Grants 101

** This guide is designed to assist you with the initial steps to grant development, submission, and guidance for communicating directly with the Federal level Contracting Officers through email and other communication options. **

Step 1 – Active System for Award Management (SAM) Registration

Your System for Award Management (SAM) Registration is the method in which your business or nonprofit entity will get paid when you submit and win a grant with any Federal level government entities, and some State level government entities.

Within the SAM registration there are supplemental registrations that need to be optimized. These include: FEMA Disaster Recovery Relief Registration, Department of Defense (DOD) Registration, and IRS Business Registration. These registrations are all databases that Contracting and Grant Officers use on a daily basis to search for vendors for product or services, as well as any type of set a side contracting that involves small business certifications. They also verify the eligibility for the applicable grants when an entity applies through these various database systems.

This registration will also include a valued piece of information for the next step your Marketing Partner Identification Number (MPIN). This is a unique identifier that is created for the purpose of IRS verification, and it is utilized in the setup and search queries for your grants registration in step 2.

With all of these registrations optimized and complete, either by your own staff, or with the assistance of a registration professional you are ready for the next step.

Step 2 – Getting Grants.gov Registration Active and Optimized

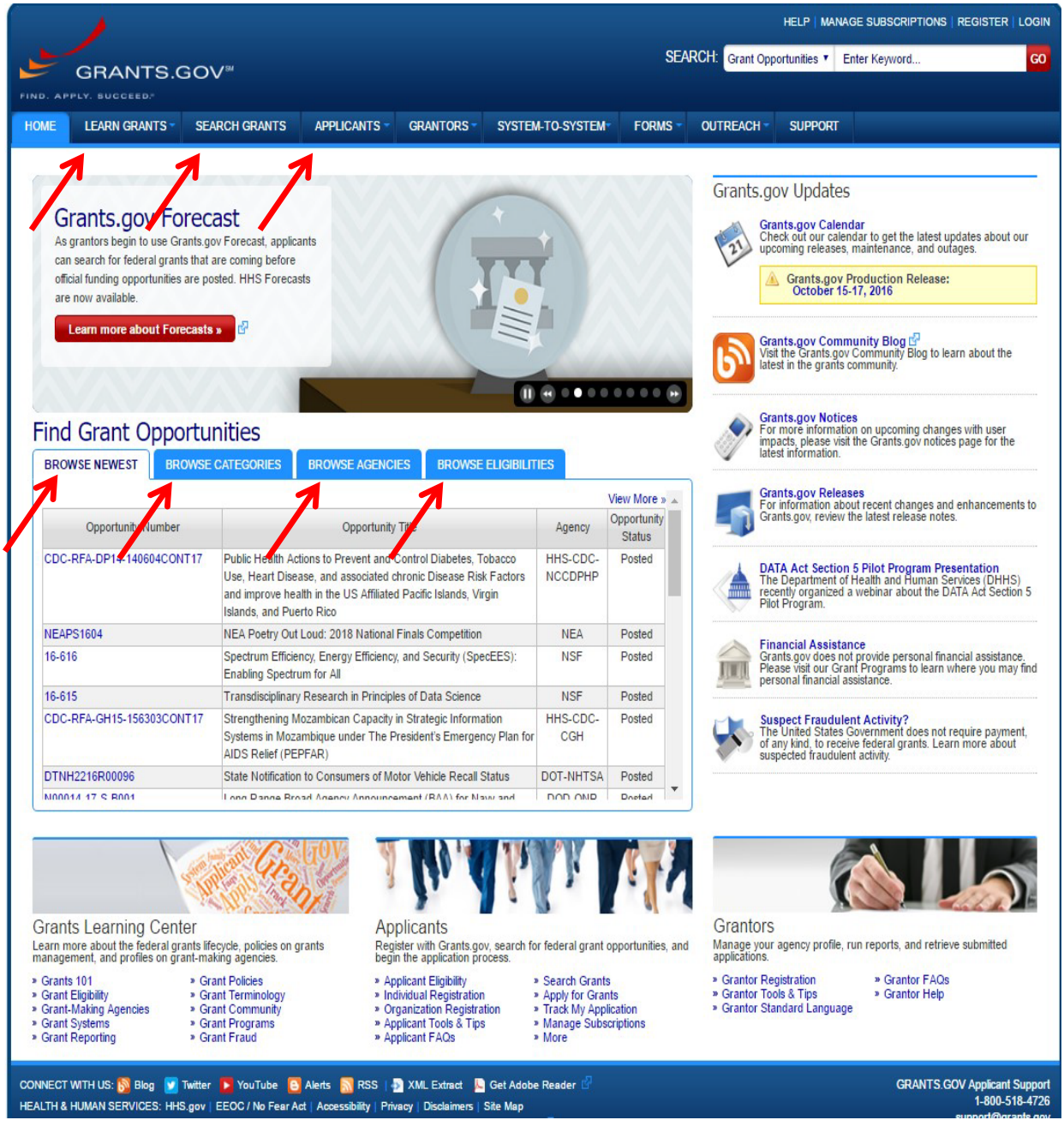
Your Grants.gov registration is the method in which your entity will field, research, get email notifications, and submit open grant funding opportunities direct to the funding federal or state entity that is funding the open grant opportunity.

You will use your MPIN as part of the initial Grants.gov registration process. This is taken directly from your System For Award Management (SAM) registration.

With this and all registrations on a federal and state level they can be completed, either by your own staff, or with the assistance of a registration professional. With this stage complete you are ready to begin the preparation process for grant submission.

The following pages have the initial assistance for navigating and registering for the Grants.gov Vendor portal.

2.1 – Grants.gov Home Page



The homepage of Grants.gov holds many fields of information. Following the image on the previous page and the red arrows the following pages will detail out the different areas of the website that are important to familiarize yourself with prior to your first attempt at grant development and submission.

All of the following areas have detailed images within the following pages

Learn Grants is an important resource that assists the newcomer with the grant development and submission process with formal federal resources.

Search Grants is the resource that the interested entity uses to find and field grant opportunities. The home page also has a quick search section identified in the light blue headings in the middle of the homepage that title: Browse Newest, Browse Categories, Browse Agencies, and Browse Eligibilities.

Applicants: This tab identified at the top of the home page is a wealth of resources for the new applicant and the veteran applicant alike.

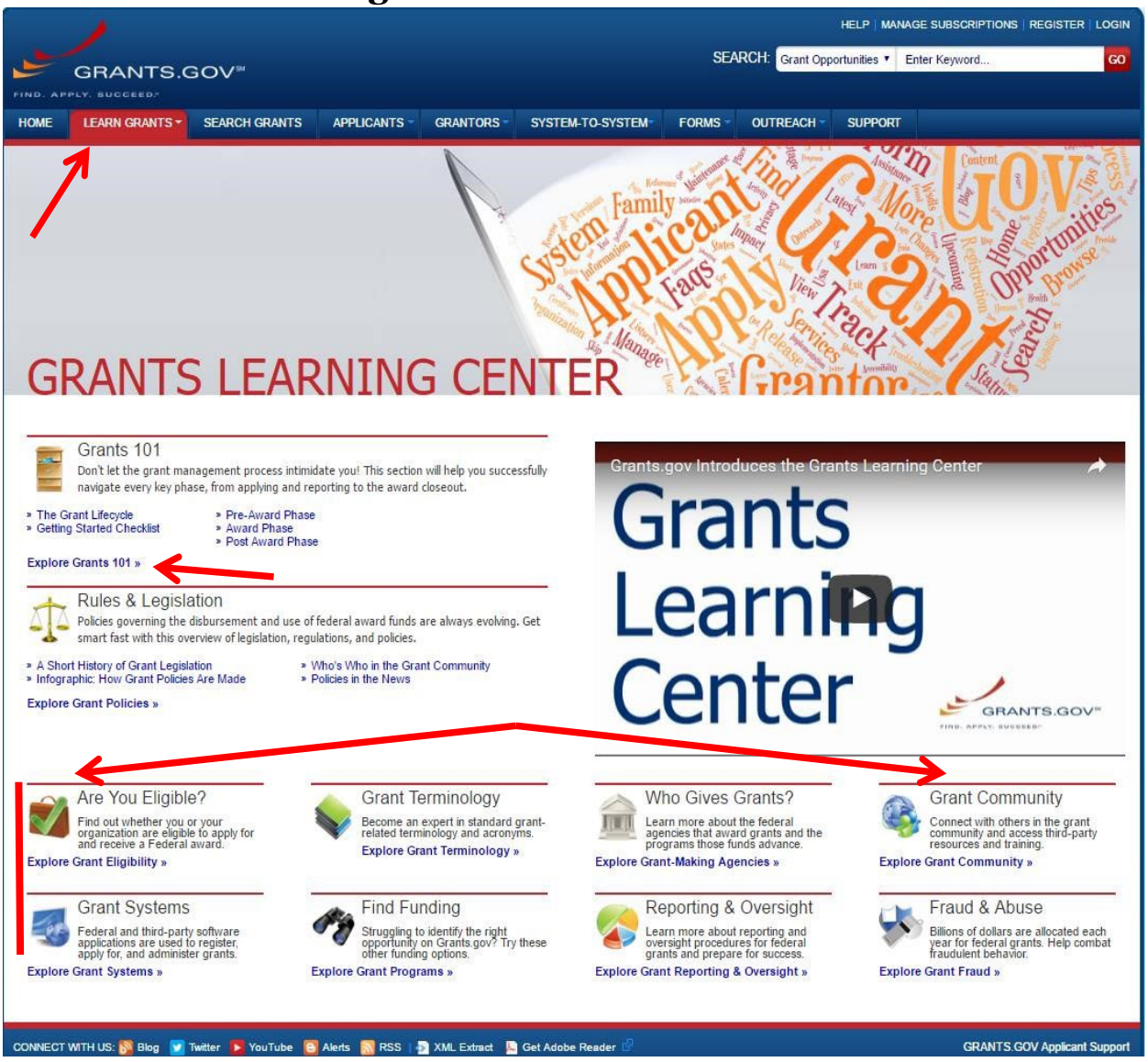
Browse Newest: This is the tab that will show all the newest grant opportunities posted.

Browse Categories: This tab shows the grant postings by category.

Browse Agencies: This tab shows grant opportunities by funding agency.

Browse Eligibilities: This tab shows the requirements that must be met for grants.

2.2 – Grants Learning Center



This page has hundreds of resources for the first time grant applicant. Everything you need to know from eligibility requirements to federal and state compliance are within the data on this set of pages. This page also explains the entire grant process. If you have the time this is the page that you will use as a guide for the entire grant process. Most business or nonprofit organizers or owners do not have the time to navigate through this section. That is where a grant professional can be used.

2.3 – Applicants

This page has many tools that can assist the applicant throughout the entire grant process.

Check Your Eligibility: This section will walk you through the different aspects to checking your eligibility on a general basis that applies to most grants. For grant specific requirements you will review the specific grant posting and requirements section of the opportunity.

Get Registered: This section will assist with the applicant getting registered through the grants.gov portal to be eligible to field, evaluate, prepare, and submit specific grants.

Apply For Grants: This section will give information on the actual process of application for specific grant opportunities that are open and posted.

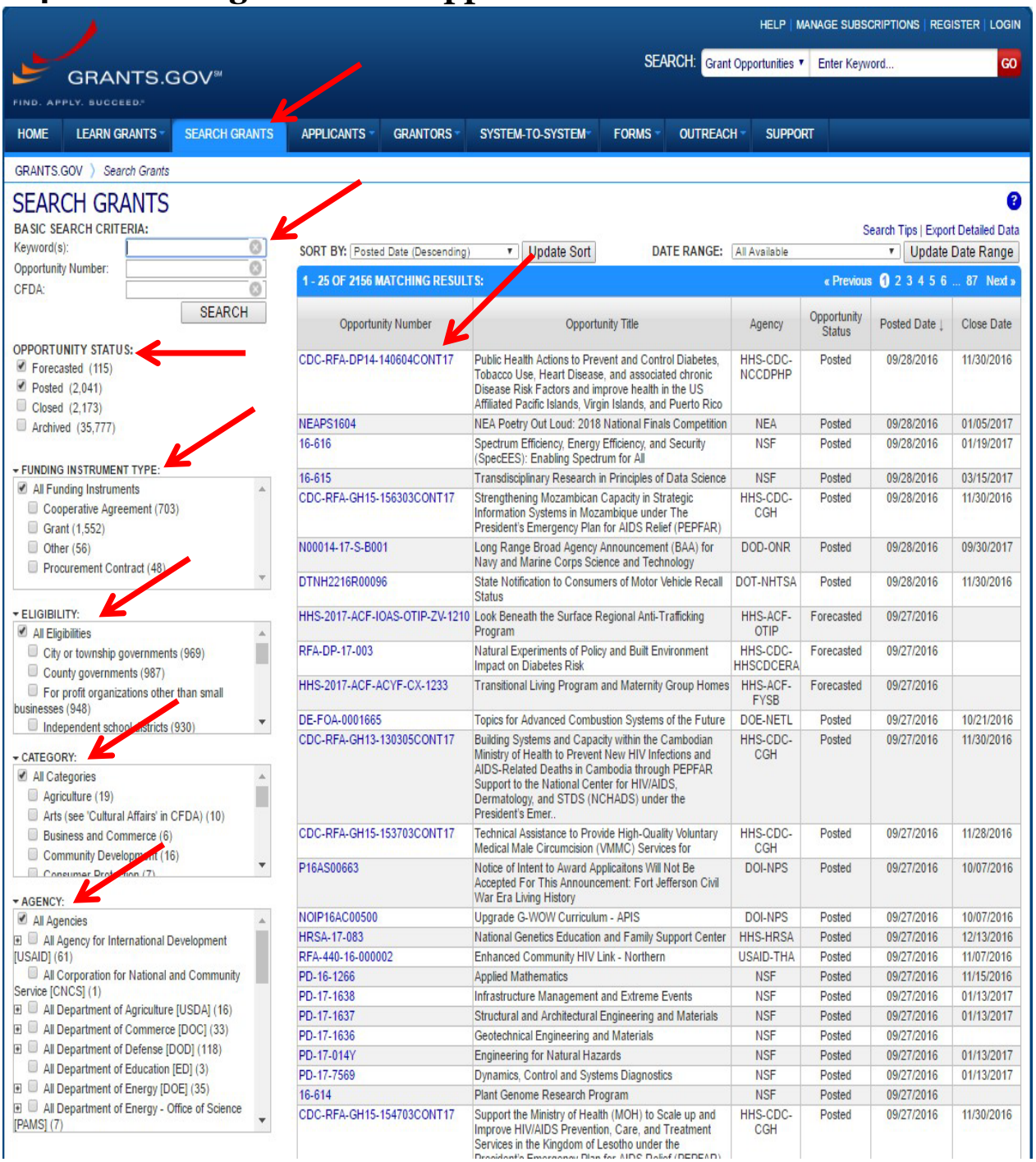
Track Your Application: This section assists the applicant with tracking their submission and any further requirements once submitted.

Tools & Tips – Applicant FAQs: These sections have resources to assist with any questions that an applicant or registrant may have within the process of registering and submitting grants.

Manage Subscriptions: This section allows you to customize the notifications you receive from the new grants that are posted.

Above is an example of the process flow for grant submission from beginning to end. This is an example of one of the hundreds of resources available within the website.

2.4 – Searching For Grant Opportunities



This page shows the different discriminators that you can use to search for grants. This is more in-depth and detailed searching than the basic search found on the home page.

Basic Search Criteria: You can search here for a simplified search with Keywords, a grant or opportunity number if known, or CFDA criteria if known for a specific grant opportunity.

Funding Instrument Type: You can select different types of grant opportunities here for whatever your needs may require.

Eligibility: You can filter the search further by eligibility type using this search section.

Category: This section allows you to search by grant opportunity category.

Agency: This filter allows you to select the funding agency as a discriminator.

Opportunity Number: This section shows carious details about the grant search results. The blue link under Opportunity Number heading, if clicked, will bring the user directly to the grant posting. This is where you can download the grant package and all the requirements are posted.

Opportunity Title: This is the official title of the grant opportunity.

Agency: This is the coding for the funding agency that posted and is funding the grant.

Opportunity Status: This is the current status of the grant. This will let you know if it is open for submission, pending funding, or awarded.

Posted Date: This is the date that the grant was posted to the system.

Close Date: This is the date that all grant submission must be uploaded and finalized for review.

The next section will bring you through the steps you should be taking after the initial registrations are complete and you are ready to meet internally to determine if you are going to bid on a specific grant opportunity identified as obtainable within your organization.

Step 3 – Grant Process 3.1 Applying for a grant

Step 1: Download an Application Package

How to Download an Application Package (Single- or Multi-Project)
Everyone will complete steps one through nine, but from that point the process diverges based on whether you are downloading a single-project or a multi-project application package.

1. Access the View Grant Opportunity page by clicking the Funding Opportunity Number link in the Search Grants results.
2. Click the Package tab on the View Grant Opportunity page.
3. Click the Select Package link under the Actions column for the application package you wish to download.
4. Review the on-screen information to confirm that you are downloading the correct application package.

5. Decide whether to enroll in automated email notifications. These emails notify you, the applicant, when the application package was changed and republished on Grants.gov by the grant-making agency.
6. A message will appear on-screen confirming your decision either to register for the notifications or to elect not to receive the change notifications.
7. Click on the Download Instructions link.
8. Thoroughly review the Application Instructions to ensure you are eligible and meet all other requirements before applying.
9. Follow the instructions based on whether you are downloading a single-project or multi-project application package.

Step 2: Complete an Application Package

After downloading the application package, you, the applicant, can complete the application offline and share the document within the office. Before beginning the process of entering information into the application package, please read the grant-making agency's application instructions. The agency's instructions include all the necessary information on what is required to submit the application.

Step 3: Submit an Application Package

The following instructions explain how to submit your application to Grants.gov. Once you have completed all the required documents and attached any required or optional documentation, be sure to use the Save button to save your package. Please note that you can only submit a complete application and may not send it in parts.

Check for Errors Button

The Check for Errors button searches your application for errors that prevent your application from being processed. If there are errors identified, clicking this button will direct you to the error in the current application. These issues may prevent the **Save & Submit** button from activating.

Submission Confirmation

After you submit your grant application package, a confirmation screen will appear on your computer screen. This screen confirms that you have submitted an application to Grants.gov. This page also contains a tracking number that is used to identify the status of your submission in the Track My Application feature.

Once Grants.gov has received your submission, Grants.gov will send email messages to advise you of the progress of your application through the system.

Step 4: Track My Application Package

To track and check the status of your submitted applications, enter up to five Grants.gov tracking numbers, one per line and click the Submit Tracking Number(s) button. The tracking number for a submitted application will be provided in the confirmation email that you receive within two business days after you submit the application.

Examples of Application status:

Application Statuses
The following are descriptions of the application statuses used to describe the progression of an application after submission through the Grants.gov system.

Status	Description
Receiving	The application is has not yet been received by Grants.gov, but is processing normally, and is waiting in the queue to be received by Grants.gov.
Received	Grants.gov has received the application, but the application is awaiting validation.
FIF Received	The application has been received by Grants.gov and is in the beginning stages of being either validated or rejected with valid errors.
Packaging Process	The application is still being processed and will be validated within the next 48 hours by Grants.gov.
Processing	The application has been received by Grants.gov and has begun checking the
Status	Description
	application for errors.
Validated	Grants.gov validated the application and it is available for the agency to download.
Rejected with Errors	Grants.gov was unable to process your application because of an error(s) and cannot accept the application until you correct the error(s) and successfully resubmit the application. You will receive email notification with information on how to address the error(s).
Received by Agency	The agency has confirmed receipt of the application package.
Agency Tracking Number Assigned	The agency has assigned an internal tracking number to your application. This is the last status that Grants.gov tracks. Updates beyond this must be checked with the agency directly. Note: All agencies do not assign tracking numbers. If you do not see an agency tracking number, this does not infer that the agency did not receive or process your application. The assignment of tracking numbers is based on the policy of a particular agency.
Purged	The application has been on the system for 3 years or more and has been purged from the system. *Note: The application purge period was increased from 180 days to 3 years on October 20, 2015, so all applications submitted on or after April 22, 2015 will be stored for 3 years. All applications submitted before April 22, 2015 have been deleted under the previous 180 day purge period.*

3.2 Grant Cycle

Grants.gov brings together Federal awarding agencies and applicants, helping to streamline the grant process. Read below to learn more about the roles of Grantors and Applicants in the Federal grant lifecycle.

Pre-Award Phase

Grantor Actions	Lifecycle Steps	Applicant Actions
In the early stages of the grant process, the grant-making agency plans and develops a funding program based on its mission, the Administration, and congressional initiatives.	**Planning an Opportunity**	
Next, the grant-making agency formally announces the funding opportunity, advertising it to applicant communities and inviting proposals tailored to address the program mission. The grant-making agency will publish details of the funding opportunity on Grants.gov.	**Announcing an Opportunity**	
	Searching for Opportunities	Potential applicants will use the Grants.gov search tool to find funding opportunities that they are eligible for and are a mission match for their organization.

Grantor Actions	Lifecycle Steps	Applicant Actions
	Registering on Grants.gov	When potential applicants have identified an opportunity to apply for, they need to register with Grants.gov as an organization or individual. Applicants should also check the funding opportunity for additional registration requirements specified by the grant-making agency.
	Completing an Application	Completing a grant application can take weeks. The application package can be downloaded from Grants.gov in the form of a PDF, and progress can be saved as form fields are filled in. These fields require everything from basic organizational information, to explanations of proposed work and financial data. When an application package has been completed per the opportunity instructions and checked for errors, it can be submitted through Grants.gov.
When an application has been submitted, the application is retrieved by the grantmaking agency and screened for compliance. If it passes initial screening, the application is routed to the appropriate agency program for consideration.	**Retrieving the Application**	Once an application has been retrieved by the agency from Grants.gov, the applicant is automatically notified via email. At this point, the grantor application processing begins.
	Staying in the Loop	Applicants can track the status of their application by communicating with the grant-making agency. The application status process is handled differently by each agency.

Finishing the Review Process

As the funding agency reviews applications, a range of program stakeholders will participate. The review process takes time and varies based on grant type. As the review process takes place, grant-making agencies may update applicants on the status of their application.

Award Phase

Grantor Actions	Lifecycle Steps	Applicant Actions
When the review process has been completed, the funding agency notifies the applicants whether or not they have been awarded a grant. The agency also begins working with the award recipient to finalize the legal framework for the funding agreement. Following this, the funds are disbursed.	**Notifying the Award Recipient**	
	Beginning the Hard Work	After an applicant receives a Notice of Award and the funds have been disbursed, they will begin their project. The award recipient is responsible for meeting the administrative, financial, and programmatic reporting requirements of the award.

Post Award Phase

Grantor Actions	Lifecycle Steps	Applicant Actions
After an award has been disbursed, a grants management officer at the funding agency oversees an awardee's reporting compliance. This process extends across the life of the grant award and involves reviewing reports submitted by the awardees. Representatives from the grantor agency may perform on-site visits with the project director and implementation staff. Oversight may also occur in the form of auditing.	**Providing Support and Oversight**	
	Reporting Your Progress	Award recipients conduct two primary types of reporting to the funding agency on a regular basis: financial reporting and programmatic reporting. These reports provide information about the overall financial status and program performance of the grant project. Recipients must also respond to any audit requests that pertain to the grant.
As reports and financial data are passed along to the grantor agency, the program stakeholders ensure that all requirements are being met. Upon completing all the closeout requirements, including a review of the final financial and technical reports from the awardee, the grant lifecycle comes to an end.	**Award Closeout**	

Break down of Pre-Award Phase

The pre-award phase represents the beginning of the grant lifecycle, which includes announcing opportunities, submitting applications, and reviewing applications. Below are explanations of what generally occurs during the preaward phase.

Funding Opportunity Announcement

Both the grant-making agencies and prospective applicants conduct their planning processes. The awarding agencies prepare and publish Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOA) based on the related legislation and their budget.

An FOA includes all the pertinent information and requirements for an applicant to assess their eligibility, competency, and interest in the funding opportunity. How do you find these opportunities? That's where Grants.gov comes in.

Registering to Apply

Registering to apply for grants on Grants.gov includes several steps and types of registration, including DUNS, SAM.gov, and Grants.gov accounts.

Completing Your Application

Before jumping into the process of filling out the application, you (i.e., an organization or individual) should spend time analyzing your own capabilities as compared to the specific eligibility and technical requirements detailed in the application instructions. The application planning process is lengthy, but it is critical when considering the importance of carrying out government-related work and the competition you may face for funding. While the specific steps vary widely depending on the type of grant you are applying for, major components of the planning process includes developing your ideas, conducting research, writing your proposal, and completing the application in Grants.gov.

Initial Screening of Application

In the initial screening, sometimes called a basic minimum requirements review, the agencies will check each proposal to ensure it includes all the required elements to qualify for the grant. What the specific requirements are will vary for each grant, but common elements are eligibility, program narrative, and budget attachment. The key for the initial screening is that the agencies are looking for the presence of the required element, not the quality of the element. If your application does not meet all of these basic requirements, then your application is likely to be rejected.

Programmatic Review and Assessment of Applications

The remaining applications undergo a thorough review and assessment for their technical and programmatic quality and competency. Again, this varies depending on the type of grant you applied for. For discretionary grants, the review is conducted by independent experts who

assess the applications using the uniform rating or scoring system established by each awarding agency.

A common format is a peer review panel of at least three people, who assess and score each application independently. Then, the peer review panel will convene to discuss the merits of the applications. A series of policies and assurances are in place to maintain a fair, objective process based on material facts in the applications and without conflicts of interest (COI) for the peer reviewers. The federal agency staff monitor and participate in this review process.

Financial Review
While an application may have technical and programmatic quality, your budget also needs to be well-documented and reflect the requirements of the grant program. The federal agencies conduct a cost analysis, reviewing each line item and the overall proposed budget to ensure compliance with statutory and financial regulations. Additionally, the financial review also factors in the total budget for the grant program in relation to how much money each application requests.

Award Phase Breakdown

Once the Federal agency completes the application review process, the Award Phase begins. The final award decisions rest solely in the hands of the federal agency staff with fiduciary responsibility and legal authority to enter binding agreements. Federal staff review and make award recommendations based on the programmatic and financial reviews of the applications. These recommendations are reviewed by a series of levels in the agencies to ensure high-quality, fair, and unbiased decisions.

Notice of Award
Once the final award decisions are made, the awarding agency sends a Notice of Award (NOA) to the entities selected for funding. The NOA is the official, legally binding issuance of the award. When you or your organization accepts the grant (i.e., by signing the grant agreement or by drawing down funds) you become legally obligated to carry out the full terms and conditions of the grant.

As an award recipient, you are also subject to federal statutory and regulatory requirements and policies

Break down of Post Award Phase
The post award phase comprises a significant amount of work over the duration of the award dates, which includes implementing the grant, reporting progress, and completing the closeout requirements. The federal agency that makes the award to you is also there to assist and ensure

you or your organization complies with the grant terms and conditions. Your job is to faithfully and diligently carry out the grant program.

Reporting
The agency monitors your progress and expenditures through various programmatic and financial reporting procedures, as well as using performance metrics per the grant agreement. While the majority of award recipients carry out the grants ethically and efficiently, these monitoring procedures are necessary to maintain transparency and to prevent fraud and abuse.

The awarding agency typically has a grants management officer and program officer designated to each grant, both of which you will work with throughout the life of the grant. They are the ones who will review reports and conduct site visits, so we recommend you build an effective line of communication with these staff members. It is better to prevent issues by talking to your grant and program officers to clarify grant terms or expectations than it is to submit a report and wait for problems to be identified and recourse initiated.

Auditing
Federal grant-making agencies and grant recipients are audited. The Government Accountability Office (GAO), Office of Inspector General (OIG), and various departments within each Federal agency monitor and analyze policies, expenditures, and more activities within each grant-making agency. These same entities, as well as others, also monitor and analyze the performance of grant recipients.

Closeout
The closeout step is where the grant process ends. In order to complete a closeout, you, the award recipient, must submit the final financial and programmatic reports. According to the OMB Uniform Grants Guidance §200.343, the receipt must submit all financial, performance, and other reports required under the grant within 90 days after the grant award expires or is terminated. The awarding agency will review these reports to ensure compliance will all the grant terms and conditions as well as to make sure you spent all the funds appropriately.