

STIMULUS 101: THE BASICS OF FINDING AND APPLYING FOR GRANTS

Your boss just walked in and said, 'We need to get some of this stimulus money.' Meaning, of course, you.

Some Basics

Take a deep breath or two.

Keep things in perspective. Ignore the Internet ads about FREE MONEY!! GRANTS FOR EVERYONE!! Yes, the government is offering a lot of money under the stimulus bill (formal name: American Recovery and Reinvestment Act), but that's no guarantee everyone who applies will get something. If you've been doing a really good job of keeping up your system, you might not have projects ready that would qualify for stimulus funds.

Your best bet is a good project or ongoing program (especially if it would generate jobs, can be implemented quickly and jibes with the administration's focus on a green energy economy).

For some background on the stimulus bill and related programs that is specifically aimed at public power utilities, check out [APPA's stimulus information page](http://www.APPAnet.org) on www.APPAnet.org. Among other things, it has a [comprehensive summary](#) of the stimulus bill's provisions of interest to public power.

When and Where

The government is trying to move the money along quickly, and some deadlines for particular programs are coming up fast (others, not so fast). For example, applications for funds under the Energy Department's Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants program are due June 25. Deadlines will differ and may change; see below for how to get more information on specific funding opportunities. And of course you don't have to wait for a deadline. Some stimulus money is going to existing programs (such as the Energy Department's Weatherization Assistance Program) so there's no delay in those areas.

APPA recommends that you contact your state energy office right away (a [complete list](#) of state energy offices with contact information is available through [APPA's stimulus information page](#) on www.APPAnet.org). For funds under some programs (e.g., DOE's Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants, State Energy Program and Weatherization Assistance Program), municipalities and utilities should apply directly

with their state energy office. Some deadlines are looming. States must submit their plans for funds from DOE's State Energy Program (\$3.1 billion in funding) by May 12 and their plans for dispensing block grants (\$3.2 billion) by May 26. If public power utilities have not made their interests and programs known to the state offices by then, it may be harder to receive future consideration. You should also contact your governor's office.

APPA recommends that you [register now](#) at www.Grants.gov if you think you might want to apply for funding directly from the federal government. Grants.gov is the one-stop grant-shopping site for the entire federal government. Registration is required in order to be able to apply and it can take weeks for the government to process your application. See below for more information on registering.

To keep up with new grant announcements and changes to existing ones, you should sign up for updates while you're at Grants.gov. Click on Find Grant Opportunities, then [Subscriptions](#).

Help

Don't be overwhelmed by the complexity and bureaucracy of the grant application process. Like anything else, if you break a job down into pieces, it may take some time but it's manageable. Also, help is available.

APPA has posted a great deal of information on its [stimulus information page](#) and will post updates as new information becomes available and new grant opportunities are announced.

Joint action agencies and state or regional public power associations can help. For example, it appears that the government is encouraging cooperative or coordinated proposals for projects under the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants program. In addition, under its [Energy Efficiency Resource Central](#) initiative, APPA has partnered with a significant number of state and regional associations and joint action agencies to share resources and information about energy efficiency, including funding announcements.

Your state energy office and governor's office also are good contacts that should be able to provide assistance.

Other departments in your city government that have experience applying for federal grants could be a valuable resource.

Grants.gov tries to make it easy. For example, under **For Applicants**, the **Applicant Resources** link provides links to frequently asked questions, user guides, animated tutorials, a glossary and more. There's even more in the **Help** section of Grants.gov.

Finally, depending on your budget, you could hire a grant-writing consultant. Be careful, though, because a lot of people are setting themselves up as grant-writing experts. Get

a recommendation from someone you know or you can check listings at the [American Association of Grant Professionals](#).

First Steps -- What's out there?

Step 1. Find information on what stimulus funds are available and what types of projects might qualify

- Go to www.APPAnet.org and, on the right hand side of the home page, click on the [Spotlight! Stimulus Funding](#) button. APPA's stimulus page includes a summary of stimulus funds that are of interest to public power utilities.

Step 2. Find out detailed information (preferably a copy of the grant solicitation) on the funding opportunity you are interested in.

- Go to www.Grants.gov to find more detailed information on specific grant opportunities from any federal agencies. You do not have to register to *find* grant opportunities. However, once you are ready to *apply* for a grant, you will need to [Get Registered](#). The registration process can take weeks, which is why APPA recommends doing so early.

Step 3. Searching on www.Grants.gov

- There are several ways to search for funding announcements. On the www.Grants.gov home page, the left side has a menu, at the top of which is **For Applicants**. The first link under For Applicants is **Find Grant Opportunities**. Click on that and you go to a page that has five buttons you can click on to conduct different searches. They are:

Basic Search (search by keyword, Funding Opportunity Number (*FON*) or Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number)

Browse by Category (search by a variety of categories of funding activities, including energy)

Browse by Agency (search from a list of agencies offering grant opportunities, including US Department of Energy)

Advanced Search (search by more specific criteria such as: Funding Instrument Type, Eligibility or Sub-agency)

Find Recovery Act Opportunities (search for Recovery Act Opportunities).

- If you click on **Find Recovery Act Opportunities**, you will get a page with a table listing Recovery Act opportunities, with the following columns: Close

Date; Opportunity Title; Agency; and Funding Number. At the time this article was written, there were 74 Recovery Act opportunities on the list.

Step 4. Click on the specific opportunity title (they're underlined) that you are interested in. It will take you to a synopsis that provides some basic, bare bones information about the funding opportunity. Be sure to write down the Funding Opportunity Number (e.g., DE-FOA-0000052); you'll need it in a minute to get the full funding announcement.

Step 5. To get to the detailed announcement, scroll down the synopsis page and you'll see a **Link to Full Announcement**. Click on that link and you go a new Web site, www.FedConnect.net .

Step 6. Searching on www.FedConnect.net

- On the right hand side of FedConnect's home page, click on **Search Public Opportunities and Awards**. This takes you to a search page. Under Search Criteria is a pull down menu; click on the arrows to get the menu and select Reference Number. The Reference Number is the same as the Funding Opportunity Number on www.grants.gov. Type the number (e.g., DE-FOA-0000052) into the box and hit the Search button. This will give you a table showing the Title; Agency; Response Due Date, etc.

Step 7. Click on the underlined title. This will take you to a summary page. The right hand side of the summary page is a section entitled Documentation. Under that are icons for folders that can be opened (with names such as Base and Attachments) and icons for documents (typically entitled Body). Click on the document icons or names to get the full, detailed announcement issued by the agency and any attachments.

Step 8. Sign up for email alerts to find out about new postings and any updates/amendments to the funding opportunities.

- To sign up, go to www.Grants.gov and click on Grants Email Alerts in the right-hand blue box under For Applicants. You can also follow amendments on the www.FedConnect.net page from Step 7.

Registration Basics

According to Grants.gov, here (in brief) is what you will need in order to register to apply for grants from the federal government:

- Your organization will need to obtain a DUNS (Data Universal Numbering System) number. If your organization doesn't have one, you will need to go to the Dun & Bradstreet [Web site](#) to obtain the number.
- Make sure that your organization is registered with the [Central Contractor Registration](#). If it is not, an authorizing official of your organization must register as the E-Business Point of Contact. You will not be able to move on

- to the next step until this step is completed. This registration must be updated annually.
- Create a Grants.gov username and password. You will need to create a Grants.gov user profile by visiting the **Get Registered** section of the Web site.
 - The E-Business Point of Contact (POC) at your organization must respond to the registration email from Grants.gov and log in at Grants.gov to authorize one or more Authorized Organization Representatives (AOR), who will be able to submit grant applications on behalf of your organization.

A detailed guide and animated tutorial on how to register are available on Grants.gov. Under **For Applicants**, click on [Applicant Resources](#).

Ready, Set, Apply

Once you've reviewed the grant opportunities, decided that you want to apply for one or more, and registered with Grants.gov, you're ready to [apply](#). At Grants.gov, under **For Applicants**, click on **Apply for Grants** and you can download application packages for specific grant opportunities. You will need the Funding Opportunity (or reference) number for each grant opportunity.

Also, make sure that your version of Adobe Reader software is compatible with Grants.gov. (You'll use it to complete the application.) On the **Apply for Grants** page, under Step 1: Download an Application Package, you can click on a link to test whether your version of Adobe Reader is compatible with Grants.gov. If it isn't compatible, click on the **Help** link on the Grants.gov menu, then **Download Software** to get a compatible version. Anyone who works on your application must use a compatible version of Adobe Reader. In addition, be aware that the latest version of Word (using the .docx extension) is not compatible with Grants.gov.

The application package should include detailed instructions and all related forms that you need. Read the instructions carefully, as they can differ from one package to another. For general help, the **Apply for Grants** page on Grants.gov has a link to a narrated tutorial on how to apply, and the **Applicant Resources** page has a link to a [user guide](#) on how to find and apply for grants.

Once you've submitted an application, you can also sign up to track it on the **Apply for Grants** page.

Good luck.