

State Vision: Grants in the State of Nevada

Overview

Nearly \$628 billion a year is given to states from the federal government in grant funding. While some of this is block granted and calculates on formulaic equations based on population and services rendered necessitating congressional approval to change, a significant amount is in competitive grant funding.

This means all eligible states and programs have an opportunity to make a case in bringing federal money to local communities. Grant programming has been pivotal to many community resources. It can allow for pilot demonstration projects, creating flexibility and innovation in the way much needed services are delivered. It allows those who work most closely with the target populations to make decisions and design programs based on their community's most eminent needs. It also serves as an ally to the State by granting funding to services which the state may not be able to otherwise fund. It is imperative to have a robust, stream-lined and competitive grant team operating in all agencies and counties in Nevada.

Many factors transpire during the grant process: gathering data, putting together a strong team to write the application, creating the program to the grant specifications, performing needs assessments, creating a realistic and competitive budget, searching budgets for match if required, collecting all documents required for submission, building a coalition of needed partners for program success, receiving legislative approval to spend the money if awarded, implementing the grant, hiring staff, collecting data throughout the program, monitoring the program, reporting on the program, finding ways to maintain the sustainability of the program when funding ends, and closing out grant duties. At any point in this process, multiple people, agencies and interests can be involved. The process can break-down at any time and appears, for good reason, to be daunting.

Mission and Strategy

Data

Collecting data and using it to show the need for the grant application has been an imperfect and inconsistent process for many grant applications and program implementations, and is one of the most crucial aspects in applying for and monitoring programs.

Many systems are antiquated and need to be manually manipulated and analyzed by staff, resulting in delayed data. Additionally, many federal requirements of reporting are far beyond the current systems making Nevada less competitive in its reporting capabilities. Requesting funding to bring Information Technology (IT) up to federal requirements can quickly consume an entire budget request.

Finally, many agencies operate and collect data in silos. This often results in agencies not being aware of what is being collected and consequences of this are duplicative data, underreported outcomes, and applications not being applied to.

The State is limited in understanding in our data limitations as there is not a centralized system for capturing program outcomes, populations being served, return on investment, etc..

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A centralized, State Grants Management System and Outcome Dashboard will allow for the streamlined and accurate collection of data in real-time. This will staff and stakeholders to pull real-time data for needs assessment, outcome measurements etc. Additionally, it will allow decision and policy makers to evaluate data to ensure resources are being invested efficiently.

2018	2020	2022
A single, stand-alone Grants Management System will be in place and all state agencies will begin to input programmatic and fiscal data for all grants, with a plan to allow county and city governments to have access to database	Program and fiscal data will be collected and analyzed and a complete and detailed report on the State of Grants will be presented to the Legislature and Governor	(further development)
<i>Goal: To create an innovative, well-designed data system that simplifies the State’s capability for collecting, analyzing and reporting the successful implementation of programs throughout the state.</i>		

Program Development and Implementation

When a grant award is received, much start-up work is required. The Interim Finance Committee (IFC) must approve the Work Program, the staff must be hired, the services must begin, and the reporting mechanism must be created, among many other things.

Data and budget must also be reported to the federal authorities to demonstrate compliance. Currently, there is not a uniform procedure or policy in the State to assist in the implementation of programs once an award is received. To remedy this, it is the goal of the Grants Office to assist in the development of a grant management unit that can be utilized from the application to implementation phase of the grant process. State agencies will have a set of expert resources to turn to all the way from deciding to apply to finishing and closing out a grant.

2018	2020	2022
All state agencies will have completed a detailed Needs Assessment regarding grants taking into account what training is necessary for staff for grant implementation	Utilizing needs data from the Grant Management System, the State Grants Office will have a team of specialists to dispatch to all state agencies to complete curriculum of training from application to inception to grant closing	Through the agencies strategic planning and needs assessments the State Grants Office will maintain a catalog of agency grants received and grants needed to enhance the agency’s planning processes.
<i>Goal: A centralized unit of grant experts will work with all agencies to promote collaboration, the best possible service, and quality in the process of requesting federal assistance statewide.</i>		

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Time Constraints/Staffing and Training

Many agencies stated they choose not to apply for a grant because they do not have adequate time to draft the application, collect information or implement the program. While the State Grants Office is available to assist, not all agencies are aware of the help available.

The goal is to institutionalize a centralized office to support state agencies in performing the identification of needs when looking for grant opportunities. This will remove the time constraint barrier and allow assistance so all relevant solicitations can be applied for.

2018	2020	2022
The State Grants Office will provide outreach to all state agencies and create a mission and vision with leadership of each agency of where they would like to be in terms of grant funding over the next four years	(further development)	(further development)
<i>Goal: To provide outstanding quality support services that Nevada state agencies, as clients, recommend to other entities and federal agencies select as recipients.</i>		

Budget/Match Requirements

Many federal grant applications ask for match or award extra evaluation points to applicants who allocate their own funding to the grant. State agencies are currently very limited in applying for these opportunities due to tightly allocated budgets with little to no room for matching funds. Increasing our ability to provide match will bring additional funding to the state.

2018	2020	2022
A small pilot fund of funding for match will be available to state agencies	Data from the State Grants Management System (GMS) will show discretionary grant revenue increase of 20%	Data from the GMS will show discretionary grant revenue increase of 40% from 2017
<i>Goal: To develop innovative ways in creating funding sources that complement federal proposals so as many entities as possible will be able to take advantage of federal assistance in Nevada.</i>		

Legislative Process

After a grant award is made, state staff have to receive approval from the legislative IFC before they can begin spending it. Sometimes, this can take up to six months. Many agencies determine if they will make the IFC deadlines when applying.

Often, grants specify services must begin within a few months of reward acceptance. Nevada has missed out on opportunities because it is not guaranteed this will happen. Sub-grants cannot be

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given and agencies cannot begin to spend the money until this approval is received. Federal funding agencies do not understand this process and hold agencies accountable for not spending funding within the appropriate timeline. Grant opportunities that are only one year long will often not be applied for as the agency decides it is not feasible due to the implementation hurdles that exist. A smooth and quick process for approval of allowing agencies to start spending awarded grants is necessary in order to ensure more agencies apply for opportunities.

2018	2020	2022
A state agency may receive preapproval by appearing before the IFC after submitting a grant application	State agencies will have a mechanism for implementing all grant funding as soon as funding is released	State agencies will have authority to implement discretionary grant funding that do not require general fund allocations
<i>Goal: To build a process that focuses on the inclusiveness of all stakeholders from beginning to end, allowing the speedy legislative approval of federal awards to state agencies.</i>		

Sustainability of Programs

Many agencies struggle with the decision of applying for the grant because they are unsure if the investment of resources and staffing will be able to continue after the grant period ends. The decision to invest staffing, technology and allow recipients to receive services they become to start to rely on can weigh in the decision in whether to apply or not.

Funding is often competitive when building state programs, and it is not always guaranteed or expected that grant programs can continue. This results in inconsistent delivery of services and unstable funding. Investment in grant programming sustainability is vital to maintaining and bringing in extra federal funds.

2018	2020	2022
The State Grants Office will work with agency leadership to incorporate sustainability solutions into each agency’s grant mission and vision	Utilizing data from an outcome dashboard, agencies will ask for a portions of the agency budget to be allocated for program sustainability	Dashboard outcomes will be reported quarterly and maintained publicly; using GMS data program continuation will increase 25% from 2017 data.
<i>Goal: To support the sustainability of programs implemented through federal assistance that demonstrate a substantial return to Nevada’s safety and livability, vibrant economy, infrastructure and communications, education and health, as well as effectively managing its natural resources.</i>		