

Florida League of Cities
Grants Assistance
Program



Toolkit Summary

The **Florida League of Cities** (FLC) has developed this comprehensive toolkit to serve as a valuable resource for member cities seeking to apply for and manage grants. This toolkit compiles a selection of materials published by Federal and State agencies, catering specifically to the needs of grant writers and grant managers. Whenever possible, direct links to these resources will be included; however, due to occasional changes in Federal administration, some links may become inactive and are therefore omitted. FLC is committed to updating this document regularly as new resources and links are made available. To ensure you are referencing the most current information, please review the date located at the bottom right corner of the document.

Toolkit Organization

The toolkit is divided into three main sections, each designed to support cities throughout the grant process:



Grant Readiness

This section focuses on gathering and organizing the essential data frequently required for grant applications. By maintaining these details in a centralized location or file, cities can streamline the application process. Additionally, cities are encouraged to compile strategic plans, assessments, and studies, keeping them readily accessible for quick reference and inclusion in future grant applications.



Identifying and Documenting the Grant Application Process for Your City

This portion outlines the steps involved in the grant application workflow, detailing responsibilities, timelines, procedures, and rationales. It features examples from other local governments, illustrating methods for tracking and documenting internal approvals, which are vital for auditing purposes.



Introduction to Grant Management

An overview designed to familiarize city staff with the basic principles and practices of managing grants effectively.



SECTION 1: **Grant Readiness**

Achieving grant readiness involves several critical steps. Cities must ensure that all relevant information specific to their operations is easily accessible and can be retrieved promptly. In addition, establishing an internal process for management review and approval of grant applications is essential. A well-defined project scope and a clearly documented need further strengthen a city's ability to successfully apply for grants.

Gathering Key Information

The first thing to do is to set up a reference file that includes a spreadsheet to record the numbers you'll need to obtain, i.e., FEIN, DUNS, UEI, etc. This file will be your "go-to" resource when filling out application forms and accessing important documents at your fingertips.

Let's get started with the numbers you'll need.

1 The Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN)

The Federal Employer Identification Number (**FEIN**) is a nine-digit number that has the following format xx-xxxxxxx and is assigned by the Internal Revenue Service. You should be able to get this number from your City Clerk.

2 The DUNS Number

The **DUNS** number is assigned by Dun & Bradstreet. You can search for your city's DUNS number and have it emailed to you through the following link: dnb.com/duns-number/lookup.html. If your city doesn't have a DUNS number, your City Clerk can obtain one through the same link above.

3 Unique Entity Identified (UEI)

If your city has administered a federal grant in the past, it probably has a Unique Entity Identified (**UEI**) and is registered in the Federal government's System for Award Management (SAM). The person who may be most knowledgeable about this would be your City/Town Manager or City Clerk. The UEI is issued by the SAM. Their website is sam.gov. If you have an existing UEI, you need to check on SAM to see if the entity registration is "active." If it isn't, the Point of Contact would need to reactivate the registration. Once you've been able to pull up your UEI on the SAM website, take a screen print and save it in your resource file.

YOU MUST HAVE A UEI TO APPLY FOR FEDERAL GRANT FUNDING.

If your city does not have a UEI, start the process now. The validation and entity registration process can take several days to complete. The link below will take you to the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) Guide for State and Local Governments Applying for Federal Financial Assistance. This document provides additional guidance on obtaining the UEI.

https://www.gsa.gov/system/files/State_and_Local_Help_Guide.pdf

Gathering Key Information, *continued*

The following is a list of additional numbers you may want to include in your spreadsheet for quick reference. These will need to be updated, so it is a good idea to reference the date each number has been obtained.

- ▶ *Congressional District(s) and Representatives*
- ▶ *Legislative District(s) and Representatives*
- ▶ *My Florida Market Place (MFMP) Vendor Sequence Number (SEQ)*
- ▶ *Population*
- ▶ *Poverty Level – Income Limits*

Grants.gov

Grants.gov is a government website and "go-to" place to find and apply for federal grants. It is also an excellent resource for learning about grants, what to include in grant applications, guides on grants management, and much more. You can access the resources in **grants.gov** without registering; however, if you will be submitting a grant application through **grants.gov**, you must go through the registration process. **Grants.gov Online Help** can guide you through the registration process.

Not all grant applications are submitted through **grants.gov**, so read the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) carefully to see if you will need to register on a different site to submit an application.

Defining Your Project

Grants primarily fund projects. Identifying the different components needed to complete your project provides you with a list of potential grant-eligible activities, such as recreational features within a park, ADA compliance, special accommodations, or public outreach/education. A Foundation or small grantor may be a good resource for funding smaller components of an overall project.

Here is just a small list of other project-related items that could be funded through smaller grants.

1 Planning Documents

Feasibility studies, needs assessments, strategic plans, quality assurance plans (QAP), process management plans (PMP), etc., are types of planning documents that may be eligible for grant funding to help the city become competitive in the bid for future funding. These planning documents can document the need for larger implementation grants.

2 Architectural and Design

Preliminary engineering studies, design plans, and conceptual drawings are usually needed for construction-related projects.

3 Capacity Building

Professional development of internal staff could include costs for specialized training, technical assistance, or certifications.

Grant Administration Policy And Procedures

A Grant Administrative Policy and Procedures handbook standardizes your city's grant process, covering everything from finding to closing grants. This policy demonstrates compliance with Federal, State, and Local regulations to grantors and auditors.

The policy should describe the roles and responsibilities of those who evaluate potential funding sources and review and approve grant applications for submission.

Some local governments use grant assessment forms to check alignment with strategic plans, staffing needs, and matching fund requirements. Questions on these assessments usually include, but are not limited to, the following:

- 1 Statement on how the grant would further the vision of the city**
Does the grant achieve objectives in an adopted City Plan, i.e., Comprehensive Plan, Strategic Plan, Stormwater Management Plan, Continuum of Care Plan, etc.?
- 2 Matching Funds**
How much is required, and where will the funds come from to match the grant?
- 3 Staff**
How will the grant be managed? Will additional staff be required?
- 4 Sustainability and Continuation**
Will there be a loss of grant-funded positions or program components?

There are several good examples of Grant Administration Policies and Procedures/Handbooks to which you can refer to help your city design its own. Every city is different, and it will need to be tailored to fit the city's management structure. The Florida League of Cities is available to assist in developing these on a city-by-city basis.

Common Acronyms

The following table lists a few of the frequently used acronyms in the context of grant writing and management:

ALN	Assistance Listing Number
AOR	Authorized Organizational Representative
DUNS	Data Universal Numbering System
EIN	Employer Identification Number
FAIN	Federal Award Information Number
FEIN	Same as EIN
FFR	Federal Financial Report or SF425
FOA	Funding Opportunity Announcement
FON	Funding Opportunity Number
FSR	Financial Status Report
NOFA	Notice of Funding Availability
NOFO	Notice of Funding Opportunity
PII	Personally Identifiable Information
POC	Point of Contact
RAIN	Recipient/Applicant Information Notice
SAM	System for Award Management
SF-424	Standard Form Application for Financial Assistance
SF-424A	Budget Information Non-Construction Programs
SF-424B	Assurances for Non-Construction Programs
SF-424C	Budget Information Construction Programs
SF-424D	Assurances – Construction
SF-425	Federal Financial Report
SFLLL	Disclosure of Lobbying Activities
SO	Signing Official
UEI	Unique Entity Identifier



SECTION 2: **Grant Preparation**

The next step in the grant lifecycle is to proceed with grant preparation and submission. Before moving forward, it is beneficial to review the actions taken during the "grant readiness" phase. At this stage, you should have registered or collected your key numbers, such as the UEI and Grants.gov login, and established an internal approval process for grant applications. Projects have been identified that address community needs and align with the city's strategic plan.

Identifying Funding Sources

Your EUNA subscription enables you to create “search agents” to help locate potential funding sources tailored to your needs. These agents can be customized to focus on areas such as parks and recreation, police, or human services, or broadened to encompass all sectors. If you need assistance with the search agent feature, consult the user guide under the “support” tab on the EUNA homepage or reach out to your FLC Grants Coordinator.

Reviewing Grant Opportunities

After identifying grants that may fit your city's needs, carefully examine the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). Grantor agencies include critical information in NOFOs that can impact your eligibility or the competitiveness of your project.

Items to Review

Eligibility

When reviewing a NOFO, read all eligibility requirements. Eligibility may depend on factors such as location, need, or previous funding. Location criteria could specify geographic regions, urban or rural areas, coastal or inland zones, low-income neighborhoods, or special designations like HUB Zones or Areas of Critical Concern. Each NOFO should include references to help determine if your area qualifies, sometimes as simply as referring to the Florida Statutes. For example, the *“Rural Community Definition”* can be accessed for further clarification.

Project Competitiveness

Once you satisfy eligibility requirements, evaluate whether your project aligns with the grantor agency's priorities. Consider the stage of your project—whether it is “shovel ready,” in design, or conceptual. The NOFO may specify criteria used to rank applications. Assess if your project fits these criteria and whether it would be competitive. If uncertain, contact the grantor agency's program manager. While they cannot guarantee funding, they can clarify whether your project aligns with their priorities.

Items to Review, *continued*

Timeline – Due Date and Project Period

Consider whether you have sufficient time to prepare the application.

- ❶ **Does the application require public input? Is there enough time to schedule, advertise, and conduct public meetings or hearings?**
- ❷ **Are support letters needed?**
- ❸ **Is State Clearinghouse Review required before submission?**
- ❹ **Does your internal process mandate Council approval for submission?**

Each of these components requires planning and time. For instance, State Clearinghouse has 30 days to review applications. Scheduling Council review may take up to 30 days in some cities. Public notice for meetings and hearings must be adequate, and some agencies specify the minimum length of time for public input. Also, consider whether your project can wait for the grant to be awarded, as the period between submission and award can span months. Ensure your project can be completed within the timeframe specified in the NOFO.

If you intend to hire an external consultant for grant development, timing is crucial. The competitive bid process can take weeks. Alternatively, you may piggyback on existing grant writing contracts, but obtaining quotes and executing contracts still requires time.

The key is to start early – even months – before applications are due.

Items to Review, *continued*

Matching

Matching demonstrates the applicant's commitment to the project by contributing funds or resources. Some applications require matching while others do not. In certain cases, providing match funds, even when not required, can improve your ranking during review.

Some grants allow a "waiver" of match requirements, typically for areas designated as financially distressed. The availability of a waiver is usually indicated in the NOFO. For disaster situations, section 252.37(5)(b) Florida Statutes provides that:

The Executive Office of the Governor may approve a waiver, subject to the requirement for legislative notice and review under s. 216.177, of all or a portion of the required match for public assistance projects for local governments if the Executive Office of the Governor determines that such a match requirement cannot be provided, or that doing so would impose a documented hardship on the local government, and if the local government applies for the waiver within the first 18 months after the disaster is declared.

Data Collection

Collecting pertinent and persuasive data is essential to support the need for your project. Visuals such as charts, tables, and graphs are useful when accompanied by explanatory narratives. Grantor agencies often provide links to data sources for use in applications. Ensure any referenced data sources are cited in your application.

Below are useful data resource links for reference:

- ▶ *University of Florida Bureau of Economic and Business Research*
- ▶ *IPaC USFWS Environmental Review*
- ▶ *Florida Natural Areas Inventory*
- ▶ *FEMA Flood Map Service Center*
- ▶ *Protected Areas of the United States | U.S. Geological Survey*
- ▶ *Web Soil Survey (WSS)*
- ▶ *National Wetlands Inventory | U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service*
- ▶ *Sole Source Aquifer Locations | US EPA*
- ▶ *Watershed Boundary Dataset | U.S. Geological Survey*
- ▶ *Resources for Source Water Assessments | US EPA*
- ▶ *Health Resources Services Administration Data Warehouse*
- ▶ *Distressed Community Index*
- ▶ *US Census Data*
- ▶ *HUD Income Limits*

Grant Writing

Most grant applications specify topics to address, such as project need, goals and objectives, method or solution, deliverables, management capacity, and performance measures. Applications typically include required forms, a narrative section, a budget and budget narrative, and supporting documents such as collected data and support letters.

There are numerous resources for learning grant writing. For example, OpenGrants provides an overview of grant writing certification programs at [*Top 12 Grant Writing Certification Programs for 2025 - OpenGrants*](#). Additionally, many grantor agencies offer free resources and webinars addressing their specific requirements.

- ▶ [*The Grantsmanship Center*](#)
- ▶ [*American Grant Writers' Association, Inc.*](#)
- ▶ [*Grant Professionals Certification Institute*](#)
- ▶ [*Grant Writing USA*](#)

The following section provides helpful tips for each main component of a grant application.

If your application requires Florida State Clearinghouse Review for compliance with Presidential Executive Order 12372 or comments from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), one of your first tasks should be to write an executive summary to accompany a project location map, budget summary, and Application for Federal Assistance SF424 form. [*Click here*](#) for more information on Clearinghouse requirements. The State has up to 30 days to complete its review.

Helpful Tips

Executive Summary/Overview/Abstract

The executive summary, overview, or abstract is typically one to three paragraphs that include the applicant's name, project location, a brief statement of need, proposed solution, timeline, cost, and desired outcome.

Needs Statement

The needs statement should clearly articulate the issue you intend to address. Avoid circular reasoning—simply noting the absence of something like a “community center” does not define a need. Instead, identify the necessity, such as a space for cultural events, programs to engage citizens, or a shelter for extreme weather. Explain why action is needed now and support your claim with collected data, such as census figures or employment statistics. Reference relevant strategic plans, master plans, or community assessments to further substantiate the need.

Goals and Objectives

Goals and objectives should be closely aligned with the needs statement. It is common to revise the needs statement as you develop goals and measurable objectives. Objectives should be **SMART**:

Specific – Specifies who and what actions or activities are involved

Measurable – Indicates the expected change and measurement approach

Achievable – Can be realistically accomplished with available resources

Realistic – Involves reasonable programmatic steps toward goals

Time – Establishes a timeline for achieving objectives

Some grantor agencies require a logic model identifying inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes. If requested, but no template is provided, consult guides such as:

- ▶ *Logic Models – Stephen B. Thacker CDC Library*
- ▶ *Understanding and Building Logic Models for Grants*
- ▶ *The Logic Model: A Complete Guide for Program Success*
- ▶ *Logic Models for Grant Proposals: Examples and Free Templates*

Helpful Tips, *continued*

Solution/Methodology

This section outlines how you selected the method to address the need described in the Needs Statement. Sometimes, "doing nothing" may be listed as an alternative solution. Detail how you evaluated different approaches and provide data supporting your chosen method.

Timelines, Tasks, and Deliverables

Grantor agencies often require a timeline with performance measures or milestones to demonstrate progress toward goals and objectives within the grant award period. When developing your timeline, include activities or tasks that may seem obvious to you but not to the grantor agency, such as Council acceptance, RFP development, bid review, permitting, contract award, and commencement. Also, include quarterly financial reports, progress reports, and final reporting or closeout. Cross-reference your objectives to ensure all related tasks and deliverables are included.

Budget

The budget should align with your narrative. If the project involves onsite monitoring and data analysis, include expenses for monitoring equipment, computers, and analysis software. It is helpful to keep your budget accessible while reviewing the narrative to ensure all costs are addressed.

Budget Narrative

The budget narrative provides details about each line item in the budget, illustrating how requested funds will achieve the grant's objectives. For example, specify who will administer the grant, the time commitment, and associated costs. Include any necessary travel (workshops, conferences, meetings) and indicate if an audit is required.

Sustainability

Some grantor agencies request information on how services funded by the grant will be maintained after initial funding. For example, the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grant requires funded positions to be retained for at least 12 months after funding ends. Describe plans for sustaining the program, such as involving community groups or volunteers.

Helpful Tips, *continued*

Capacity

Agencies may ask you to demonstrate your capacity to manage the grant. Indicate whether you have sufficient staff or plan to hire additional personnel. Outline policies and procedures for compliance with governmental requirements and management's involvement in report approvals. Cite the policies developed in Section 1 and your city's purchasing policies and procedures. Some agencies may request copies of these documents for review.

Mitigation of Risk

To minimize risk, identify factors that could affect timely project completion and budget, such as material shortages, staff turnover, or weather events. Describe processes to monitor risks (e.g., inspection reports), manage changes (e.g., regular team communication), and evaluate situations to develop alternative solutions.

External Support

Some grantor agencies request evidence of public or stakeholder support, usually in the form of letters. Attach these to your application. When submitting applications to State and Federal agencies, notify your local Representatives and Senators. The Executive Summary or Abstract created earlier is an ideal one-page document to share with legislators.

Grant Submission

After completing your grant application, most submissions occur online. It is advisable to submit early in the day, or a day before the deadline, to avoid issues such as power outages or website downtime. You should receive electronic confirmation of acceptance. Take a screenshot or save the confirmation email, as these indicate the date and time of submission.

Summary

This toolkit provides an overview of grant-writing essentials, along with resources for further information. The resources referenced are not affiliated with FLC and are provided for informational purposes.