

**Office of
Congressman Jim Himes
Connecticut's Fourth Congressional District**

*A Federal Grant Resource
Guide for Constituents 2011*

****Special Note from the Congressman:***

I am happy to offer my assistance, and the assistance of my office to help you succeed in your grant research. You might find it helpful to read through this manual and speak to my office before beginning the grant process. Although you, as the grant seeker, are primarily responsible for grant research, grant writing, and the application, we may be able to help narrow your search, recommend an agency with which to start, or perhaps guide you to an existing program that may be a fit.

Finally, for questions or concerns about any other federal issues with a federal agency such as: IRS, Social Security Administration, Medicare, Veteran Affairs, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, and Military, please contact my District Office toll-free at 866.453.0028.

Best of luck,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Hill", with a large, stylized flourish extending from the bottom left of the signature.

I. Introduction

The Congressman's office seeks to be of assistance to constituents, whether state, local and non-profit entities, for-profit businesses and individuals who are seeking resources to fund a variety of projects. The congressional office serves you, as a constituent, not only as a source of information but also as a facilitator with agencies and foundations and, in some cases, as an advocate. Congressional staff, specifically, the Grants Coordinator, Amy Lappos, may help to identify resources and direct you to possible funding sources. Congressional staff is also able to assist in clarifying the intricacies of proposal development, application, and follow-up procedures. In addition, the Congressman's office may write letters of support and act as a liaison between grant seekers and government offices that administer federal grants to help to resolve any issues or problems that may arise during the application process. Be aware that grant writing and research can be extensive and time-consuming, so you should plan accordingly. In addition, most grant application processes are competitive, and applicants may or may not receive favorable results. Unfortunately, assistance from this office does not guarantee funding; however, we will do our best to help you navigate the system.

The Congressional office also works with for-profit entities, including small businesses and with individuals, to identify resources such as loans and benefits to meet their specific needs.

In addition, benefits or loans may be available:

- For individuals looking for government benefits (such as for child or health care, housing or energy costs, disability or veterans needs, or "living assistance"): <http://www.govbenefits.gov>;
- For students seeking financial aid: <http://www.Studentaid.ed.gov>;
- For individuals or entities seeking to start or expand a small business, the federal government provides help in the form of loans, advisory, and technical assistance. See the Small Business Administration (SBA) website at <http://www.sba.gov> to find programs and state or local SBA offices; and
- For individuals seeking information on federal contacts: www.Fedbizopps.gov

While this Resource Guide seeks to provide you with guidance regarding pursuing grants funding for your project, for specific assistance and questions, please feel free to contact: **Amy Lappos, Grants Coordinator at amy.lappos@mail.house.gov**. Should you seek guidance from the Congressman's office, please be sure to fill out in full the Congressman Himes' Grants Assistance Questionnaire, so that the office knows how it can best assist you. *See Attachment A.*

II. Are You Eligible?

As noted above, the Congressman's office is often approached by constituents, including local governments, nonprofit groups, community organizations, small businesses, and individuals, seeking grants for projects. It is important to note that with few exceptions, federal grants are not benefits or entitlements to individuals, but rather are intended for projects serving state, community, and local needs. Most federal funding goes to state and local governments, which in turn may make sub-awards to local entities such as eligible nonprofit organizations. Local governments seeking funds for community services, infrastructure, and economic revitalization may be eligible to tap into state or federal funds. Government assistance may also be available for

nonprofit organizations, including faith-based groups, for initiatives such as establishing soup kitchens or after-school tutoring programs benefitting entire communities.

There are many groups or organizations that are eligible to apply for government grants. Typically, most grantee entities are state or local governments, school districts and educational institutions, public housing organizations, and non-profit organizations, including faith-based entities.

Before starting your application, please feel free to contact Congressman Himes' office to make sure you've done all the necessary preliminary work to be eligible for federal grants. For example, if you need to obtain 501(c)(3) status, you will need to apply through the IRS. It may take anywhere from three months to a year to receive 501(c)(3) status. If you have applied, but have not yet received an answer from the IRS, you can contact our office for assistance.

III. The Grants Process

A. Getting Started

Once you've determined that you are eligible to seek a federal grant, it is important for you to develop a plan and prepare a proposal and budget.

Although different agencies have different requirements for their grant applications, most contain some variations of the list below.

The basic components of a proposal are:

1. Cover letter
2. Proposal summary or abstract
3. Introduction describing the grant seeker or organization
4. Problem statement
5. Project objectives
6. Project methods or design
7. Project evaluation
8. Future funding
9. Project budget

Writing a strong proposal is the most important step in the launch of your project and may take several months to prepare, so be sure to allow yourself plenty of time to develop your plan. Whether you have your proposal complete and ready to go, or need assistance with developing your idea, it may be helpful to take a course in grant writing and project development or work with an agency or web source that offers these services. Project proposal writing resources include:

Blue Green Research Institute: <http://www.workplace.org/bluegreen.asp>

Charter Oak State College course: http://www.charteroak.edu/bb/Syllabi/IDS/IDS_400_printable.cfm

Fairfield University: http://www.fairfield.edu/cas/cas_news.html?id=2648

Cooperation for Public Broadcasting: <http://cpb.org/grants/grantwriting.html>

Council on Foundations: <http://www.cof.org/events/seminars/index.cfm?navItemNumber=14866>

The Foundation Center Proposal Writing Course: <http://fdncenter.org/learn/shortcourse/prop1.html>

School Grants: <http://www.k12grants.org/tips.htm>

The Grantsmanship Center: <http://www.tgci.com/>

University of Wisconsin Proposal Writing: <http://grants.library.wisc.edu/organizations/proposalwebsites.html>

An extensive list of resources and grant writing tips are included in the *CRS Resources for Grantseekers* report and the *CRS How to Develop and Write a Grant Proposal* report, attached to this Guide. See Attachments B and C.

B. Determining Which Grant is Right for You

1. Identifying the Best Possible Funding Source

Once you have prepared your proposal and completed your project budget, you are ready to search for federal grant and assistance programs. The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (<http://www.cfda.gov>), compiled by the General Services Administration, is a complete catalog of all 1,600 federal domestic assistance programs. The site includes important information about the program description, funding, requirement and past awards. You can also find the local contact information for the agency.

If you need help navigating this site, please do not hesitate to contact the Grant Coordinator, Amy Lappos, for assistance. She also can help you find more information about the grant program itself, including opening dates and current funding levels. Note that some grants may not receive funding in this Congress or may already have closed for this fiscal year.

Grants.gov or FedConnect.net are other resources to assist grant seekers regarding when and how to apply for a grant.

Once you chose the grant for which you wish to apply, you can download the grant application package from http://www.grants.gov/applicants/apply_for_grants.jsp.

2. Identifying Types of Grants

Grants are primarily awarded to states or municipalities to sub-grant to local governments, non-profits or organizations.

Categorical Grants: Most federal grants are for specific purposes and include specific requirements. 90% of federal grant money is categorical.

Block Grants: A block grant does not have as many requirements as the categorical grants and allows the state to have more flexibility in allocation for projects. Qualifying projects must address at least one of the national objectives of the program.

Entitlement Grants: Entitlement grants require that any eligible person receive the benefits and are often formula based (*e.g.*, per person award)

Grant Subcategories: Project Grants, Formula Grants, Matching Grants

C. Applying For a Grant

You've determined that you are eligible, developed your plan, proposal and budget and identified a funding source. Now what?

1. Register with Grants.gov

To apply for a grant, you must submit the application through the federal portal, Grants.gov. In order to submit, you first must register online. The registration process may take several weeks so it is important to allow plenty of time for processing.

2. Seek a Pre-Review of your Application

Once you decide to submit a formal grant application for a particular program, the Congressman's office may recommend or arrange a meeting or teleconference for you with agency offices in the district or state. The agency may also provide facts about budget levels, authorizations and appropriations, the amount of money available for the program, the total amount requested in applications on file, the number of applications received, and the number likely to be approved, agency priorities, categories of competition or targets by region, key dates and deadlines, and information on who makes recommendations and decisions.

Another way to get input from the agency early in the process is a pre-review of the application. Some, but not all, agencies provide procedural review of proposals one or two months before the application deadline. Such a review, while not dealing with the substance of the proposal, allows an agency to inform the applicant of any technical problems or omissions to be corrected before the proposal is formally submitted.

The Congressman's office is also willing to review and provide feedback regarding your application. ***You must be mindful to meet all deadlines for grants applications set by the agency or funding organization and the Congressman's office has no ability to alter or extend any such deadlines.***

3. Ask Congressman Himes for a Letter of Support

In connection with your grants application, you may seek a letter of support from the Congressman to be sent to the funding agency directly. The letter may express the Congressman's interest in the project, his desire to be kept informed of developments relating to the application and requesting that the application be given all full and fair consideration under all applicable rules and regulations. In addition, the letter may also request a list of all applicants for the particular grant from the Member's state or district.

To request a letter of support, please complete the Himes' Letter of Support Request Form, attached to Congressman Himes' Grants Assistance Questionnaire. (See Attachment A). This must include:

- Summary of the proposal
- Name and CFDA number of the applicable Federal program
- Grants Officer's name and specific person to address letter
- Application deadline

It is at the Congressman's discretion whether a letter showing support of the grant application will be submitted. The office considers generally the overall "public interest" and the potential public benefits of the proposal or project. Once you provide all requested information, there will be a determination of whether it is appropriate to provide a letter of support. Letters of support are important additions to grant applications, but *they do not guarantee success in the grants process*. Again, the awarding of grants is a competitive process in which the

agency decision is to be made on the merits of the proposal and not on political considerations. Letters of support are submitted directly to the awarding agency, not to the requestor.

Requests for letters of support must be submitted at least 14 days prior to grant application due date. It is also to the office's discretion whether the letter will be sent directly to the awarding agency, with a copy provided to the applicant.

D. Tracking Your Grant

Once your application is submitted, you are able to track the progress of your application on grants.gov. To the extent that you experience difficulty in obtaining a response from the funding agency, the Congressional office may assist in seeking information and updates regarding the status of your application. If the application is successful, the Congressional office will be advised, as will the applicant. If the application is unsuccessful, the Congressional office may seek information from the agency about the reasons and any deficiencies or weaknesses in the application.

The Congressional office documents all requests for assistance and grants applications, successful or otherwise, and draws from that information to provide assistance and guidance to constituents on an ongoing basis.

E. Other Assistance

From time to time, the Congressional office will conduct workshops or publish a e-newsletter regarding grants writing and resources, specific grants opportunities and other information applicable and useful to grants seekers. To ensure that you are aware of both these workshops and are subscribed to the newsletter, please notify Amy Lappos via email. Again, you can always contact the Grants Coordinator, Amy Lappos, at either 866.453.0028 or amy.lappos@mail.house.gov for more information.

GOOD LUCK!