



BABY STEPS TO GRANT FUNDING



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Across the country, law enforcement agencies are feeling the pain of steep budget cuts; now, more than ever, it makes sense for agencies that haven't had a clear grant-seeking strategy to adopt one to help keep valuable programs afloat and even implement new projects.

If your agency has not gotten into the grant-seeking game, now might be the time to take a close look at the advantages of securing grant funding to support your department. Here are some simple steps you can follow to get started:

1. Lay the foundation by becoming "grant ready." This means establishing the internal infrastructure to apply for grants and manage funded projects. In other words, you need someone (or a group of people) willing to research funding opportunities, identify the most viable funding agencies, and write proposals. You can establish your own internal grants team consisting of writers, subject matter experts (SME), and fiscal experts. Or, you can consider hiring a grant-writing consultant to do these jobs for you. As for managing grant projects, someone will have to take responsibility for adhering to the terms and conditions of every funded grant, collect the programmatic and fiscal information needed for required reports, and make sure that reports are completed and submitted in a timely fashion. Grants management for smaller funded grants is usually less complicated and time-consuming than for larger grant awards. Keep in mind that managing one or two grants can be pretty simple, but the more successful you are at getting funds, the more grants you will need to manage!

2. Subscribe to grant-seeking resources. If you want to pursue federal grants, then subscribe to grants.gov to receive daily information about funding opportunities. You should also become familiar with the U.S. Department of Justice web site to get advance notice of upcoming funding opportunities. For state grants, check to see if your state department of justice or commission on law enforcement has an e-mail alert system

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you can subscribe to. There are several other funding alerts you can sign up for. For foundation funding, check out the [Foundation Center](#) and its Foundation Search. Also, some foundations will alert potential grantees of their grant programs via e-mail. Consult law enforcement publications for funding alerts you can subscribe to, and ask colleagues for their recommendations.

3. Use larger agencies as resources. Larger law enforcement agencies will have specialized personnel with specific expertise related to grant seeking and grant writing. They will not be placed on your grant teams, but will become a valuable resource for your team. They also can be sources of information about all types of funding agencies. In the best-case scenario, they might have a special long term contact that can serve as a potential funding sources for your agency. In addition, larger agencies within the same jurisdiction can make in-kind contributions by donating their time or expertise to your various projects. Send a letter to the agency head, asking for their support.

4. Develop project or program ideas. Having specific ideas is necessary to secure grant funding. Meet with department heads to discuss the problems they are having or facing. From these problems develop programs or projects that they would like to implement in the next year or two. One of the keys to success in the grants field is to know that long-term planning is crucial. Grants should never be viewed as a "quick fix" to a budget crisis, or as a way to bring in funds to balance a budget that has been beset with shortfalls. Grants are primarily seed money for new programs or projects or funds to develop new technology. Funding agencies want to support projects that will have a positive social impact on the community, not just equipment. To be funded they want to view grantees as "wise investments" of their grant funds, not recipients of money to keep their heads above water. Funding agencies award grants based on the strength of project ideas; if you focus your efforts on developing socially sound projects, the funding is sure to follow.

5. Explore local partnerships. Working with outside partners such as other law enforcement agencies, nonprofit organizations, faith based religious institutions and mental health organizations will strengthen your projects. Most federal agencies are looking for total community envelopment. Including a number of community organizations in your program or project will strengthen your proposals and send a very positive message to potential funding agencies, many of whom might encourage or even require collaboration on projects. By working with partners, you also expand the pool of potential funding agencies available to you. For example, if you are working with a school, you can apply for grants from organizations and programs that support both law enforcement and education and not just those that support law enforcement.