

## State of Nevada Advisory Council on Federal Assistance

### Obtaining and Maximizing Federal Grants in Nevada 2016 Report

To The Honorable Governor Brian Sandoval and Members of the 79<sup>th</sup> Nevada Legislature:

I am pleased to submit the 2016 report on behalf of the Nevada Advisory Council on Federal Assistance. This work highlights our observations on federal grants in Nevada and makes recommendations for the future, including several for your consideration during the 2017 Legislative Session.

In the past five years you and your colleagues have initiated the critical work and monumental shift needed to ensure Nevada receives its equitable share of federal grant funding. Congratulations, and thank you. Because of you, Nevada is now ascending from last place in the nation, where it has rested for decades. Because of you, Nevadans are seeing more of their federal tax dollars return to their local communities in the form of valuable programs that improve the quality of life and strengthen the economy. And, if you so choose, it will be because of you that our progress takes another giant step forward.

Continuing to improve Nevada's share of federal grants will have many important and significant benefits that policymakers and everyday Nevadans want, including:

- Enhancing programs, projects, and services in the areas of health care, transportation, income security, education, job training, social services, community development, economic development, and environmental preservation;
- Significantly expanding Nevada's revenue without adding tax burden to its residents and businesses; and
- Stimulating Nevada's economy by locally spending tens of millions of dollars in federal tax dollars (returned to us through federal grants), that will otherwise be spent in Washington D.C. and the other 49 states.

The Advisory Council on Federal Assistance (Grants Council) was created in 2015 with near-unanimous bi-partisan support, and tasked with advising and assisting the State in obtaining federal grants. The Grants Council held bi-monthly hearings to: discuss methods and models for identifying, procuring, utilizing and maintaining federal grants; receive reports from the Nevada Grants Office; and, gather testimony from State employees and other stakeholders. Based on the information and ideas exchanged during these hearings, the Grants Council developed four complementary recommendations for consideration during the 2017 Legislative Session:

1. Establish a statewide grants management system that allows users – across state and local governments and nonprofits – to more effectively identify grant opportunities, coordinate with each other to submit grants, secure grant funding, and track and report outcomes and spending related to federal grants.
2. Streamline the review and authorization (or denial) process for grant-related work plans by the Interim Finance Committee, as the current process significantly hinders State agencies' ability to comply with strict processing timelines required by most grants.
3. Eliminate existing budgetary disincentives that discourage State agencies from pursuing federal grants.
4. Create a pilot program that allows State agencies to access the match funding and professional support they need to secure high-priority, high-return competitive grants.

In addition to these specific recommendations for action during the 2017 Legislative Session, the Grants Council urges policymakers to find opportunities to address: equitable distribution of grant funds and State Grants Office's services statewide; adequate staffing in the State Grants Office and grant units within State agencies; and significantly increase coordination and communication among state government, local governments, and nonprofits.

The enclosed report is intended to assist policymakers, grant practitioners, and stakeholders throughout the State in their work of increasing federal grants for the benefit of all Nevadans. Members of the Grants Council would like to thank Ms. Connie Lucido, Chief, and her colleagues in the Nevada Grants Office, Mr. Jim Wells, Director, Governor's Finance Office, and the numerous grant professionals who contributed their time and talent to this effort.

Sincerely,

John Ritter  
Chairman

**Members:**

Mr. John Ritter, Chairman, Focus Property Group  
Assemblyman Derek Armstrong, Vice Chairman, Nevada Assembly  
Senator Pete Goicoechea, Nevada Senate  
Ms. Kathi Thomas-Gibson, City of Las Vegas  
Ms. Zanny Marsh, American Red Cross of Northern Nevada  
Ms. Connie Lucido, State Grants Office  
Mr. Jim Wells, Governor's Finance Office  
Mr. Tim Burch, Clark County (former member)