

FEDERAL FUNDING NAVIGATOR GUIDE



 **SARAH MCBRIDE**
— DELAWARE'S  CONGRESSWOMAN —

LETTER FROM REPRESENTATIVE SARAH MCBRIDE

Dear Neighbor,

Thank you for being in touch about opportunities for locating, applying for, and securing federal grant funds. These funds can be a lifeline for our neighbors, but identifying and understanding federal grants can seem daunting. My hope is that this guide will provide clarity and assistance in navigating this process in order to efficiently obtain this critical funding.

Federal grant funding comes from federal agencies with the goal of providing new and existing projects with funds to deliver on public needs. In short: it is putting federal dollars to work in a way that benefits the public good of the greatest state in the Union.

Navigating federal agency language is no small feat—and I hope that we can help you begin the process of navigating the funding process so that we can, together, better communities up and down Delaware. Let's look ahead to ensure that Delaware isn't just catching up to the present but leading the future.

If you have any concerns or questions, please do not hesitate to reach out and my team will be happy to assist you however way we can.

Sincerely,



SARAH MCBRIDE
DELAWARE'S CONGRESSWOMAN

STAY CONNECTED:

I'm committed to keeping you informed and engaged, which is why I share updates about my votes, legislative activities, and district work across all of my social media channels—including Facebook, X, Instagram, and Bluesky. I also invite you to explore my official website at mcbride.house.gov, where you can track legislation, learn about my initiatives, and access a wealth of resources, including our grant guidance and other constituent services.



 [MCBRIDE.HOUSE.GOV/CONTACT](https://mcbride.house.gov/contact)

 [CONGRESSWOMANSARAHMCBRIDE](https://www.instagram.com/congresswomansarahmcbride)

 [REP_MCBRIDE](https://twitter.com/REP_MCBRIDE)

 [CONGRESSWOMANSARAHMCBRIDE](https://www.facebook.com/congresswomansarahmcbride)

 [MCBRIDE.HOUSE.GOV](https://mcbride.house.gov)

FROM IDEA TO APPLICATION: BEGINNING YOUR FUNDING JOURNEY

As your representative in Congress, I understand firsthand that applying for federal grants can be a complex and time-consuming process. That's why I've prepared this guide—to help clarify the steps involved and empower you to pursue funding opportunities with confidence.

In this section, I'll walk you through how to:

- Determine which types of federal funding your organization is eligible for
- Launch a targeted search for grant opportunities
- Craft and submit strong, competitive proposals
- Obtain the critical letters of support that can enhance your application

With growing fiscal pressures at the federal level, agencies must ensure taxpayer dollars go toward projects that demonstrate clear impact and community support. Therefore, it's essential not only to meet eligibility criteria but also to make your proposal stand out.

I STRONGLY ENCOURAGE YOU TO:

1. Start early — both searching for funding and building your proposal can take months.
2. Track deadlines meticulously — missing even one can disqualify your application.
3. Leverage resources — connect with colleagues experienced in grants, tap into regional support networks, or use services offered by my office and others.

My office is here to help! We can answer logistical questions, assist with letters of support, and connect you to agency contacts or other resources as needed. If you find a part of this process confusing or need more personalized assistance, please reach out to my team—we're committed to working with you every step of the way.

Let's work together to ensure your proposals are timely, competitive, and reflect the strong leadership and innovation of our community.

WASHINGTON, DC OFFICE

1306 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: (202) 225.4165

GEORGETOWN OFFICE

28 The Circle, Suite 2
Georgetown, DE 19947
Phone: (302) 752.9140

WILMINGTON OFFICE

1105 N Market Street, Suite 400
Wilmington, DE 19801
Phone: (302) 830.2330

ELIGIBILITY ESSENTIALS: LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR GRANT SUCCESS

Before you begin your search or apply for federal funding, it's important to understand whether your organization is eligible. Different types of grants are often tailored to specific groups—meaning what's available to local governments or nonprofits may not apply to small businesses or individuals, and vice versa. The first step is identifying the type of organization you represent. To help guide you, I've outlined some of the most common types of eligible applicants below:

GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS

- State and Local Governments
- City or Township Governments
- Special District Governments
- Native American Tribal Governments

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

- Independent School Districts
- Public and State-Controlled Institutions of Higher Education
- Private Institutions of Higher Education

PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITIES

- Public Housing Agencies
- Indian Housing Authorities

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

- Nonprofits with 501(c)(3) IRS status
- Nonprofits without 501(c)(3) IRS status

Understanding where you fit helps ensure your time is well spent pursuing the opportunities best suited to your mission! Eligibility is highly dependent on the specific grant you are applying for. Carefully review the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for detailed requirements. You can also verify your eligibility at [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) or through the individual agency's grant posting.

At the federal level, grants for individuals and certain types of organizations are more limited in scope. Typically, students, small businesses, and individuals seeking government benefits or personal assistance aren't eligible for most federal grant programs. That said, while direct funding opportunities may be harder to come by for these groups, there are still many federal and state-run programs designed specifically to provide meaningful support.

STUDENTS:

While students and recent graduates don't typically qualify for federal grants, there are still important resources available to help fund your education. The U.S. Department of Education offers student loan repayment programs and other financial aid opportunities tailored to students' needs. You can explore these options by visiting [StudentAid.gov](https://studentaid.gov). Additional resources can also be found at [Planning and Paying for College: Federal Government Resources](#).

INDIVIDUALS:

Individuals must submit applications on their own behalf and are not eligible for grants that are specifically intended for organizations. If you're seeking personal financial assistance or government benefit programs, I encourage you to visit [USA.gov](https://www.usa.gov) and [Benefits.gov](https://www.benefits.gov) for trusted, up-to-date information and available resources. These platforms are excellent starting points for finding support tailored to individual needs.

SMALL BUSINESSES:

Small business grants and loan programs are managed through the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). If you're a small business owner looking for funding opportunities, I encourage you to explore the resources available at [SBA.gov](https://www.sba.gov) and the [Delaware Small Business Development Center \(SBDC\)](#). The SBA and SBDC offer valuable guidance and programs designed to support entrepreneurs at every stage. Additional resources can be found at [Connecting Constituents with Federal Assistance for Businesses](#).

YOUR FUNDING MATCH: HOW TO FIND THE RIGHT GRANT OPPORTUNITY

Over the past few years, the federal funding process has become much more streamlined. A good starting point for finding opportunities is the Assistance Listings on [SAM.gov](https://www.sam.gov) and [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). These websites serve as centralized databases of federal funding opportunities and are updated daily. I encourage you to check them regularly, as new funding opportunities are posted frequently—and many come with short application windows.

SAM.GOV

Formerly known as the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA), the Assistance Listings at [SAM.gov](https://www.sam.gov) provide a searchable database that includes detailed information on over 2,000 federal assistance programs. These listings cover both financial and non-financial support available to individuals, nonprofits, small businesses, and government entities.

The site allows you to search by agency, keyword, program type (such as project grants or direct loans), and more. Its advanced search tools help you quickly narrow your results based on the specific needs of your organization. Each listing includes key details like program descriptions, eligibility requirements, deadlines, and agency points of contact. The Assistance Listings also highlight newly added or closed opportunities, saving you time and helping you stay current with what's available. Whether you're exploring funding for the first time or refining your search, [SAM.gov](https://www.sam.gov) is an essential resource.

GRANTS.GOV

Managed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) provides standardized access to over 1,000 grant programs from dozens of federal agencies.

Once you've identified a program that fits your goals, this site will allow you to review current solicitations, download application packages, and submit proposals directly. Registration is required, but you only need to do it once to apply for as many grants as you wish. The platform is designed to simplify the process and make it easier for individuals, nonprofits, and governments to access federal support.



DELAWARE STATE GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to federal programs, the State of Delaware offers its own grant opportunities tailored to our communities. To explore those, I encourage you to visit [Delaware.gov](https://www.delaware.gov) or check out [Delaware Office of Management and Budget](https://www.delaware.gov/omb). These resources are an excellent way to stay informed about local and state-level funding available for individuals, nonprofits, and public agencies.

For a more detailed explanation of how to locate funding opportunities, please visit [Searching for Federal Grants: An Overview of Resources](#).

THE GRANT LIFECYCLE

Every federal grant opportunity follows a structured, step-by-step process—from its initial announcement all the way through final reporting. Understanding this grant lifecycle is essential to being a strong applicant and successful award recipient. Generally, this process is grouped into four main phases:



- **Pre-Award Phase** – Finding funding opportunities and submitting applications
- **Award Phase** – Receiving notification of award decisions
- **Post-Award Phase** – Implementing the grant and reporting progress
- **Close-Out Award Phase** – Submit final reports

PRE-AWARD PHASE

The pre-award phase marks the beginning of your grant journey. During this time, a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) is published, outlining all eligibility criteria, deadlines, application instructions, and program goals. This is your opportunity to review the requirements, assess your fit, and submit a complete and compelling application.

Once submitted, the awarding agency will review your proposal through a series of steps:

- First, they conduct an initial screening to ensure the application is complete.
- Then, a substantive review of your program approach and impact is performed.
- A financial review of your proposed budget follows to confirm feasibility and compliance.
- Finally, award decisions are made, and selected applicants are notified.

AWARD PHASE

If your application is selected, you'll receive a Notice of Award (NOA)—the official document confirming your selection. Once accepted, you and your organization take on the legal responsibility of fulfilling all the terms and conditions outlined in the grant. It's critical to read this document carefully, as it forms the foundation of your grant's implementation.

POST-AWARD PHASE

The post-award phase begins once funding is received and implementation begins. At this stage, your organization is responsible for delivering the proposed work and meeting any reporting requirements. Federal agencies provide support and oversight to help ensure compliance with grant terms.

Reporting timelines and expectations vary from grant to grant but generally include both financial and programmatic updates. These are key to maintaining transparency, ensuring ethical use of public funds, and preventing fraud or misuse.

CLOSE-OUT AWARD PHASE

When the period of performance ends, the closeout process begins. This requires submitting final reports—financial, performance, and administrative—often within 90 days of the grant's end date. Once the agency verifies that all requirements have been met and reports reviewed, the grant is formally closed. Keep in mind that most recipients are also required to retain their grant records for at least three years following the final report submission.

Navigating this process can seem daunting at first, but with the right preparation and support, it's entirely manageable.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER: SUBMITTING A STRONG APPLICATION

Once you've identified a grant program that aligns with your needs—whether through the [Assistance Listings on SAM.gov](#) or by browsing opportunities on [Grants.gov](#)—it's time to begin the application process. I understand this can feel intimidating. Submitting a federal grant application takes time, attention to detail, and thoughtful preparation. Before you start drafting your proposal, I strongly encourage you to contact the program's point of contact listed on the opportunity page. This person can answer specific questions, clarify deadlines, and help ensure your application aligns with the agency's expectations. If no contact is listed, check the agency's website directly—they often have additional guidance available.

REGISTERING ON SAM.GOV AND GRANTS.GOV

Most federal grant applications are submitted through [Grants.gov](#), the government's online system for finding and applying for funding opportunities. However, before you can apply, your organization must first be registered in SAM.gov, the federal government's official system for entity registration and identification.

TO GET STARTED:

- Obtain a Unique Entity ID (UEI) through [SAM.gov](#) – this has replaced the DUNS number as the official federal entity identifier.
- Register your entity in [SAM.gov](#) – this must be renewed annually and includes essential financial and organizational details.
- Create a [Grants.gov](#) account and link it to your [SAM.gov](#) registration.

Once your [SAM.gov](#) registration is complete, [Grants.gov](#) allows you to search for opportunities, register as an applicant, and submit applications to grant-making agencies. The site offers step-by-step guidance, along with helpful features such as email alerts for new opportunities and upcoming deadlines.

[Grants.gov](#) provides helpful tutorials to guide you through each stage of the process. Because the full registration process can take several weeks, I strongly urge you to begin as early as possible—many applicants miss submission deadlines simply because they didn't register in time.

SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION AND PROPOSAL

A strong grant proposal is clear, persuasive, and tailored to the specific funding opportunity. It should explain why your organization needs the funding, how the funds will be used, and the impact you intend to achieve. Your proposal must be well-organized and free of spelling or grammatical errors. I recommend having several colleagues or partners review your application before submission to ensure it's polished and complete.

Lastly, always review the specific submission requirements listed in each funding opportunity—these can vary significantly between programs. If you are applying through an individual agency rather than [Grants.gov](#), reach out early to that agency's program officer to confirm the required submission method and documentation.

For a more detailed explanation of how to develop and write a grant proposal, please visit [How to Develop and Write a Grant Proposal](#).

OBTAINING LETTERS OF SUPPORT

Community support can make a real difference in the success of your grant application. Many federal funding opportunities require—or strongly recommend—letters of support as part of the application package. Once you've developed a summary of your proposal, I encourage you to begin identifying individuals and organizations who may be willing to endorse your efforts in writing. These can include leaders in professional, academic, political, or community-based spaces. The quality and credibility of these letters can play an important role during the review process by reinforcing your organization's capacity and the importance of your project.

When reaching out for letters of support, you should do so as early as possible and be sure to include:

- A description of your organization
- A copy of your proposal summary
- The name and contact information for the head of the grant program or agency
- A sample letter of support tailored to the funding opportunity

While my office does not play a role in the decision-making process for federal funding, I am more than happy to offer a letter of support when appropriate. If you'd like to request a letter, please provide my staff with a draft version of the letter, background on your organization, and a clear explanation of how the funding would benefit your mission and the broader Delaware community.

All requests for letters of support should be submitted to my Wilmington District Office:

WILMINGTON OFFICE

1105 N. Market Street, Suite 400
Wilmington, DE 19801
Phone: (302) 830.2330

Please submit your request at least two weeks in advance of the application deadline. I understand that tight timelines are sometimes unavoidable, so if you're facing an urgent deadline, I ask that you call my office to speak with a staff member directly—we will do our best to accommodate you.



TRACKING YOUR APPLICATION

If you've submitted your application through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov), you can track its status directly through the platform. It's also a good idea to follow up with the point of contact listed for the specific grant opportunity—they can often provide more detailed insight into the review process and timing for award decisions.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Thank you for taking the time to explore this guide to federal grant funding. Navigating the application process step-by-step—from confirming eligibility and searching available opportunities to registering, preparing your proposal, and submitting your application—can be challenging, but it doesn't have to be overwhelming.

I believe strongly in empowering Delawareans and community organizations with the tools and support they need to succeed. It's my commitment to ensure transparency, accessibility, and responsiveness every step of the way. Whether you're just starting to explore funding opportunities or seeking guidance on navigating the federal grants process, my office is ready to assist:

- **Reach out** if you need help understanding eligibility, navigating [SAM.gov](https://www.sam.gov) or [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov), or connecting with federal program officers.
- **Request letters of support** early and with sufficient lead time to make meaningful contributions to your application.
- **Stay confident and organized** at every stage—your attention to detail matters.

Delaware's communities thrive when individuals and organizations have access to the resources they need to make a positive impact. I'm honored to serve and advocate on your behalf. Wishing you success in your endeavors. Together, we'll secure the resources to build a stronger, more vibrant Delaware.



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