

Find and Apply: Lexington, South Carolina's Success Story

OVERVIEW

CHALLENGE

Mary Louise Resch, Lexington, SC Grants Administrator spent 1 to 1-1/2 hours each day searching for grant opportunities in the same old places. She needed to find and apply for new grant opportunities in a more timely fashion in order to meet the needs of her growing community.

SOLUTION

Grants.gov helped Mary Louise Resch reduce her time searching for grant opportunities by 90% and has identified grant opportunities in areas she never knew existed.

WHY GRANTS.GOV?

Grants.gov is a single website where users can find and apply for more than \$360 billion on competitive Federal grants. Users can register in one place and search and apply for opportunities across all 26 Federal grant-making agencies.

"In an era of economic downturns, deficits, and reductions in funding available through State budget dollars, resources such as Grants.gov become even more critical in helping our community to maintain our quality of life without having to raise taxes," said Daniel P. Breazeale, Sr., Mayor, Lexington, SC. "Local governments...can successfully leverage current budget levels without having to increase the tax burdens on our citizens...The resources provided through Grants.gov makes it easier to identify potential funding sources, apply using an online application process, and complete the reporting process in a more timely and efficient manner."

USER STORY

A Welcome Introduction to Grants.gov

Lexington is the fastest growing municipality in South Carolina with a grants office consisting of one full-time employee, Mary Louise Resch. Resch's job functions include administering applications, award notifications, post-award performance, and reporting, with additional duties including Media Relations Coordinator and Chamber of Commerce Ambassador in the Town of Lexington.

"For a small municipality like ours with limited grants staffing, Grants.gov has been a wonderful time-saving tool," said Resch. "The ability to quickly review, on a daily basis, postings from a variety of Federal agencies is efficient and effective. With Grants.gov, my research time is less than 30 minutes each day. I can review the grant opportunities, forward them to the right parties, and move on to other things."

Prior to learning about Grants.gov by way of a state funding source, Resch estimates that she spent 1-1/2 hours each day researching grant opportunities through individual websites, searching the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance, reading newsletters, etc. Grants.gov has saved Resch and Lexington, SC the bulk of their research time and has freed Resch to focus on other daily duties and priorities.

Grants.gov is easy to use and effective

The whole grants process, according to Resch, flows better with Grants.gov. Instead of signing up at individual websites and scouring newsletters, users can log in, find grant opportunities, and electronically apply.

Users can manually search for grant opportunities, or, like Resch, can sign up to receive email notifications of new grant opportunities that are tailored to their specifications and community needs — alerting them when new grant opportunities come on-line giving users enough time to prepare a thoughtful and complete application without rushing.

"Within one to two weeks we got our first hit after registering online to receive email notifications of opportunity postings," Resch exclaimed. Many Grants.gov users find this feature helpful, with more than 550,000 grant opportunity email notices sent weekly to the grant community.

Help when and how you need it

Resch noted the combination of information, clear instructions and tools available on the website and the personalized communication with Grants.gov Customer Support facilitated much of the process leading to their successes.

"The Customer Service Team was extremely helpful in answering questions with a great desk-side manner and a lot of patience," said Resch. And like with any system, she had some challenges getting started, but felt that there was no problem that the live customer service representative couldn't solve.

The Grants.gov Help Desk is ready and able to walk users through any issues they might have from finding grant opportunities to the submission of their application and anything in-between. As an end user, Resch continued, having an option to communicate beyond an impersonal email

support function, to speak to someone directly and receive timely responses to questions made a big difference.

Opportunities in new places

"Thanks to Grants.gov, we've become aware of funding opportunities that might have been missed or we didn't know to think of, helping us to expand rapidly to meet the growing need for services. The Town of Lexington, SC cannot thank Grants.gov enough and emphasize how valuable it's been to us as end users!" said Resch.

Sometimes, Resch continued to explain, the grant opportunities are in places she would never have thought to look. "I would just focus on the Department of Justice for law enforcement grants but we've become aware of opportunities outside of the box," Resch said.

Grants.gov really works

The Town of Lexington has had several successes. They have been able to leverage local resources to expand a rapidly growing need for services. With the influx of grant awards, the need for tax increases for new services has diminished, and new and innovative programs have been ramped up between budget cycles. The town council has also been proactive in making grant matches.

Lexington is benefiting from Grants.gov in many ways:

- > Research is now more targeted to Lexington's community needs
- > The time spent researching Federal grant funding is significantly reduced
- > No more missed funding opportunities due to program awareness or last minute notices
- > Faster communication and information sharing of potential grant sources among local end users
- > Costs saved on reproduction and postage

Just a few of the recent successful grants awarded to the Town of Lexington making an impact their community include:

- > National Park Service Technical Assistance Grant for the development of parks and trails. The grant will provide a design for new walking and biking trails.
- > U.S. Department of Justice COPS Universal Hiring Program has enabled the Town of Lexington to immediately hire 2 more police officers while integrating the cost for these officers into the town's budget over three years.
- > U.S. Army has funded a pilot project for electronic equipment used in law enforcement activities. The town received a piece of electronic monitoring equipment and the training (including the training travel expenses) for an officer to use it. The monitoring equipment is now being used on the multi-jurisdictional narcotics task force.

A formula that works

Finding and applying for new grant opportunities has gone from tedious searches to new successes in a fraction of the time for the Town of Lexington South Carolina. Now Resch enjoys spending more time on other duties for the town while still securing the grant monies it needs. Using Grants.gov, Resch has access to over 1400 grant opportunities, most she was never aware of, at her fingertips. And with features like e-mail notifications and downloadable attachments and applications Resch does not want to go back to manual searches and the copy machine.

With Grants.gov, Resch admits, the formula works for Lexington, South Carolina.

One Town + One Website = Grants Success.

Grants.gov Features:

Advanced Search Options – Search a wider selection of grants, from a broad search to searches for more specific subject areas

Downloadable Applications – Applications can be completed offline when and where convenient for users. Applications are easily distributed via email as an attachment and submitted electronically at Grants.gov upon completion

Content-Sensitive Help – Customized help and solutions based on the page being viewed so users do not have to hunt and peck for the right help or lose their place on the site

Online Tools – Enhanced FAQs, quick reference guides and online demonstrations guide users through the application process, along with lots of resources to learn more about Grants.gov. Applicant Support Center with helpful links and grant-writing resources to prepare planned and concisely packaged applications

Personalized Support – Complimenting the online help and support features, Grants.gov also provides users with a dedicated Customer Support center providing accessible via email or phone

About Grants.gov

Grants.gov is the single website unifying Federal grants. Through Grants.gov, state, local, and tribal governments, colleges and universities, non-profits, research institutions, and other organizations can access, find, and apply for grants from more than 900 grant programs representing over \$360 billion in annual grant funds offered by the 26 Federal grant-making agencies.

Grants.gov, one of 24 E-government initiatives, is a collaborative effort led by Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Collaborative partners include the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Education, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, Justice, Labor and Transportation, Environmental Protection Agency, National Endowment for the Humanities, and the National Science Foundation.