



IMPORTANT FIRST STEP TO APPLY FOR FEDERAL GRANTS:

An organization must register with SAM.gov and Grants.gov to be eligible for federal grants. It is essential to register as early as possible. Registration can take up to 10 business days in a best case scenario, but the process can take several months if there are errors or other issues with the application.

SAM.gov is a registry for all organizations that do business with the federal government. It centralizes information about grant applicants and enables applicants to change organizational information if necessary. An organization must register with SAM.gov to obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), which is a 12-character alphanumeric identifier. The organization must also designate an E-Business Point of Contact (EBiz POC). Registering with SAM.gov is free, and registration must be renewed each year. You can watch this [Environmental Protection Network webinar](https://www.environmentalprotectionnetwork.org/sam-gov-registration-webinar/) (<https://www.environmentalprotectionnetwork.org/sam-gov-registration-webinar/>) for specific guidance on registering for SAM.gov.

A UEI is different from an Employer Identification Number (EIN), which is also known as a Federal Tax Identification Number. The IRS uses an EIN to identify a business entity, which is defined with [specific criteria, found here](https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/do-you-need-an-ein) (<https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/do-you-need-an-ein>).

After obtaining the UEI for the organization from SAM.gov, an organization must go to Grants.gov to continue the registration process to be eligible for federal grants. The organization's EBiz POC must create a Grants.gov account with the same email address they used in SAM.gov. The EBiz POC must then add a profile to Grants.gov using the UEI. The EBiz POC can then delegate administrative roles to other users in the organization. Registering with Grants.gov is free. [This webpage](https://www.epa.gov/grants/how-register-apply-grants) (<https://www.epa.gov/grants/how-register-apply-grants>) provides good written guidance on signing up for SAM.gov and Grants.gov (even though it is an EPA webpage, the guidance applies for any federal grants).

Overview of the Federal Funding Process

The Basics

The U.S. federal government makes money mostly through collecting taxes, but it also generates revenue through other methods like customs duties on imports, national parks admissions, and annual license fees on businesses. The federal government then provides funding to many organizations and individuals to support a wide variety of projects. Congress, which is made up of the House and Senate, is responsible for allocating this money. Members of the House and Senate write legislation (laws and policies) that determine funding amounts, as well as criteria for funding, and this legislation must then must be passed after a vote in both the House and Senate before being signed into law by the President. The Office of the President provides guidance as needed on how to use this funding, and federal agencies (like the Environmental Protection Agency or Department of Transportation) provide information about how they will use the available funds and distribute them to organizations and individuals across the country.

Funding Solicitation and Applications

Federal agencies open funding opportunities to the public through multiple avenues, including requests for proposals, program solicitations, and funding announcements. Funding opportunities come in many forms, with grants, loans, and tax credits being the most common. Each funding opportunity is generally attached to a specific program or group of programs. The agencies provide information about the relevant program, including the program's objectives, eligibility criteria, application deadlines, and the amount of funding that is available. Potential applicants generally must submit an application to show the hosting agency why they are a good fit for the specific program and indicate how they plan to use the funding if they were to receive it, or they may need to provide detailed information to show why they are eligible for a funding program.

Application Review

Agencies begin reviewing submitted applications once an application deadline passes. The specific review process for each funding opportunity differs depending on the agency and nature of the funding, but the review process generally follows these three steps:

1. Initial Application Screening
2. Deeper Review and Assessment of Application
3. Financial Review of Budget

The initial application screening determines whether an application meets basic minimum requirements, such as inclusion of all required documents and whether the application is fully complete. The substance of the application is not important during this step; if an application does not meet the funding opportunity requirements, it will be rejected, and if it does meet the requirements, it will move to the deeper review and assessment of its content.

During this second step, the agency reviews the content of the application to assess its quality and to determine whether the proposal may be a good fit to be funded. If the agency's reviewers like the application, the final step is to review the proposal's budget. The budget must be comprehensive and accurate, and it needs to be in compliance with relevant regulations. The agency must consider the total amount of funding it has available for a specific program when assessing individual application budgets.

Once each review step is complete, the award decision or decisions are made, and the award is announced. Successful applicants will receive a Notice of Award. It is possible that successful applicants will need to provide additional clarification or documentation before receiving funds.

Post-Award Administration

When an applicant accepts an award, they are legally obligated to carry out the full conditions of the funding. This includes implementing the funding, reporting on the program progress, and providing concluding reports about the program that the funding supported.

Additional Information

- Lawyers for Good Government's (L4GG) resource webpage for accessing federal funding
 - <https://www.lawyersforgoodgovernment.org/l4gg-climate-change-resources>
- Guidance from Environmental Protection Network on accessing federal funding, including information on a few specific federal grants
 - <https://www.environmentalprotectionnetwork.org/category/access-federal-funding/>
- More information about signing up for SAM.gov and Grants.gov
 - <https://www.grants.gov/applicants/registration.html>

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