



# Federal Financial Assistance Readiness Guide

by Pecan Street Inc.

# Target Audience

Nonprofit organizations, in the environmental justice (“EJ”) space, with limited experience engaging with the federal government as source of program funding.

# Objectives

- **Inform** - to provide information and point to sources of useful information on federal financial assistance readiness.
- **Empower** - to provide experience-based actionable insights and strategies to aid EJ organizations looking to explore federal funding opportunities.
- **Support** – help organizations in our eco-system with context for seeking / hiring necessary assistance to fill gaps.

# Structure

- Part I – Fundamentals of Accessing Federal Funding.
- Part II – Preparing the Application Package & Award-readiness



# PART I

**Fundamentals of Obtaining Federal Financial Assistance**

# Basics - Sponsor Terms

- Federal Financial Assistance is:
  - a mechanism by which the federal government makes funding available in service of the public.
- Types of Federal Financial Assistance :
  - there are several types, we focus here on two: [grants](#) and [cooperative agreements](#).
- Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA):
  - notice to the public of a federal agency's intention to award funding. Usually includes: award information, eligibility criteria, evaluation criteria, application requirements, and application submission instructions.

# Basics- Applicant Terms

- **Prime Awardee:**
  - is the primary federal award recipient. This is the entity that signs the grant or cooperative agreement with the government and is ultimately responsible and financially accountable for the use of the federal funds received for performance of the project, as well as, legally responsible for carrying out the terms and conditions of the award.
- **Subrecipient:**
  - receives a subaward (under a subaward agreement) from the Prime Awardee to carry out portions of the program. The entity's performance is measured in relation to whether objectives of the program are met and it usually has responsibility for programmatic decision making. Subject to fewer federal compliance responsibilities.
- **Contractor:**
  - receives a contract from the Prime Awardee (or subrecipient, if approved) to purchase goods or provide services needed to carry out the project. The primary difference between the contractor and subrecipient is the substance of the relationship. The contractor is ancillary to the program and may provide goods/services to the org. in its normal course of business. No federal compliance obligations.



# Basics- Award Instruments

## Grant vs. Cooperative Agreements

- The key distinction is **sponsor involvement**.
- Grant - provides funding to support a public purpose with few restrictions and with no substantial involvement expected between the federal agency and recipient when carrying out the activity contemplated in the grant agreement.
- Cooperative agreement - provides funding to support a public purpose with substantial involvement expected between the federal agency and recipient when carrying out the activity contemplated in the cooperative agreement.

**The difference is worth noting in assessing which opportunities are best suited to an organization's capabilities.**



# Funding Sources

These agencies fund projects in the environmental space:

- U.S. Department of Energy (DOE).
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).
- U.S. Department of Defense (DOD).
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).
- U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI).
- U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT).
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).
- U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA).
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS).
- National Science Foundation (NSF)

# Finding Funding Opportunities

## **WWW.GRANTS.GOV**

- All federal agencies publish funding opportunities designated for organizations on **grants.gov**.
- Some agencies also receive FOA application responses and communicate status and decision information to applicants via grants.gov.
- Some agencies notify about FOAs (with a brief synopsis) on grants.gov but only receive application submissions via the particular agency's website.
- Grants.gov is useful as a one-stop-shop for conducting multi-agency FOA searches. Under the "Search Grants" tab, users can enter specific words and phrases, filter by eligibility, agency, and other criteria.
- Grants.gov also allows users set alerts to receive email notices of new FOAs based on the user's desired criteria.

# GRANTS.GOV SEARCH TAB

**GRANTS.GOV** SEARCH: Grant Opportunities | Enter Keyword...

HOME | LEARN GRANTS | **SEARCH GRANTS** | APPLICANTS | MANAGERS | SYSTEM TO SYSTEM | FORMS | CONTACT | SUPPORT

## SEARCH GRANTS

**BASIC SEARCH CRITERIA**

Keyword(s):

Opportunity Number:

CFDA:

**SEARCH**

**OPPORTUNITY STATUS:**

- Forecasted (179)
- Posted (2,091)
- Closed (4,409)
- Archived (56,356)

**- FUNDING INSTRUMENT TYPE:**

- All Funding Instruments
- Cooperative Agreement (850)
- Grant (1,722)
- Other (178)
- Procurement Contract (46)

**- ELIGIBILITY:**

- All Eligibles
- City or township governments (1,078)
- County governments (1,118)
- For-profit organizations (other than start-up businesses) (1,542)
- International public entities (4,016)

**- CATEGORY:**

- All Categories
- Affordable Care Act (6)
- Agriculture (42)
- Arts (see "Cultural Affairs" in CPDA) (24)
- Business and Commerce (30)

**- AGENCY:**

- All Mission Challenge Corporation (MCC)
- All National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) (46)
- All National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) (3)
- All National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) (5)
- All National Endowment for the Humanities

**Search Tips | Export Detailed Data | [View All](#)**

**Sort BY:** Posted Date (descending) | **Update Sort** | **DATE RANGE:** All Access | **Update Date Range**

| Opportunity Number                  | Opportunity Title   | Agency       | Opportunity Status | Posted Date | Closed Date |
|-------------------------------------|---|--------------|--------------------|-------------|-------------|
| <a href="#">BBJLJ018MFS229-2021</a> | Dwight David Eisenhower Transportation Fellowship Program (DDETFP) Grants for Research Partnership (GRP)  | DOT-FHWA     | Posted             | 09/04/2021  | 09/15/2021  |
| <a href="#">PAR-21-283</a>          | Implementing and Sustaining Evidence-Based Mental Health Practices in Low-Resource Settings to Achieve Equity in Outcomes (RSA Clinical Trial Required)   | HHS-MH11     | Posted             | 08/26/2021  | 09/07/2024  |
| <a href="#">PAR-21-284</a>          | Effectiveness of Implementing Sustainable Evidence-Based Mental Health Practices in Low-Resource Settings to Achieve Mental Health Equity for Traditionally Underserved Populations (R01 Clinical Trial Optional)   | HHS-MH11     | Posted             | 08/23/2021  | 09/07/2024  |
| <a href="#">FAUPOFY21005</a>        | Establishing the U.S. Palestinian Affairs Unit aHub   | DOJ-DEA      | Posted             | 08/25/2021  | 09/03/2021  |
| <a href="#">PAR-21-292</a>          | Pilot Studies to Test the Initiation of a Mental Health Family Navigator Model to Promote Early Access, Engagement and Coordination of Needed Mental Health Services for Children and Adolescents (R3a Clinical Trial Required)                           | HHS-MH11     | Posted             | 08/21/2021  | 09/07/2024  |
| <a href="#">PAR-21-294</a>          | Initiation of a Mental Health Family Navigator Model to Promote Early Access, Engagement and Coordination of Needed Mental Health Services for Children and Adolescents (R01 Clinical Trial Required)   | HHS-MH11     | Posted             | 08/23/2021  | 09/07/2024  |
| <a href="#">W911KB-21-1-0013</a>    | USAO Hawaii Recycling Program Field Support   | DOC-COE-AK   | Posted             | 08/23/2021  | 08/22/2021  |
| <a href="#">RFA-HQ-21-033</a>       | Genome Research Experiences to Attract Talented Undergraduates into the Genome Field to Enhance Diversity (R25 Clinical Trial Not Allowed)  | HHS-MH11     | Posted             | 10/21/2021  | 07/31/2023  |
| <a href="#">CDC-RFA-GH22-2221</a>   | Comprehensive High Impact Community Based HIV Prevention, Testing and Treatment Initiation for Sustained Epidemic Control in Lesotho under the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)  | HHS-CDC-CO4  | Forecasted         | 08/03/2021  |             |
| <a href="#">CDC-RFA-GH22-2253</a>   | Strengthening Access to High Quality and Comprehensive Services Targeting Adolescent and Young People in Malawi through Determined, Resilient, AIDS-Free Mentored and Safe (DREAMS) Program under the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) | HHS-CDC-CO4  | Forecasted         | 08/03/2021  |             |
| <a href="#">CDC-RFA-GH22-2234</a>   | Delivering Comprehensive and Sustainable HIV/AIDS Clinical and Community Services to Address HIV Epidemic Control in Subnational Units in Nigeria under the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)   | HHS-CDC-CO4  | Forecasted         | 08/03/2021  |             |
| <a href="#">CDC-RFA-EH22-2201</a>   | Enhancing Disease Detection in Newborns: Building Capacity in Public Health Laboratories  | HHS-CDC-NCEH | Forecasted         | 08/03/2021  |             |
| <a href="#">CDC-RFA-EH22-2252</a>   | Modernizing Environmental Public Health Training to Advance Environmental Health Surveillance   | HHS-CDC-NCEH | Forecasted         | 08/03/2021  |             |
| <a href="#">SS-OCDWS-21-003</a>     | Women's Business Center Initial Phase   | SBA          | Posted             | 08/03/2021  | 08/16/2021  |



# PART II

## Preparing the Application Package & Award-readiness



Microsoft Word  
Document

Sample  
DOE FOA

# Recipient Readiness

All organizations considering applying for federal funding must do/have the following:

1. Pre-application preparation
2. Agency-specific preparation
3. Eligibility assessment
4. Capability assessment
5. Eligibility & Capability Gaps Mitigation
6. Application package preparation and submission
7. Preparation for contract negotiation, program execution, funding administration, and compliance.

# #1 - Pre-application Preparation

# Universal Requirements

All organizations considering applying for federal funding must do/have the following:

1. Obtain an Employer Identification Number (EIN)
  - [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)
2. Obtain a Data Universal Number System (DUNS) Number
  - [fed.gov.dnb.com/webform](http://fed.gov.dnb.com/webform)
3. Register with the System for Award Management (SAM)
  - [www.sam.gov](http://www.sam.gov)
4. Register for a Grants.gov account

Completion timeline: 3 days to 5 weeks, so start early!

## #2 – Agency-specific Preparation



# Agency-specific Preparation

Each federal agency has its specific pre-application requirements. Examples of agency-specific requirements:

1. DOE ARPA-E funding
  - Requires an account on ARPA-E's Funding Portal (<https://arpa-e-foa.energy.gov>).
2. NSF Funding
  - Some proposals require an account on NSF FastLane System or Research.gov
3. EPA, DOT, and other agencies
  - None. Submit applications via grants.gov

It is critical to visit the applicable agency's website and register early (if applicable). Completion timeline can last up to 5 weeks, so start early!

# #3 – Eligibility Assessment

# Eligibility

Is your entity structure listed in the FOA as one of those invited to apply or is it barred from applying?

**Example of an EPA "eligible applicants" list:**

- states or state agencies, territories, city or township governments, county governments, the District of Columbia, American Indian Tribes (federally recognized), and possessions of the U.S.
- public and private universities and colleges, hospitals, laboratories, or public or private nonprofit institutions.
- nonprofit organizations described in Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities as defined in Section 3 of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 **are not eligible to apply for funding.**
- for-profit organizations, including proprietary colleges and universities, **are not eligible.**

**Ineligibility to submit an application is not necessarily dispositive. More on next slides.**

# #4 – Capability Assessment

# Capability

## 2 Main Areas of Capability Assessment

- Programmatic Capability:

Assess existing skills-set and resources; identify and characterize gaps (relative to FOA ask); and determine whether the org. possesses or can acquire the necessary capabilities to adequately perform the scope of work and timely produce the FOA deliverables without jeopardizing its other commitments.

- Administrative Capability:

Assess existing financial systems for org's ability to manage funds in the magnitude of the budget request, comply with procurement standards, perform consistent monthly financial reporting, perform auditable record-keeping, and produce administrative reports/certifications necessary for grant closeout.

**Incapability on some aspects is not necessarily dispositive. More on next slides.**

# #5 – Eligibility & Capability Gaps Mitigation

# Ineligible or Lack Capability?

Orgs can overcome ineligibility / incapability challenges in several ways:

1. **Teaming**: is an arrangement where:

- more than one entity pursues a funding opportunity in a joint application package;
- one eligible entity is deemed the “prime” applicant while the other entities join as subrecipients, contractors, or other participants. An otherwise ineligible or less capable organization could still participate in an FOA as either a subrecipient or contractor.

Benefits of Teaming:

- Efficiencies because team members can complement each other’s unique capabilities.
- Lower risk way for smaller organizations to gain experience with federal funding (ex. with budgeting and progress reporting).
- Where cost-share is required, the team may be more capable.
- An organization with an ineligible structure may be able to participate as subrecipient or contractor.

Note: it is important to read the FOA to ensure that teaming is permitted and the rules specific to each FOA

# Ineligible or Lack Capability?

## 2. Scoping to size:

- Where the burden of compliance is the barrier to application, smaller organizations should detailed-review the FOA for compliance thresholds that they may be able to strategically fall below.
- For example, in the areas of procurement, single audits, vendor management, cost categories (ex. supplies vs. equipment), the proposal narrative can be strategically scoped and budgets developed /structured to fit in a lower compliance category.\*

**Note:** in all cases, receipt of federal funds comes with compliance requirements.



# #6 – Application Package Preparation & Submission

# Application Stages

Application requirements vary by agency; typical decision points are:

- Letter of interest (LOI) submission:
  - Typically, a paragraph notifying agency of interest in submitting an application.
- Concept paper submission: 2-3-page write-up to describe and demonstrate understanding of the problem posed in the FOA; identify how your proposed project will address this challenge; describe why and how your org/team would be best suited to effectively & efficiently execute the work and deliverables; and identify how your project fits the mission/priorities of the funding agency.
  - Usually followed by an agency “encourage” or “discourage” decision. Neither decision bars full application.
- Full application submission:
  - Full proposal package including statement of work, detailed budget, along with supporting schedules required by the agency.

# Full Proposal

- Critical to read and re-read each FOA's specific requirements and follow to the letter.
- Prepare with the reviewer in mind. Each awarding agency is required to review and assess each application to determine the following:
  - ✓ The applicant is eligible for the specified program.
  - ✓ The costs and activities in the application are for allowable, allocable, necessary, and reasonable costs.
  - ✓ The applicant possesses the responsibility, financial management, fiscal integrity, and financial capability to administer federal funds adequately and appropriately.

# EXAMPLE OF A DOE FULL APPLICATION COMPONENTS

(ILLUSTRATION PURPOSES ONLY)

| Submission #                                       | #  | Components   |
|--|----|--|
| Full Application<br>(PDF, unless stated otherwise) | 1  | Technical Volume – 30 page limit                             |
|  | 2  | Statement of Project Objectives - 10 page limit              |
|  | 3  | Application for Federal Assistance (Form SF-424)             |
|  | 4  | Budget Justification (Form EERE 335)                         |
|  | 5  | Summary for Public Release - 1 page limit                    |
|  | 6  | Summary Slide - 1 page limit                                 |
|  | 7  | Subaward Budget Justification, if applicable (Form EERE 335) |
|  | 8  | SF-LLL Disclosure of Lobbying Activities                     |
|  | 9  | Data Management Plan   |
|  | 10 | Letters of Commitment (if applicable)                        |
|  | 11 | Environmental Questionnaire (EQ)                             |

**Note:**

- 1) An org. teaming as a subrecipient would only need to submit #7, #8 and #10 to the lead applicant.
- 2) An org. teaming as a contractor would only need to submit a services price quote to the lead applicant.