budget justification activities all align?
- Do the numbers match across all documents?
- Does it follow all funder and solicitation instructions?

## WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Taking these steps is key as a complete and realistic budget justification demonstrates that your project is well thought out, that you have a clear plan, and that you fully understand the costs that will be required to successfully implement your project's various activities within a specific timeframe. All of this detail builds your credibility in the eyes of the reviewer and gives them greater confidence that your project is worth investing in. Reviewers will typically know a bit about the logistics of implementing the proposed work and the various costs associated with this work, so writing a strong budget justification will also help to convince them that all proposed expenses are necessary and limit the likelihood of reviewers removing your grant request from consideration due to lack of clarity. Ultimately, a budget that is adequately and appropriately justified is the best way to ensure a positive cost analysis by the funder. As we explored throughout this article, there are several simple recommendations that you can follow to improve the quality of your budget justifications, and in so doing, improve your likelihood of grant award.

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