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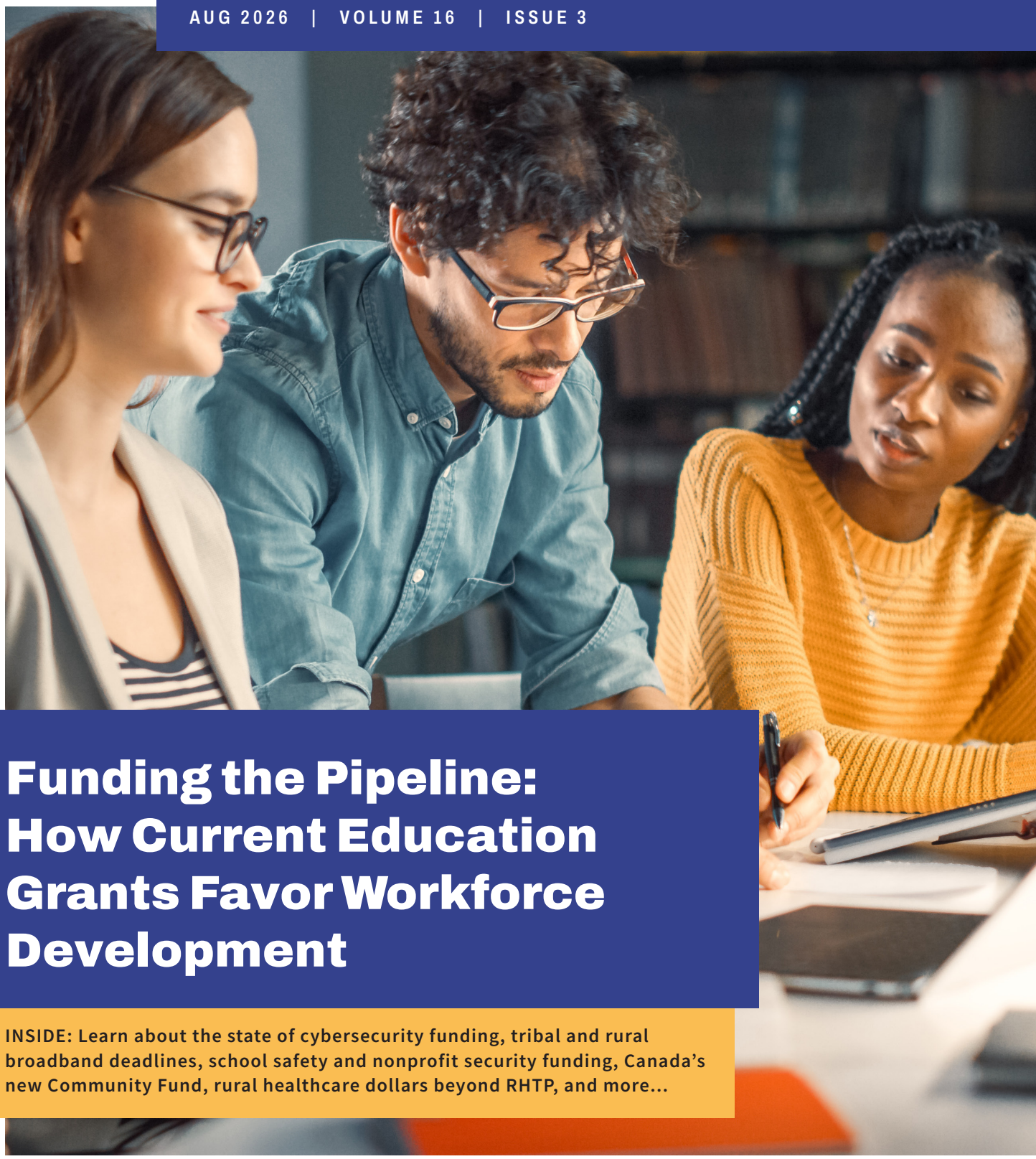

Funding the Pipeline: How Current Education Grants Favor Workforce Development

INSIDE: Learn about the state of cybersecurity funding, tribal and rural broadband deadlines, school safety and nonprofit security funding, Canada's new Community Fund, rural healthcare dollars beyond RHTP, and more...

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Dear reader,



Every issue of FUNDED is a snapshot of where the grants landscape stands at a particular moment, and this one captures a moment of genuine structural change that will be shaping how grantseekers compete for federal and foundation dollars for years to come.

The most consequential shift we document this issue is the transformation happening inside the U.S. Department of Education. Christina Fernandez's analysis of the first competitive grant programs to emerge under DOE's newly signed interagency agreements reveals that the rules of competition have changed in ways that affect how institutions pursue federal education dollars. Marc Smithers' deep dive into FIPSE and SIP tells a similar story from the higher education side. And Liz Shay's cover story ties it all together, covering what workforce development actually means in the current grants environment, what funders on both sides of the border are prioritizing, and what your organization should be building right now so the next competition doesn't catch you flat-footed.

Beyond education, Amanda Day provides some helpful strategies for building cybersecurity into a wide range of grant applications. Joseph Phelan gives tribal entities and broadband-focused organizations the clearest picture available of where BEAD and TBCP stand right now, with the final TBCP deadline of November 17 coming up fast. Amber Walker follows her May piece on the Rural Health Transformation Program with an important reminder that rural healthcare funding extends well beyond that single program, and that rurality itself has become a strategic advantage in the current grants environment. And Shannon Day continues her series on the criminal justice process, moving from reentry into the courts themselves.

For our Canadian readers, Sid Aubeeluck's analysis of the Build Communities Strong Fund's first funded projects reveals how the federal government is rewarding projects that frame infrastructure as a community growth investment, not just a construction project. That framing lesson applies well beyond Canada.

We've also included Sandy Trowbridge's practical guide to cultivating foundation relationships. It's a timely discussion, as foundations are becoming more central to the grants development strategies of many public-serving agencies, particularly nonprofits.

As the grants environment continues to evolve, we at Grants Office remain committed to being your most reliable source of intelligence and perspective. For the latest developments in federal funding as they happen, I encourage you to visit our dedicated web page at grantsoffice.com. And if you haven't yet explored Grants Office Communities at communities.grantsoffice.com, I encourage you to take it for a spin — there's a free two-week trial, and I think you'll find it genuinely changes how you approach grant research and proposal management.

As always, if you have comments, feedback, corrections, or ideas for future issues, I'd love to hear from you at mpaddock@grantsoffice.com.

I hope you enjoy this issue of FUNDED as much as we have enjoyed bringing it to you!

Sincerely,

Michael Paddock
Editor and Publisher,
FUNDED

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Grants Office

The High Cost of Cutting Federal Cybersecurity Grant Funding

Amanda Day, Grants Development Consultant (State and Local Government)



Escalating cyber risks demand aggressive federal investment, shifting cybersecurity from a basic IT requirement to a core pillar of national security. Cyberattacks no longer target only large corporations or federal agencies; they increasingly affect state and local governments, schools, hospitals, utilities, and nonprofit organizations. These threats include ransomware, data breaches, phishing attacks, and malware. Hackers typically seek money, data, or unauthorized access, and most are financially motivated, so cybersecurity protections and training are key.

WHAT IS AT RISK?

Critical Infrastructure depends on interconnected systems that support services such as electric, transportation, and water infrastructure. Without adequate cybersecurity protections, there is an increased risk of service disruptions that could affect millions of Americans and cost lives.

State, Local, and Tribal Governments are particularly vulnerable to attacks due to antiquated systems and limited IT staff. Cybersecurity investments safeguard citizens' personal information, reduce the likelihood of costly data breaches, and prevent service disruptions.

Public Safety Agencies are depending more on improved IT systems for rapid response, officer and citizen safety, and criminal investigations. Cyberattacks can affect emergency dispatch centers, fire departments, and police departments. Even a short downtime can pose a risk to public safety and lead to loss of life.

Education Organizations hold an immense amount of personal data from students and staff members. K-12 schools and institutions of higher education store personal information, including academic records, students' and teachers' personal information, research data, and health records. All this information is at risk from ransomware and theft. In addition, school security is at risk if cameras and other security precautions are disabled.

Healthcare Facilities are a major target for ransomware attacks. Since lives are at risk if systems are shut down, hospitals and other healthcare facilities are more likely to pay the ransom quickly in order to restore critical machinery. As a result of outdated IT systems, healthcare organizations are at higher risk of data breaches and attacks. Many devices and systems were not designed with modern cybersecurity threats in mind and cannot prevent targeted attacks.

With federal funds from the Biden-era **State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program (SLCGP)** winding down, organizations are seeking additional funding sources to continue the fight against cyber threats. The SLCGP assists state, local, and tribal applicants in managing and reducing cyber risk by providing funding for hardware, software, and workforce training. Funding for the program was $1 billion from fiscal years 2022-2025. States and territories were allocated funds for each year of the program, based on population size and the rural population relative to all states. A significant portion of the funds will be awarded to rural applicants.

In November 2025, the House passed the PILLAR (Protecting Information by Local Leaders for Agency Resilience) Act. This bill authorized an extension of the program through 2033. Unfortunately, the bill did not result in additional funding. As the 2026 budget negotiations came and went, it was clear that additional funding would not be available. In April 2026, state officials from Florida, New York, and Tennessee testified at a House committee meeting in favor of reauthorization, and in late June 2026, several state and local government officials formed a group called "the collective voice of state and local governments." This group sent a letter to the Senate Appropriations Committee requesting $300 million in additional funding for SLCGP for an additional year. As of this date, there has been no response.

Since very few states offer their own cybersecurity grant programs, most organizations seek help from federal funding. Cybersecurity funding is increasingly included as an eligible expense in many federal grant programs, including those for homeland security, public safety, utilities, and transportation projects. However, cybersecurity is rarely funded as a stand-alone project. Instead, cybersecurity can be included as part of a larger, more comprehensive project, aligned with the grant's parameters. Therefore, federal cybersecurity-focused grants are key to ensuring that public entities receive financial assistance that might otherwise be out of reach.

Continued federal cybersecurity grant funding is essential to help organizations:

- Update antiquated and obsolete hardware and software
- Conduct cybersecurity assessments
- Provide workforce training so employees can recognize a cyber threat
- Develop cybersecurity plans and governance
- Ensure compliance with increasing regulatory requirements

For most organizations, continued federal funding isn't just about purchasing new technologies. It's about protecting critical infrastructure, safeguarding sensitive information, and ensuring organizations can provide services without disruption. Cybercrimes are becoming more sophisticated, with new methods for exploiting vulnerabilities, stealing sensitive data, and disrupting services. Cybersecurity is not a one-time purchase. For organizations with limited budgets and resources, keeping up with these threats is becoming increasingly difficult. The federal government needs to recognize this threat and respond. Federal investment is the difference between organizations that can get ahead of a cyberattack and organizations that only find out how vulnerable they were after the damage is already done.



Program Snapshot

State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program (SLCGP)



SUMMARY

The goal of the State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program (SLCGP) is to help states and territories, specifically rural and local governments, address cybersecurity risks and cybersecurity threats. The SLCGP enables DHS to make targeted cybersecurity investments in state, local and territorial government agencies, thus improving the security of critical infrastructure and resilience of the services they provide to their communities.

Examples of allowable expenses:

- Multi-factor authentication (MFA)
- Endpoint Detection Response (EDR)
- Enhanced logging
- Data encryption for data at rest and in transit
- End use of unsupported/end of life software and hardware that are accessible from the internet
- Firewalls
- Vulnerability management and asset management tools
- Backup and recovery solutions
- Migration to the .gov internet domain
- Cybersecurity awareness training
- Tabletop and incident response exercises

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible sub-applicants are:

- A county, municipality, city, township, local public authority, school district, special district, intrastate district, council of governments, regional or interstate government entity, or agency or instrumentality of a local government;
- An Indian tribe or authorized tribal organization;
- A rural community, unincorporated town or village, or other public entity.

DEADLINE

Deadlines vary by state.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Grants Office Communities: https://communities.grantsoffice.com/s/grant/a0B0b00000PHsnDEAT/state-and-local-cybersecurity-grant-program-slcgp

Check your state listing or visit the Federal program page: https://www.fema.gov/grants/preparedness/state-local-cybersecurity-grant-program#nofos

What FIPSE and SIP Teach Us About How the Department of Education Plans to Fund Colleges and Universities

Marc Smithers, Grants Development Associate (Higher Education)

With the deadline of the Strengthening Institutions Program passing in June, the Office of Postsecondary Education has completed its first year of major program competitions. Now is the perfect time to review what has been learned about how the Department of Education (ED) plans to implement its stated priorities and also to consider how the current administration has reorganized its structure and collaborative framework with external departments like the Department of Labor (DOL). While the ED has released various programs open to multiple levels of educational institutions, this deep dive will focus on just those programs that are open to only institutions of higher education. In this review, the goal is to provide grantseekers at colleges and universities with a concise review of what has happened and how this can help them understand how grant funding from the Office of Postsecondary Education may look in the next several years under this administration. Three main themes emerged from this review, which we'll expand on below:

1. Competitions are filtered through the stated priorities set by the Secretary of Education
2. Funding for minority-serving institutions has been absorbed into broader programs
3. Collaboration with the Department of Labor is now structural, not incidental



HOW PRIORITIES ARE SHAPING HIGHER EDUCATION GRANTS

When the Secretary of Education announced her priorities in 2025, our review of them detailed how the Department of Education was focusing on learning, cost-effectiveness, and reshaping higher education's relationship to the federal government. The seven priorities—Evidence-Based Literacy, Education Choice, Returning Education to the States, Advancing AI in Education, Promoting Patriotic Education, Meaningful Learning, and Career Pathways and Workforce Readiness—were finalized in April of 2026 but have appeared as competitive preference priorities in nearly all programs offered through the agency before this finalization, though this article will focus on just two that have broad applicability to institutions of higher education. In November 2025, the Department released the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) competition in which three of the seven priorities were given attention: Advancing AI in Education, Returning Education to the States, and Career Pathways and Workforce Readiness. The competitive preference priorities in the FIPSE program aimed to increase the use of AI to improve teaching and student outcomes, support the creation and expansion of short-term programs aligned with the new Workforce Pell Grant, and address accreditation reform, citing the difficulty that states like Florida and North Carolina had recently experienced in trying to create an alternative accrediting agency. The Department awarded $169 million to fund projects built around these and other priorities, giving grantseekers an early and fairly reliable preview of what the finalized priorities would eventually look like in practice.

The next substantial program open to a large number of institutions of higher education came in the Strengthening Institutions Program (SIP) competition, announced in May 2026. This competition again focused on the priorities seen in the FIPSE competition. Rather than introducing new thematic priorities of its own, SIP built its competitive preference priorities directly from both the Career Pathways and Workforce Readiness priority and Advancing AI in Education priority. For grantseekers who have applied to SIP in past competitions, this represents a meaningful departure: where past competitions rewarded institutional need and capacity-building plans on their own terms, the most recent competition asked applicants to frame those same plans through the lens of workforce alignment and AI readiness, regardless of whether that framing reflected the institution's original project design.

Taken together, FIPSE and SIP suggest that grantseekers should treat the seven priorities not as a way in which the Department might frame its actions, but as the default filter through which nearly every decision is made. Future funding competitions from the Office of Postsecondary Education will likely be built with these priorities in mind rather than program-specific absolute priorities.

MINORITY-SERVING INSTITUTIONS AND HOW THEY MAY BE FUNDED

The most consequential shift to emerge from this year's competitions came in May 2026, when the ED and DOL announced plans to cancel the 2026 grant competitions for Minority-Serving Institution (MSI) programs entirely, redirecting the associated funding into the Strengthening Institutions Program instead. What was perhaps most surprising was how the agency announced the decision, not as a quiet reallocation, but as a decision publicly proclaimed and framed as a deliberate correction for past government misdeeds. The press release described the MSI programs as "unlawful," conferring "government benefits exclusively to institutions based on racial or ethnic criteria," and characterizing the shift as a one-time investment that would allow the funding to reach a broader set of under-resourced institutions through SIP rather than through the race-conscious eligibility criteria that had defined MSI competitions previously.

The scale of the shift is significant. As noted in our review of the agency's appropriations, the budget for the agency, which was passed in February 2026, included $102 million for the SIP program, whereas the final FY 2026 SIP competition ultimately made available over $365 million. This figure reflects both the base SIP appropriation and also includes the absorption of MSI dollars from programs like the Developing Hispanic Serving



Institutions (HSI) Program (appropriated $231.6 million) and the Strengthening Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISI) Program (appropriated $18.9 million). For grantseekers at HSIs, AANAPISIs, and other MSI-designated institutions, the practical reality is that this funding has not disappeared but rather has been decoupled from the intent of the appropriations. Rather than competing within a pool reserved for institutions that met specific enrollment thresholds, these institutions must now compete for the same dollars against every SIP-eligible institution nationwide, MSI-designated or not.

The important lesson here isn't simply that MSI-specific funding has shrunk but rather that the eligibility framework of postsecondary grantmaking has changed fundamentally. Institutions that have relied on MSI-designation as a distinguishing factor in past applications should not assume that description carries the same weight going forward. Instead, these institutions should prepare to make their case for funding on the same workforce alignment and innovation terms that governed the SIP and FIPSE contests. To this point, Congress has been reluctant to challenge the agency for not using appropriated MSI funding for MSI-specific programs.



THE STRUCTURAL INTEGRATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EDUCATION

Besides the absorption of MSI funding into larger agency programs, one other notable change has been the close integration of the DOL and the ED in recent grant competitions. What began as a workforce development partnership announced alongside the FIPSE priorities in November 2025 has evolved into something more structural: the DOL is no longer simply a partner in subsequent offerings but is now directly administering some of the ED's largest higher education grant programs.

The Strengthening Institutions Program is the clearest example. The FY 2026 SIP competition was formally solicited and administered by DOL's Employment and Training Administration on ED's behalf, an arrangement formalized through an interagency agreement described in a March 16, 2026, Dear Colleague letter. This is not a small change. Applicants preparing SIP proposals are now navigating a competition run through DOL's processes and will, in the future, manage their grant awards through GrantSolutions, which is the management system preferred by the DOL. This shift carries real implications for where institutions should look for guidance, technical assistance, and application support going forward. This isn't limited to higher education institutions, either. In April 2026, ED and DOL jointly issued the FY 2026 competitions for the Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program and the Innovative Approaches to Literacy Program, marking DOL's expansion into K-12 grant administration as well.

For grantseekers, there are a few practical implications. First, familiarity with DOL's grant infrastructure, including GrantSolutions, is quickly becoming relevant for those who regularly compete for postsecondary funding. Second, and more importantly, the competitions themselves are increasingly reflective of DOL's priorities, potentially to the exclusion of ED's priorities. The emphasis on workforce outcomes, industry-recognized credentials, and employability evidences DOL's growing influence. Institutions that have historically framed their SIP or FIPSE proposals purely in terms of academic capacity-building should expect that framing alone to carry less weight going forward. Also, grantseekers should have employment-outcome data ready and workforce development language primed for their next proposal.

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

While it is important not to draw too many conclusions from just two programs, the way in which the agency's priorities have manifested provides vital clues for grantseekers at higher education institutions. Regarding the agency's seven stated priorities, institutions should consider ways that future initiatives may be shaped to align with those priorities they feel they can best support. Consider ways that AI-integration and workforce outcome language may be incorporated into future projects, for instance, and expect that these priorities will be those on which the agency will base future decisions. For MSI-designated grantseekers, expect a more crowded and less-targeted applicant pool in future competitions, and keep an eye on whether Congress restores dedicated MSI funding lines in future appropriations competitions. Also, those competing for ED funding should get comfortable navigating the DOL's GrantSolutions platform, which is likely to play a growing role in jointly administered competitions. Above all, grantseekers should expect the exact themes we initially pointed out when the agency's priorities were released: they will focus on learning, cost-effectiveness, and reshaping higher education's relationship to the federal government. The grant programs they have offered thus far have proved this last theme to be perhaps the most jarring to experienced grantseekers.

Project Highlight

Funds for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE): Special Projects



FUNDED ORGANIZATION

Columbia State Community College

PROJECT TITLE

“COMPASS - Community College Operational Model for Promoting AI Systems and Standards”

AMOUNT FUNDED

$2,021,376

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This four-year project will help Columbia State prepare students, faculty, and staff to use artificial intelligence (AI) responsibly and effectively in the classroom and the workplace. Each year, the project will directly benefit more than 50 faculty and student support staff and approximately 1,700 students across the college’s five campuses. This includes about 1,200 first-year students who will receive AI instruction through the College Success course and another 500 students who will participate in AI literacy workshops. Beginning in the third year, the project will also extend AI learning opportunities to dual enrollment students attending seven high schools in Maury County.

As part of the project, the institution will create an AI Division that will develop campus policies for the ethical use of AI, provide training for faculty and staff, and encourage instructors to try new ways of using AI to improve teaching and student services. By the end of the project, the college will publish a practical AI Integration and Ethics Toolkit, establish new partnerships with employers and educational organizations, and develop a long-term sustainability plan to continue the work after the grant ends. The project aims to strengthen student learning, prepare graduates for an AI-enabled workforce, and expand AI education opportunities for both college and high school students in the region.

FOR MORE AWARD INFORMATION

https://www.ed.gov/grants-and-programs/grants-higher-education/improvement-of-postsecondary-education/fipse-special-projects-program#past-awards

ORGANIZATION WEBSITE

https://www.columbiastate.edu/news/details/2026/01/grant-helps-create-new-ai-division.html

COVER STORY

Funding the Pipeline: How Current Education Grants Favor Workforce Development

Dr. Liz Shay, Senior Grants Development Consultant



Workforce development is increasingly appearing in the news and in grant solicitations. At its core, workforce development is about training workers, either those preparing to enter the workforce or those already on a career path, to have the skills they need to meet local labor demands and further their individual career goals. Workforce development is ultimately an economic development initiative, seeking to promote economic growth through skilled labor.

The U.S. Department of Education (USED) has specifically called out workforce development in its current agency priorities, often phrased as "career pathways and workforce readiness." Their current agreement with the Department of Labor (DOL) further strengthens this focus for education grant programs. Canada also has a significant interest in workforce development, working through the Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) and other agencies to implement initiatives and coordinate resources.

Interested in learning more about the agreement between USED and DOL for the Office of Postsecondary Education? Check out Marc's article on page 7.

Although attention on workforce development has certainly increased in the last few years, it has been a part of the work of many government and private funders across the United States and Canada for decades. However, to be competitive in today's education grants landscape, workforce development topics must be taken into consideration. This article will highlight some of the main priorities we're seeing for education and workforce development initiatives, along with ways your organization can prepare to be competitive in your grantseeking efforts.

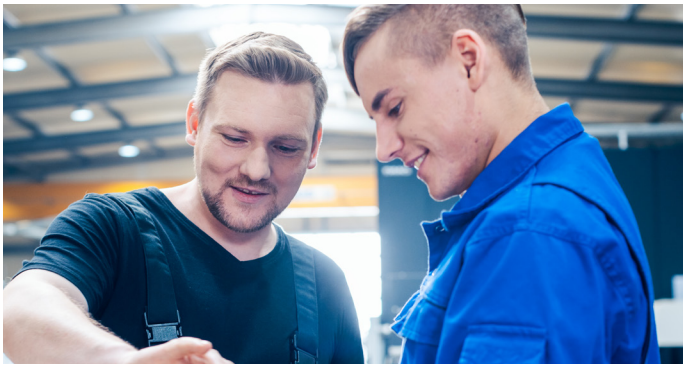
EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

There are many priorities within the education and workforce development space. Funders, practitioners, and policymakers all impact the areas of interest. Below are a few of the current highest priorities, particularly on workforce topics within the broader education space.

Alignment of Education Initiatives with Workforce Needs

Many grant programs highlight the need for all education projects to have a clear impact on students gaining employment post-graduation. Often, funders ask how planned programmatic activities align with local and regional labor demands, and some grantmakers focus more on in-demand industries across many different regions, such as infrastructure or artificial intelligence.

Grantmakers are interested in supporting projects that help students enter careers that result in growth opportunities and family-sustaining wages (the U.S. Department of Labor refers to these qualifications as "good jobs"). Beyond requesting data related to labor demands, grant programs that prioritize alignment with workforce needs also often highlight certifications and short-term credentialing opportunities that help students enter the workforce quickly or upskill themselves to further their careers. In the United States, grantmakers interested in this type of stackable credentialing are currently prioritizing Workforce Pell Grant-eligible industries and programs.



Focus on Partnerships

Funders have always been interested in maximizing the impact that their money has on their communities. Many recent grant programs have added explicit requirements for partnerships to encourage project design that considers multiple perspectives to support the largest possible number of students. These collaborations most often come in three formats:

1. Education and training providers working with industry organizations, including employers and labor organizations. In these cases, the industry representatives provide expertise in the needs they have for future employees. Educational programming is then aligned with these needs to ensure that students are ready to enter the labor market.
2. Workforce development boards working with education and training providers. The goal of this partnership is to establish or grow training programs that align with regional labor demands and coordinate across organizations to provide wrap-around services for trainees.
3. Education entities working together, including K-12 with 2-year institutions and 2-year schools with 4-year institutions. Collaboration across educational organizations at different degree levels allows for the development of clear credentialing and career pathways for students. Opportunities to continue their education are available, along with ways to enter the workforce along the pipeline.

Expansion of Work-Based Learning Opportunities

Like with the other current priorities, work-based learning opportunities allow students to be better prepared to enter their chosen career pathways. Funders are interested in projects that include practical skills and knowledge development. Although specific grant programs vary in terms of their requirements, these types of education efforts can include formal or informal apprenticeships with local employers, site visits to potential future workplaces, or hands-on learning experiences in the classroom. Beyond the learning that happens as part of these initiatives, grantmakers also encourage work-based learning opportunities to help students build the connections to get hired when they complete their credentials.



WHAT YOUR EDUCATION ORGANIZATION SHOULD BE DOING TO PREPARE FOR COMPETITIVE GRANTSEEKING

Although priorities change between grant cycles, ultimately, the interest in workforce development within education funding is not going anywhere. Your organization needs to prepare strategically to best position itself in upcoming grant applications. It's not about changing your mission or priorities as an organization; rather, it's highlighting the alignment between what you are doing and the interests of the funders. To have the correct pieces for any grant program you are pursuing, ensure you have the following components in place now, or work towards them.

Establish, strengthen, and formalize partnerships

Partnerships allow your organization to work with other entities to strengthen your collective work, expand your impact, and balance strengths and assets. Consider other organizations within your region that contribute complementary skills and knowledge to the work that you are doing. These relationships should include other education and training providers across educational levels and at different places in the training pipeline, workforce development entities, and employers and labor organizations. Identify collaborators in each industry sector that you cover in your own work.

Gather data

Data to demonstrate your need and impact is critical to any grant application. For education projects under the current priorities, also consider the data that demonstrates the alignment with workforce development needs. Collect numbers about the local and regional labor demand, hiring rates and earnings for graduates of your programs, and career pathway options. The Bureau of Labor Statistics in the United States and Statistics Canada in Canada can provide general information, but also consider more local sources. Look at state/provincial-level statistics along with information specific to your organization and your students.

Build Credentialing Pathways

Clear pipelines through the educational process and defined off-ramps to career options help learners understand their pathway. Work within your organization and with education partners to develop clear, stackable credentialing pathways. Ideal pathways will move from high school coursework through short-term credentialing options that can be combined into 2-year degrees and then transfer into 4-year programs. Students should be able to see their career pathway options from each of these courses and return to them for future upskilling to progress in their chosen professions. These systems work best when collaborating with partners. They also give your organization an opportunity to be able to clearly demonstrate the value of the work that you are doing for students, helping funders to understand why your organization is a solid investment.

ALIGNMENT WITH WORKFORCE NEEDS BUILDS COMPETITIVENESS IN GRANT PROPOSALS

Workforce development is a critical component of current education funding in the U.S. and Canada. Organizations that treat partnerships, labor-market data, and credentialing pathways as ongoing infrastructure, rather than something designed during proposal season, will be the ones funders recognize as safe, well-positioned investments. Ensuring your organization has these pieces in place will strengthen your grantseeking efforts.

Program Snapshot

Strengthening Community Colleges Training Grants (SCC)



SUMMARY

The Strengthening Community Colleges Training Grants program (SCC) supports building the capacity of community colleges to meet labor demands. The 2026 funding round specifically focused on implementing and scaling access to short-term training opportunities through Workforce Pell Grants. Priority was also given to projects demonstrating statewide impact.

There were three Core Elements for the 2026 round of SCC:

1. Industry-Driven Strategies with Demonstrated Employer Value: active engagement with employer partners to support the development of high-quality programs that meet the hiring requirements in the focus industry sector(s)
2. Workforce Mobility through Career Pathways Programs: development of a clear sequence of education coursework and/or training credentials aligned with employer-validated work readiness standards and competencies
3. Workforce System Integration to Expand Training Option: collaboration with WIOA and other workforce system partners to accelerate career pathways programs through the development and expansion of programs seeking Workforce Pell eligibility that will create statewide impact

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible applicants are public and state-controlled community colleges. All applicants must lead a consortium. This group must include:

- A majority of the community colleges located within the state (ideally encompassing a statewide system of community colleges)
- A state-level of community college district-level entity
- At least three employers for each proposed industry sector
- One or more partners from the publicly funded workforce development system within the selected labor market area(s)
- Other optional partners, including other institutes of higher education

DEADLINE

Applications were due on May 20, 2026. A similar deadline is anticipated annually.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/skills-training-grants/scc

Grants Office Communities: https://communities.grantsoffice.com/s/grant/a0B0b00000Rz2mGEAR/strengthening-community-colleges-training-grants

Broadband Funding: A Brief History and Upcoming Tribal Deadlines

Joseph Phelan, Grants Development Consultant

Broadband has dominated headlines since the passage of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) in 2021, which provided billions of dollars for various broadband projects nationwide. Most of those funds, $42.45 billion, sit with states and territories to advance last-mile deployment through the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program. Alongside BEAD, over $3 billion was reserved exclusively for tribal entities through the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program (TBCP), which reaches its final application deadline on November 17 in a third and last round of funding.



BACKGROUND

For the most part, BEAD and TBCP fund the same projects, but there are slight differences. For starters, states and territories are heavily involved in the BEAD process. Each state and territory has its own broadband office that works directly with the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), the federal agency responsible for administering broadband programs. Tribal entities, by contrast, work directly with the NTIA directly.

The BEAD process has been drawn out, which is underselling it. A myriad of reasons drove this delay: the initial mapping of every unserved household, the complex 'challenge' process of determining eligible locations, and a change of administration, to name a few. TBCP has also experienced its fair share of delays, but NTIA did award 271 projects totaling over $2 billion through TBCP's first two rounds of funding during the Biden administration.

Baked into the original BEAD framework is the idea of non-deployment activities. These funds, such as digital skills and training, device access, workforce development, and 911 connectivity upgrades, varied depending on the state or territory. When entities submitted plans, they positioned how they would use these non-deployment funds. Conversely, TBCP was more specific within their application guidance as they called for broadband adoption and use projects that addressed telehealth, distance learning, and broadband affordability in addition to broadband infrastructure deployment and planning projects.

When the Trump administration took over in 2025, they made changes to the BEAD program. First, they rescinded final proposals approved under the Biden administration. They then created a new round of funding called the Benefit of the Bargain, which focused on technology-neutral approaches (such as satellite and fixed wireless) to broadband deployment to achieve cost savings. The new round also removed those non-deployment activities from state and territory plans. Over the course of last summer, states and territories held that extra round of funding before submitting final proposals to NTIA. As of early July 2026, all but two states and territories (California and Illinois) have had their final proposals approved by NTIA, and they are moving forward with deployment.

The original BEAD framework also built in non-deployment activities — digital skills training, device access, workforce development, 911 connectivity upgrades — with states and territories proposing how they'd use those funds. TBCP's guidance was more specific, calling for broadband adoption and use projects addressing telehealth, distance learning, and affordability, in addition to infrastructure deployment and planning.

When the Trump administration took over in 2025, it reshaped BEAD, rescinding proposals already approved under the Biden administration and introducing a new 'Benefit of the Bargain' funding round focused on technology-neutral (meaning any technology able to meet the requirements of BEAD should be considered) approaches — including satellite and fixed wireless — to cut costs. That round also eliminated non-deployment activities from state and territory plans. States and territories spent last summer working through this extra round before submitting final proposals to NTIA. As of early July 2026, every state and territory except California and Illinois has had its final proposal approved and is moving into deployment.

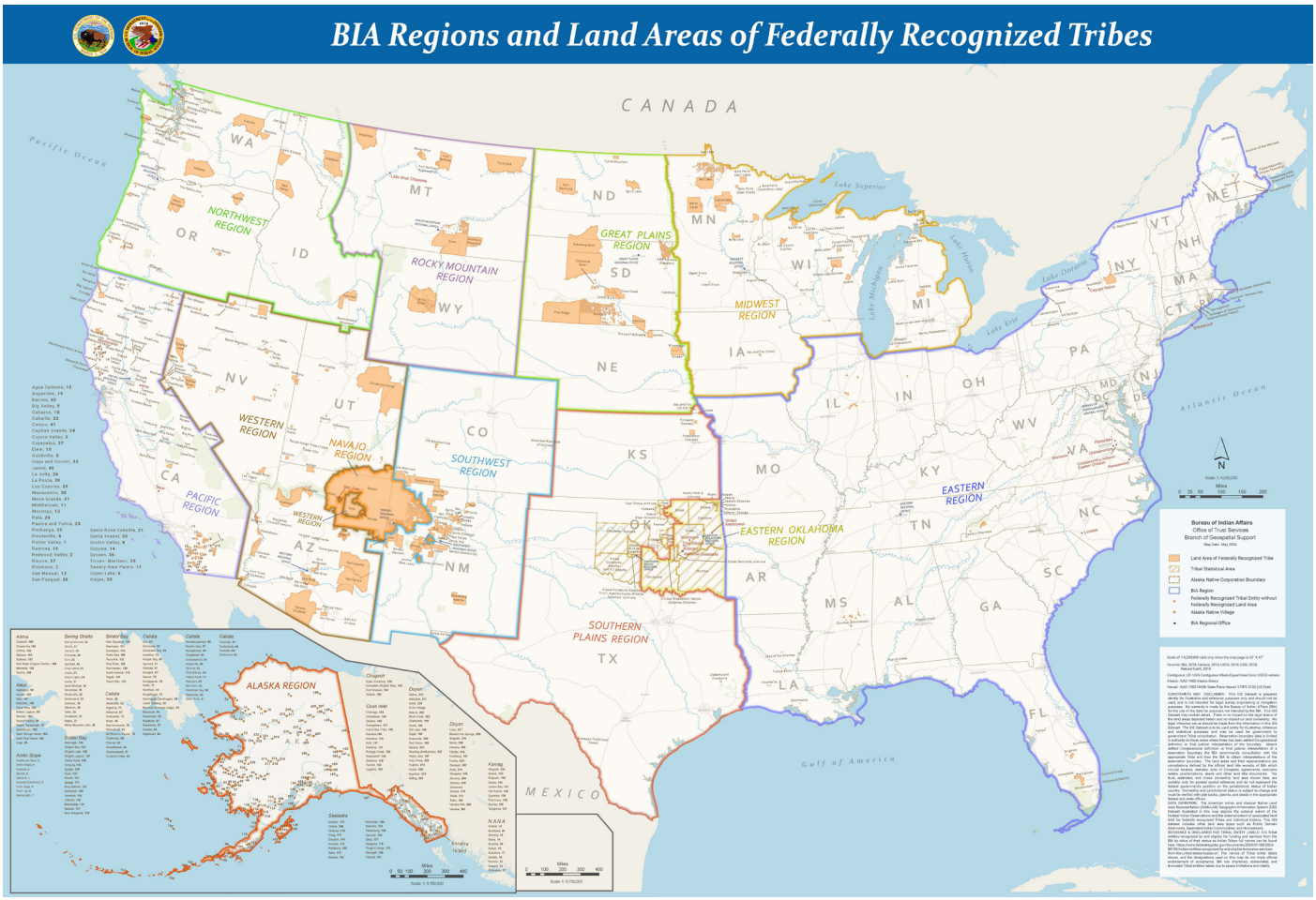
According to the NTIA, the Trump administration reform resulted in $21 billion in savings. The funds, however, will ultimately go back to the states and territories for non-deployment activities. Guidance for non-deployment activities is expected by the end of Summer 2026.

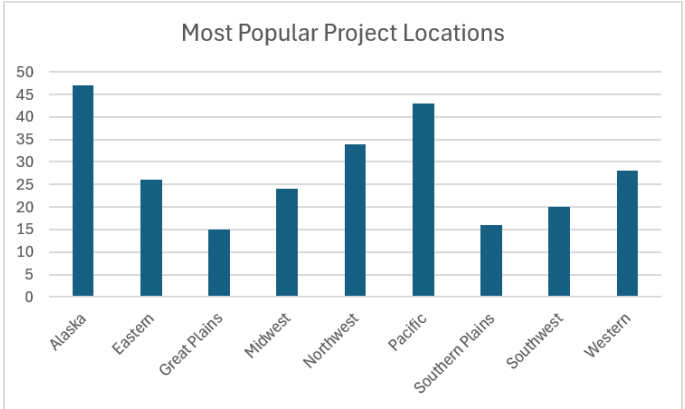
WHERE THE FIRST TWO ROUNDS OF TBCP FUNDING WENT

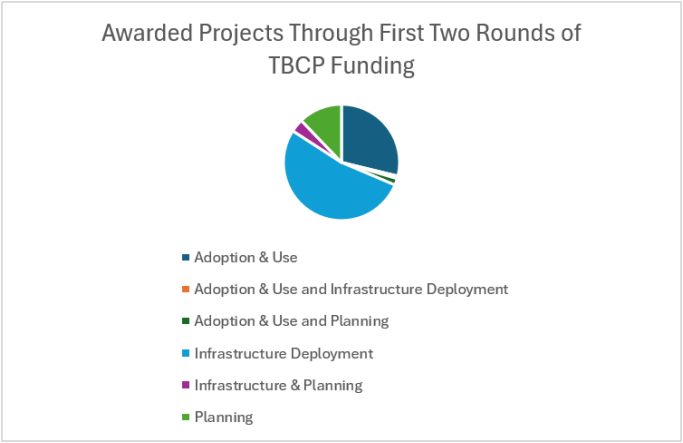
The NTIA groups awardees under TBCP across 13 regions: Alaska, Eastern, Eastern Oklahoma, Great Plains, Hawaii, Midwest, Navajo, Northwest, Pacific, Rocky Mountains, Southern Plains, Southwest, and Western.

A map of federally recognized tribes can be found here. (Note: Hawaii entities are not included on this map)

Over 90 percent of the awarded projects fell in nine of the 13 regions, while the majority of projects were categorized as infrastructure deployment.







WHAT'S CHANGING FOR ROUND THREE

The same Benefit of the Bargain rules established under BEAD have surfaced for TBCP.

Unlike the first two rounds of funding for TBCP, there will be a technology-neutral focus for broadband deployment projects, which means satellite and fixed wireless will be emphasized by reviewers.

NTIA will prioritize three project types: standalone broadband use and adoption projects, standalone broadband infrastructure deployment projects to unserved households, and connections to community anchor institutions (schools, hospitals, libraries, workforce development organizations).

A NEW COMPANION PROGRAM

When NTIA announced the final TBCP round in June, it also announced a grant opportunity called the Native Entities Grant Program. It was the first mention of that specific name, but the program stems from the Digital Equity Act, which originated in the BIL.

There is plenty of history regarding the Digital Equity Act, which was originally designed to go hand in hand with BEAD and TBCP. With the bulk of funds under BEAD and TBCP focused on internet deployment, the Digital Equity Act was created to give people the skills to use it. There is some overlap between the broadband and digital equity programs, specifically regarding non-deployment of BEAD funds and general eligible projects under TBCP, but the Digital Equity Act was viewed as a game-changer for individuals to truly benefit from widespread broadband access with over $2.75 billion in funds.

During the Biden administration, like with BEAD, states and territories applied directly to NTIA to receive grants to help develop digital equity plans. States and territories would then receive approvals from the NTIA under the $1.44 billion State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program. Throughout 2024, the NTIA announced awards, explaining what each state or territory would do with the allocations, many of which reported that they would subaward grants to eligible community anchor institutions to help with digital equity activities. There was even one round of funding under the Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program.

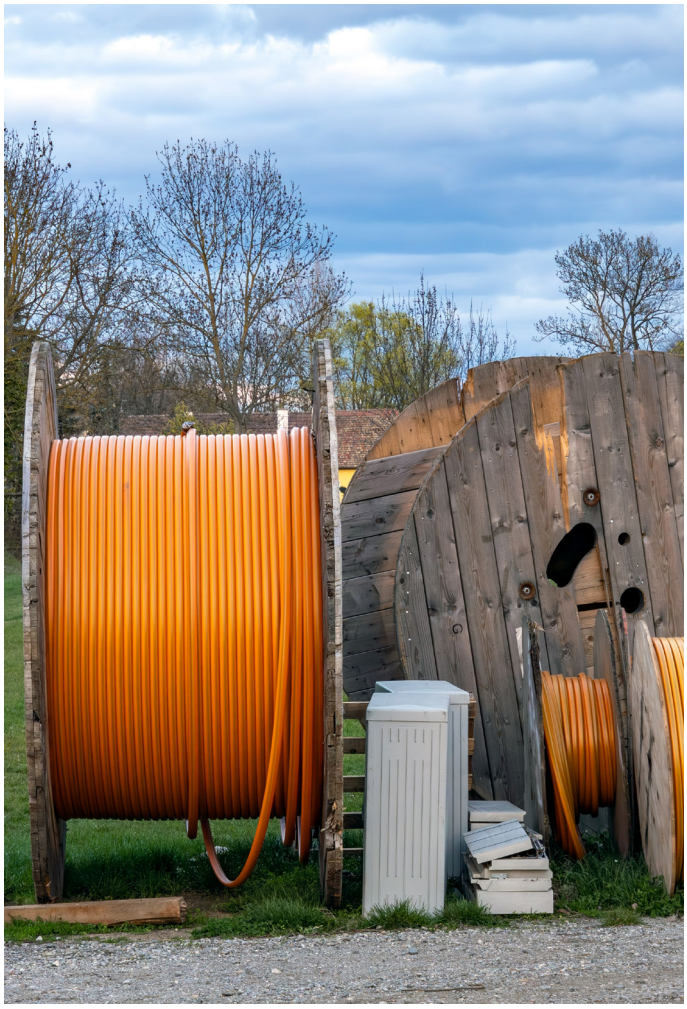
That all changed in 2025 when the Trump administration terminated these programs because the phrase "Covered Populations" was mentioned in funding guidance. Funds were supposed to go to low-income households, aging populations, incarcerated individuals, veterans, people with disabilities, people with language barriers, racial and ethnic minorities, and rural inhabitants, those who could most benefit from digital literacy or devices. Links to awards were removed from federal websites, including a list of initial Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program awardees (which, fortunately, was saved through the internet archive). Idaho had already announced awards for subrecipients from the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant during the spring of 2025, and many states had active deadlines at the time of the decision to terminate the Digital Equity Act.

This history sparked a bit of confusion when the Native Entities Grant Program was announced, since these funds came directly from the Digital Equity Act, begging the question, will other Digital Equity Act funds be restored?

As lawsuits surrounding the termination of the program persist, a Trump administration attorney recently said the competitive program could "likely continue," if racial and ethnic groups were removed from "Covered Populations."

In the meantime, we all wait for the legal process to endure.

One thing is certain: broadband will remain in headlines well into 2027.



Program Snapshot

Tribal Broadband Connectivity Grant Program



SUMMARY

The purpose of the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program is to improve the quality of life, spur economic development and commercial activity, create opportunities for remote employment and online entrepreneurship, remote learning, and telehealth by expanding broadband access to Native American communities.

Grant funds available under this program may be used for the following purposes:

- Broadband Use and Adoption
  - Such as device distribution, digital skills training, and broadband subsidy
  - Award sizes range from $500,000 and $2.5 million
- Broadband Infrastructure Deployment
  - Such as network deployment and facilities equipment, long-term facility leases, and engineering and network design
  - Award sizes range from $1 million and $25 million

ELIGIBILITY

A Tribal government, a Tribal college or university, a Native Hawaiian organization, a Tribal organization, an Alaska Native Corporation, or a consortium of eligible entities

DEADLINE

November 17, 2026

FOR MORE INFORMATION

https://broadbandusa.ntia.gov/funding-programs/tribal-broadband-connectivity

Grants Office Communities: https://communities.grantsoffice.com/s/grant/a0B5a00000UY1cQEAT/tribal-broadband-connectivity-grant-program

Program Snapshot

Native Entities Grant Program

SUMMARY

The NTIA's Native Entities Grant Program focuses on projects that advance innovation, protect the interests of children, and deliver measurable improvements in broadband adoption and use. Specifically, the proposed programs must support at least one of the following activities

- Develop and implement use and adoption of broadband activities
- Facilitate educational and employment opportunities through broadband
- Implement training programs that cover basic, advanced, and applied skills or other workforce development programs
- Make available equipment, instrumentation, networking capability hardware and software or digital network technology for broadband services at low or no cost (including broadband service subsidies)
- Construct, upgrade, expand, or operate new or existing public access computing centers through community anchor institutions



ELIGIBILITY

An Indian Tribe, an Alaska Native entity, or a Native Hawaiian organization is eligible to apply.

DEADLINE

November 17, 2026

FOR MORE INFORMATION

https://broadbandusa.ntia.gov/funding-programs/native-entities-grant-program

Grants Office Communities: https://communities.grantsoffice.com/s/grant/a0BQk000007ytOzMAI/native-entities-grant-program

How To Cultivate Authentic Relationships with Foundation Funders

Sandy Trowbridge, Grants Development Associate

You've already done the hard work of shaping your project and identifying foundations whose funding priorities align with your mission. The next step is just as important. Before submitting a formal funding request, invest time in building meaningful relationships with prospective funders. Organizations that take the time to listen, engage, and understand a foundation's priorities before asking for support are often better positioned than those that submit proposals without any prior connection.

Think of funder cultivation as the process of building a relationship through open, two-way dialogue. Instead of focusing first on persuading a foundation to support your project, begin by learning about its funding priorities, grantmaking strategy, and decision-making process. The goal is to determine whether there is a strong alignment between your organization's work and the foundation's mission and interests.

Ideally, by the time you submit a funding request, the funder will already be familiar with your organization and the impact of your work. Early conversations can also provide valuable insights into a foundation's funding preferences and application expectations, allowing you to tailor your proposal more effectively. So, where should you begin?

STEP 1: IDENTIFY EXISTING RELATIONSHIPS

Begin by determining whether anyone connected to your organization already has a relationship with the funder. Review the foundation's staff and board list on its website. If the information is incomplete, consult Candid (formerly GuideStar) or other publicly available resources. Share the names with your staff, board members, volunteers, and trusted partners, explaining that you are exploring a potential funding partnership and asking whether anyone has an existing connection.



If someone does have a relationship with the funder, ask whether they would be comfortable making an introduction. If no direct relationship exists, consider whether peer organizations have received funding from the foundation. You can often identify previous grantees by reviewing the foundation's IRS Form 990-PF (the annual tax filing that discloses a private foundation's grants and giving history, available for download on the IRS website). Reach out to these organizations to ask whether they would be willing to share insights about working with the funder, make an introduction, or even collaborate on future opportunities if appropriate.

Use existing connections and trusted networks to create warm introductions and gain valuable insight into prospective funders.

STEP 2: INTRODUCE YOUR ORGANIZATION

Before reaching out, thoroughly review the foundation's website, recent grants, funding priorities, and application guidance. At the same time, ensure your own website accurately reflects your mission, leadership, programs, and recent accomplishments, as many funders will research your organization before deciding whether to engage.

If someone has introduced you to the funder, thank the individual who made the connection and follow up to express your interest in learning more about the foundation's work. Request a brief introductory phone call, virtual meeting, site visit, or in-person conversation.

If no introduction is available, review the foundation's website to determine its preferred method of communication. Many foundations welcome inquiries by phone or email, while others intentionally limit pre-application contact to promote fairness or manage limited staff capacity. Ensure that you make note of the funder's stated communication preferences and adhere to them closely.

If the foundation welcomes inquiries (or does not explicitly discourage them), consider sending a brief, thoughtful email introducing your organization and requesting a 20–30-minute introductory conversation to learn more about the foundation's priorities. Briefly explain who you are and why you believe there may be mission alignment. Prepare your talking points in advance should the funder respond quickly. If the foundation does not maintain a website, review its most recent IRS Form 990-PF, which often indicates whether unsolicited requests are accepted and provides preferred contact information.

If you do not receive a response, one or two courteous follow-ups over several weeks are generally appropriate. Whenever possible, include something of value (such as a newly published report, a significant organizational accomplishment, or an invitation to an upcoming event) rather than simply repeating your original request. If multiple attempts go unanswered, consider applying through the foundation's open application process (if available) or revisiting the opportunity later after identifying a mutual connection. If there is still no response, assume the foundation is unable to engage at this time and focus your efforts elsewhere.



Likewise, if a funder indicates that your project is not a good fit or advises you not to pursue funding, respect that decision. A gracious response can leave the door open to future conversations if the foundation's priorities change. If early discussions reveal limited alignment, thank the funder for their time and move on. Investing your cultivation efforts in genuinely aligned funders is far more productive than trying to persuade an uninterested foundation.

Make a thoughtful first impression by researching the funder, respecting communication preferences, and focusing on learning rather than immediately requesting funding.

STEP 3: HOLD A PRODUCTIVE INTRODUCTORY CONVERSATION

Remember that the purpose of an introductory conversation is not to ask for funding. Instead, your goal is to better understand the foundation's priorities, funding philosophy, and whether your work aligns with its current interests. Spend more time asking thoughtful questions than describing your organization. Careful listening often provides insights that strengthen both your proposal and your long-term relationship. Take notes during the conversation and expand them immediately afterward while the discussion is still fresh. This will allow you to reference the funder's interests, preferences, recommendations, and any agreed-upon next steps in future communications and grant proposals.

Use the meeting to deepen your understanding of the foundation's funding strategy, priorities, and preferred approach to partnerships. Once you've confirmed mutual alignment, discuss your project in greater detail. Resist the temptation to cover every aspect of your organization. Instead, focus on the specific program or initiative that best aligns with the foundation's interests. Helpful questions to ask include:

- What funding priorities are most important to the foundation right now?
- Have those priorities changed recently?
- What characteristics do your strongest grantee partners have in common?
- Are there particular outcomes or evaluation methods you value?
- Are there projects or approaches that typically fall outside your funding strategy?
- Is there an ideal grant size for organizations like ours?
- Is there anything you recommend we consider before applying?
- Is there anything we haven't discussed that would be helpful for us to know before applying?

After the meeting, promptly send a thank-you message and any materials you agreed to provide. Briefly summarize key discussion points and next steps to make future conversations easier.

Use introductory conversations to listen carefully, confirm alignment, and gather insights that will strengthen both your proposal and your long-term relationship.

STEP 4: MAINTAIN THE RELATIONSHIP

Cultivation does not end after the first conversation, or even after a funding decision is made. Share occasional, meaningful updates throughout the year when appropriate. These might include newly published reports, significant organizational milestones, noteworthy program outcomes, or invitations to events that align with the funder's interests.

Keep your communication authentic, relevant, and consistent with the foundation's stated preferences. Some funders welcome periodic updates, while others prefer minimal communication outside the application or reporting process. Respecting those preferences helps build trust over time.

If the relationship does not result in a grant, thank the funder for their time and consideration. When appropriate, ask whether they can recommend other foundations or organizations that may be a better fit for your work. Those referrals can often lead to valuable new funding opportunities.

Cultivate long-term partnerships by sharing meaningful updates, respecting communication preferences, and staying engaged beyond the grant cycle.



HOW TO APPROACH INVITE-ONLY FOUNDATION FUNDERS

Some foundations do not accept unsolicited proposals or intentionally limit pre-application contact. While you should always respect a foundation's stated communication preferences, there are several ways to increase your organization's visibility and build credibility over time:

- Regularly publish reports, impact stories, research, and other thought leadership on your website and professional platforms such as LinkedIn.
- Attend conferences, sector meetings, and community events where foundation staff are likely to participate.
- Invite foundation staff to organizational events that closely align with their philanthropic interests.
- Serve on community coalitions, advisory committees, or collaborative initiatives where foundation staff and nonprofit leaders work together.
- Strengthen your professional network through associations, working groups, community partnerships, and board engagement.
- Reach out to current or former grantees of the funder to learn about their experiences and explore opportunities for collaboration.
- Unless the foundation specifically requests otherwise, consider sending a brief introductory email expressing interest in learning more about the foundation's mission and approach.

Increase your organization's visibility over time through strategic networking, thought leadership, and authentic engagement with the philanthropic community.

CONCLUSION

Organizations that consistently secure foundation funding tend to focus less on submitting large numbers of proposals and more on building authentic relationships with aligned funders. Effective relationship cultivation requires intentional planning. Develop a system for tracking your interactions with prospective funders, including key contacts, recent communications, funding interests, preferred communication methods, follow-up commitments, and next steps. Set reminders to stay engaged so promising opportunities do not go dormant.

Even if a foundation declines your proposal, maintain the relationship when appropriate. Foundation priorities, staff, and funding strategies evolve, and organizations that remain engaged professionally and respectfully are often well-positioned when new opportunities emerge.

Successful grant seeking is rarely about finding a single perfect funding opportunity. It is about developing a network of mission-aligned funding partners who come to know, trust, and value your organization's work. Every thoughtful conversation, introduction, and follow-up helps strengthen that network, even when it does not immediately result in a grant.

Above all, remember that funders are people working toward meaningful change in their communities, just as you are. Approach every interaction with curiosity, authenticity, and a genuine interest in understanding their priorities while sharing your organization's mission and impact.

Sustainable foundation funding is rarely built through a single proposal. It grows through authentic relationships, mutual trust, demonstrated impact, and consistent engagement with mission-aligned partners.

This article draws on themes discussed at the December 2025 Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) CareerTech Vision Conference by Grants Office's Sandy Trowbridge and Christina Fernandez.

How Interagency Agreements Are Influencing New Federal Grant Programs

Christina Fernandez, Grant Development Consultant (Education)

Since November 2025, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) has announced 14 Interagency Agreements (IAAs) with six federal agencies, including the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Justice, Interior, State, and Treasury (see Table 1). Seven months later, we are beginning to see new competitive grant programs administered under these partnerships, providing the first real insight into how they may reshape the federal grants landscape.

For context, an Interagency Agreement is a formal arrangement that allows one federal agency to perform work or administer services on behalf of another. These agreements are not new for federal agencies, as they are routinely used to procure specialized services, technical expertise, or administrative support from another agency. What makes ED's recent agreements unique is not the use of IAAs themselves, but rather the department's decision to use them as a mechanism for assigning responsibilities to partner agencies while advancing its broader objective of reducing federal bureaucracy in education. According to ED, the agreements are intended to streamline program administration, reduce duplication, improve efficiency, and leverage existing federal expertise. These agreements have caused legal debates amongst school districts, labor organizations, higher education associations, and several states, arguing whether certain responsibilities can be delegated in this manner and whether this is an attempt to slowly shut down the department.

While those legal questions continue to evolve, grant applicants are already beginning to see changes in how new funding opportunities are being structured. This article examines what we are learning from the first grant competitions issued under these partnerships and what school districts can do now to position themselves for future funding opportunities.



HOW IAAS ARE IMPACTING NEW GRANT PROGRAMS

While the long-term impact of these agreements is still unfolding, two brand-new competitive grant programs provide an early indication of how these partnerships may influence grant programs moving forward:

- School Safety Enhancement Program
- Career Pathways Exploration Grant Program

Both programs were issued on behalf of ED and share several characteristics that distinguish them from traditional discretionary programs.

Most notably, eligibility is limited to state-level applicants such as governors, State Educational Agencies (SEAs), State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies, and other state entities. Rather than allowing multiple LEAs, IHEs (institutions of higher education), and other education-related organizations to compete nationally, only one application is allowed per state. For applications not submitted by a state-level entity, the state must provide a signed letter from the governor identifying, designating, or endorsing the applicant to represent the state.

Another significant change to the application process is that State applicants may choose to administer the program directly or distribute funding through subgrants to local educational agencies (LEAs). The state then has the option to choose whether or not they want to subgrant through a competitive or non-competitive process. If they choose to competitively subgrant their award, then they must describe the competition process in their applications. If they choose to subgrant through a noncompetitive process, then they must identify the specific LEA(s) that will receive funding. Although this model sounds similar to a traditional pass-through program, there are no set rules for how the state should structure its competitions or the process for how they choose which LEA(s) they want to support.

COULD EXISTING PROGRAMS FOLLOW?

Several partnership fact sheets identify existing ED programs that could eventually be administered under these new agreements. These include programs such as Innovative Approaches to Literacy, Teacher Quality Partnership, Supporting Effective Educator Development, Charter Schools Program Grants to State Entities, Promise Neighborhoods, Ready to Learn Programming, Talent Search, Educational Opportunity Centers, and others.

While it is too early to tell whether these longstanding programs will ultimately adopt the same state-centered eligibility model, we are seeing state leadership being called out as a priority. For example, the Teacher Quality Partnership program made it an absolute priority, while the Talent Search Program made it a competitive priority, offering an additional five points to projects carried out by a state agency. To incentivize this even further, the Talent Search Program also increased the max award for state-level applicants to $10 million compared to $1 million for applications not endorsed by their governor.

Although these changes don't exclude educational institutions, they demonstrate a growing preference for applications that incorporate meaningful state involvement. Applicants should anticipate greater emphasis on statewide coordination, partnerships, and alignment with state priorities.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS

For LEAs, these changes could significantly alter how they pursue federal funding.

Historically, districts often developed projects independently or as a consortium with other districts and agencies to compete directly for federal grants. Now, through these new programs being released on behalf of ED, districts may first need to secure support from their SEA or other designated state applicants before federal funds ever reach the local level.

This means successful districts will be those that follow these best practices:

- Engage with their SEA to see if they plan to pursue these opportunities and discuss how their district may be involved as implementation partners.
- Demonstrate how local initiatives align with statewide priorities.
- Build local and regional partnerships that position them for inclusion in state-led applications.
- Prepare for state-run subgrant competitions after federal awards are made.
- Review the priorities of the administering (federal partner) or reviewing (state) agency and align the proposal narrative accordingly while still addressing ED priorities.

Sharing project concepts early, identifying areas of alignment with statewide priorities, and maintaining regular communication with state leaders can help ensure that local initiatives remain visible as states determine whether to apply and which implementation partners to include.

Moving forward, it will be important for districts to note that for grant programs being released on behalf of ED, relationship-building may become just as important as project development. Organizations that establish themselves as trusted partners before a funding opportunity is released will likely be in a stronger position than those waiting until the application opens.

LOOKING AHEAD

While it is too early to conclude that every Department of Education program will follow this model, the new grant releases suggest that state-led implementation is becoming an increasingly important feature of the federal education funding landscape. If this approach continues, education institutions may find that success depends less on competing directly for federal dollars and more on becoming strategic partners in statewide initiatives. Grant readiness will increasingly involve relationship-building with SEAs, understanding state priorities, and positioning local projects within broader statewide strategies.

At the same time, several important questions remain unanswered. As additional grant programs are transitioned under these partnerships, applicants will be watching closely to see how administrative responsibilities are divided between agencies, whether application and award timelines change, and how technical assistance and post-award monitoring will be coordinated.

TABLE 1: ED INTERAGENCY PARTNERSHIPS — OFFICE & GRANT PROGRAM CHANGES

Interagency Partnership Title	Current ED Office	New Federal Agency Office	Grant Programs Impacted
ED and HHS: Special Education and Rehabilitative Services Partnership	Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS)	HHS and Administration for Children and Families	IDEA Parts B, C, D grants; Rehabilitation Act of 1973 grants; Randolph-Sheppard Vending Facility Program; Vocational Rehabilitation Disability Innovation Fund; Special Olympics Sport and Empowerment Act programs; Education of the Deaf Act (National Technical Institute for the Deaf); Helen Keller National Center Act programs; American Printing House for the Blind; Gallaudet University
ED and DOL: Elementary and Secondary Education Partnership	Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE)	DOL	Title I Parts A–D; Title II Part A; Title III Part A; Title IV Parts A & B; Title V Rural programs; Impact Aid; Education for Homeless Children and Youths; Republic of Palau Grant; Consolidated Grants to Insular Areas; plus competitive grants: Comprehensive Literacy State Development, Innovative Approaches to Literacy, Supporting Effective Educator Development, Charter Schools Program, Assistance for Arts Education, DC SOAR Act, Teacher and School Leader Incentive, Teacher Quality Partnership Grant, American History and Civics, Magnet Schools Assistance Program
ED and DOL: Postsecondary Education Partnership	Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE); also OESE (for HEP/CAMP)	DOL	TRIO programs (Upward Bound, Talent Search, etc.); GEAR UP; GAANN; Augustus F. Hawkins Center of Excellence; Title III Parts A & B (incl. HBCUs); HBCU Master's/Graduate programs; Howard University; HEERF; TPSID/TPSID-CC; FIPSE; Higher Ed Congressionally Funded Community Projects; HBCU Capital Financing Program; College Housing and Academic Facilities Loans Program (CHAFL); High School Equivalency Program (HEP); College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP)
ED and DOI: Indian Education Partnership	OESE, OPE, OCTAE, OSERS	Department of the Interior (DOI)	Indian Education Grants to LEAs; Special Programs for Indian Children (PD, DEMO); State Tribal Education Partnership (STEP); NALED; NALRC; ANEP; NHEP; NAM Program; Tribally Controlled Colleges/Universities (HEA Title III); Indian Education R&D Infrastructure Grant (HEA Title VII); Tribally Controlled Postsecondary CTE Institutions Program; American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program
ED and HHS: Child Care Access Means Parents in School Partnership	Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE)	HHS (Administration for Children & Families)	Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS), authorized under HEA Section 419N
ED and State: International Education and Foreign Language Studies Partnership	Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE)	Department of State	AORC; BIE; CIBE; FLAS Fellowships; IRS Program; LRC Program; NRC Program; UISFL Program; Fulbright-Hays DDRA, FRA, GPA, and Seminars Abroad

Interagency Partnership Title	Current ED Office	New Federal Agency Office	Grant Programs Impacted
ED and DOL: Workforce Development Partnership	Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE)	DOL (Employment and Training Administration)	Adult education and family literacy programs (WIOA Title II); Career and technical education programs (Perkins V)
ED and HHS: Family Engagement and School Support Partnership	Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE)	HHS (Administration for Children and Families)	Project SERV; School Safety National Activities; Ready to Learn Programming; Full-Service Community Schools; Promise Neighborhoods; Statewide Family Engagement Centers
ED and DOJ: Training and Advisory Services Partnership	N/A	DOJ	Training and Advisory Services program (school desegregation technical assistance), authorized under 42 U.S.C. § 2000c-2
ED and Treasury: Federal Student Assistance Partnership	Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) / Office of Postsecondary Education	Department of the Treasury (Bureau of the Fiscal Service)	None — student loan default collection (Default Resolution Group/DMCS), not a grant program
ED and DOJ: Civil Rights Partnership	Office for Civil Rights (ED-OCR)	DOJ Civil Rights Division (DOJ-CRT)	None — enforcement/compliance partnership, not a grant program
ED and DOJ: Student Privacy Protection Partnership	Student Privacy Policy Office (SPPO)	DOJ	None — complaint review/investigation partnership, not a grant program
ED and HHS: Foreign Medical Accreditation Partnership	Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE)	HHS	None — supports NCFMEA accreditation review, not a grant program
ED and State: Section 117 Partnership	Office of the General Counsel (OGC)	Department of State	None — foreign gift/contract reporting compliance, not a grant program

Program Snapshot

School Safety Enhancement Program



SUMMARY

The Administration for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) solicited applications in support of the administration of the School Safety Enhancement (SSE) program on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education (ED).

The School Safety Enhancement program provided competitive grants to State educational agencies (SEAs) to develop, implement, and strengthen statewide school safety systems and the physical security of schools consistent with findings outlined in the U.S. Department of Justice January 18, 2024, report, "Critical Incident Review: Active Shooter at Robb Elementary School".

ED only considered applications that met both absolute priorities.

Absolute Priority 1: Returning Education to the States- Projects or proposals that will be carried out by State educational agencies

Absolute Priority 2: Improving school safety systems and physical security of schools - To meet this priority, an SEA must describe how funds will support one or more of the following: (a) Installation or upgrading of interior door locks and secure entry systems; (b) Installation or upgrading of deterrent measures, including but not limited to metal detectors or security cameras; (c) Installation or upgrading of perimeter controls; (d) Installation or upgrading of visitor screening infrastructure; (e) Acquiring or upgrading emergency communication systems; (f) Development or updating of emergency response and coordination plans; or (g) Training and preparedness exercises for SROs and school personnel in active threat response.

Competitive Preference Priority (up to 3 points): Rural Applicants - LEAs with a NCES locale code of 41, 42, or 43.

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible applicants included State Education Agencies. Only one application per state was permitted.

DEADLINE

Applications were due by July 28, 2026. Future funding for this program is to be determined.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

https://www.ed.gov/grants-and-programs/grants-birth-grade-12/safe-and-supportive-schools/school-safety-enhancement-program-84184a#overview

Grants Office Communities: https://communities.grantsoffice.com/s/grant/a0BQk000007nD9lMAE/school-safety-enhancement-program

Tracking the Trends: What Canada's 'Build Communities Strong Fund' Early Projects Reveal

Sid Aubeeluck, Grants Development Associate (Canada)

INTRODUCTION

Canada's infrastructure needs are evolving. Communities across the country are under growing pressure to build more housing, maintain essential services, and adapt to climate-related challenges. Meeting these demands requires more than new construction; it requires the infrastructure systems that allow communities to grow, including water and wastewater networks, transportation infrastructure, community facilities, and resilient public assets.

The Build Communities Strong Fund (BCSF) is the federal government's response to this challenge. Announced as a $51 billion investment in public infrastructure, the fund supports projects that build, renew, and expand the infrastructure needed for long-term growth. The BCSF goes beyond replacing aging assets; it prioritizes investments that increase capacity, remove barriers to development, strengthen essential services, and create lasting community benefits.

The program reflects a broader federal approach: infrastructure matters less for the assets themselves than for what they unlock: from housing to community resilience. The first wave of funded projects provides valuable insight into how these priorities are being put into practice, revealing common themes in how successful applicants frame their needs, demonstrate impact, and position their projects as investments in the future of their communities.



TREND 1: WATER AND WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE DOMINATES EARLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

While the Build Canada Strong Fund supports a broad range of infrastructure, one trend stands out in the first wave of funding announcements: water and wastewater infrastructure have dominated the early portfolio. Of the first 13 individual projects announced under the fund, eight primarily focus on drinking water, wastewater, sewer, or stormwater infrastructure.

A closer look at the Iqaluit Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Project helps explain why. The project will expand the city's trucked water and utilidor systems, creating the infrastructure capacity needed to support an estimated 2,000 to 2,500 new housing units by 2031. The investment isn't a replacement project; it clears a constraint that's been capping how much the city can grow.

Whether it's expanding wastewater treatment capacity in Bridgewater, Nova Scotia, extending servicing into a designated growth area in Northeast St. Albert, Alberta, or replacing the drinking water treatment plant in Hay River, Northwest Territories, these projects are consistently framed around increasing capacity and preparing communities for future demand.

While it is still too early to conclude that water infrastructure is one of the program's primary long-term focuses, its prominence among the first funded projects suggests the federal government views these investments as one of the most effective ways to remove barriers to housing and community growth.

TREND 2: THE STRONGEST PROJECTS CREATE RIPPLE EFFECTS

Looking beyond the infrastructure itself, another clear trend emerges: successful projects are designed to advance multiple government priorities through a single investment.

The Cartier Sector Revitalization Project in Laval is a strong example. In addition to upgrading underground infrastructure, the project includes streetscape improvements, public spaces, and active transportation enhancements that are expected to support nearly 1,800 new housing units while revitalizing an important urban district. Similarly, the Windsor Street Exchange Redevelopment Project in Halifax is framed as a mobility, housing, economic development, and climate resilience investment all at once, rather than a transportation project with side benefits.

Across the announcements, successful projects are rarely presented as solving a single problem. Instead, they demonstrate how one investment can advance multiple government priorities: from housing and economic development to resilience, mobility, and community wellbeing. Applicants take note: a proposal that stops at 'what we're building' is competing against ones that answer 'what this makes possible.'

TREND 3: PROJECTS ALIGN WITH LOCAL GROWTH PRIORITIES

One of the more interesting observations from the first round of announcements is the geographic diversity of funded projects. Investments have been announced in major urban centres, growing suburban municipalities, rural communities, and northern regions: from Iqaluit to Bridgewater to Vancouver and various communities in between. The program isn't targeting one particular type of community; rather, it's supporting infrastructure needs across Canada, regardless of size or location. Despite this diversity, the projects share an important characteristic: they are closely tied to broader local priorities.

The Whistle Bend Active Transportation Connector in Whitehorse, for example, is designed to connect one of the city's fastest-growing neighbourhoods to schools, employment areas, and the downtown core, supporting both mobility and planned community expansion. The announcement doesn't stop at describing a new active transportation route; it ties the corridor directly to the neighbourhood's growth plan.

Whether the project is located in a large metropolitan centre or a small northern community, the rationale extends beyond the infrastructure itself. Investments are linked to local growth plans, redevelopment initiatives, or broader community objectives that explain why this project, in this place, is needed now.

Strong applications should demonstrate not only what infrastructure is being proposed, but also how it supports existing municipal plans, addresses local priorities, and contributes to the community's long-term vision.

CONCLUSION

The first wave of Build Communities Strong Fund announcements reveals a clear pattern in how the federal government is approaching infrastructure investment: prioritizing foundational infrastructure, supporting projects that advance multiple community objectives, and investing in initiatives that align with local growth priorities.

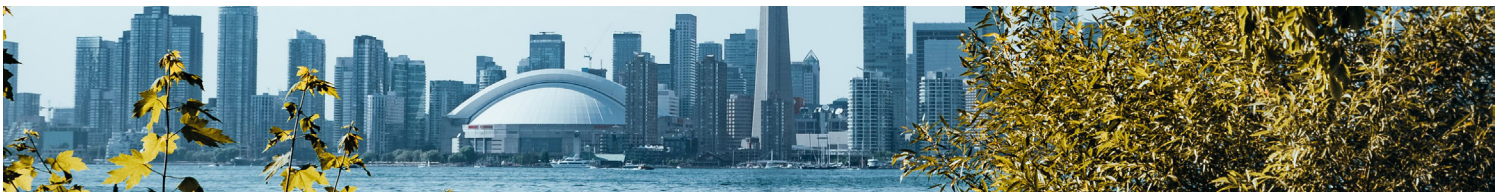
It is important to note, however, that these observations are largely based on projects announced through the Direct Delivery Stream. As the program continues to roll out, announcements from the remaining funding streams are beginning to reveal the broader scope of the BCSF and the different ways federal investments will be delivered.

Through the Provincial and Territorial Stream, the federal government has begun announcing investments delivered through bilateral agreements with provinces and territories. One of the first is a more than $200 million joint federal-provincial investment in Phase II of the Université de Montréal Science Complex. Announced under the new Canada–Quebec agreement, the project funds two new buildings that bring together the natural sciences, data science, and the Courtois Institute in a single location, part of a broader push to position Quebec and Canada at the forefront of advanced materials, computing, and artificial intelligence, and to create space for nearly 2,500 students, 300 researchers, and staff.

More trends will surface as additional projects are announced across all three streams. But one thing is already clear from this early portfolio: the strongest proposals go beyond describing what will be built and make the case for how that investment helps a community grow, adapt, and last.

Program Snapshot

Build Communities Strong Fund (BCSF)



SUMMARY

Announced in Budget 2025, the Build Communities Strong Fund (BCSF) is a $51 billion federal infrastructure investment designed to support new and renewed public infrastructure across Canada. The BCSF is delivered through three funding streams, each supporting different types of infrastructure investments and applicants.

Provincial and Territorial Stream: $17.2 billion over 10 years

The Provincial and Territorial Stream provides funding through agreements with provinces and territories to support infrastructure priorities identified at the provincial and territorial level. The stream is focused on large-scale priorities related to housing, post-secondary education, and health infrastructure.

Eligible project areas include:

- Housing-enabling infrastructure
- Post-secondary education infrastructure
- Health infrastructure

Eligible applicants include:

- Provincial and territorial governments
- Public institutions and organizations identified through provincial and territorial agreements

Direct Delivery Stream: $6 billion over 10 years

The Direct Delivery Stream supports regionally significant projects, climate adaptation initiatives, and community infrastructure investments that align with federal priorities. Projects can be identified through federal processes, existing program pipelines, consultations, and calls for expressions of interest. The online portal is now open for project applications that are shovel-ready for 2026.

Eligible project areas include:

- Drinking water, wastewater, sewer, and stormwater infrastructure
- Climate adaptation and resilience projects
- Community infrastructure
- Other strategic public infrastructure investments that deliver broader economic, environmental, and social benefits beyond the immediate location of the project

Eligible applicants include:

- Municipal and regional governments
- Indigenous governments and organizations
- Public sector organizations
- Incorporated not-for-profit organizations
- Private sector organizations working in collaboration with an eligible public-sector entity
- Other eligible infrastructure partners that own or will own the project asset

Community Stream: $27.8 billion over 10 years

The Community Stream continues the role of the former Canada Community-Building Fund. Rather than operating through a competitive application process like the Direct Delivery Stream, the Community Stream provides predictable, allocation-based funding to support locally identified infrastructure priorities across Canada. Funding allocations flow from the federal government to provinces and territories, which then distribute funds to eligible communities, primarily municipalities and Indigenous recipients, through established agreements and allocation formulas.

Tips for Building a Strong Vulnerability Assessment for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program

Meghan Jacobsen, Grants Development Associate



For any organization applying to the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP), the vulnerability assessment is not only a requirement, but it is the foundation of the application. Reviewers look to this assessment for proof that what you are seeking in your Investment Justification (IJ) is necessary for the safety and security of your organization. Every project you propose, and every dollar you request in your IJ, should be directly tied to a specific finding in that assessment. Because of this, taking the time and utilizing credible resources to create a strong vulnerability assessment can greatly contribute to a competitive NSGP application.

Here are some tips for creating a strong vulnerability assessment:

1. Each physical site requires its own assessment

FEMA and every State Administrative Agency (SAA) require a separate, site-specific vulnerability assessment for each physical address for which you're requesting funding. Avoid reusing the same assessment language across multiple locations or submitting one generic assessment. If your organization is applying for three buildings, you will need three distinct assessments, each reflecting the unique needs of each property.

2. Use valid assessment methods or a qualified assessor.

Reviewers give more credibility to assessments that are conducted using valid methods. A vulnerability assessment should not be a simple walkthrough. Instead, opt for an in-depth inspection to better identify your security needs. This can be done internally by staff, volunteers, or an external expert. The strongest options to conduct this assessment include:

- Local law enforcement
- A licensed private security consultant with experience in soft-target or houses-of-worship assessments
- CISA's (Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency) Houses of Worship Security Self-Assessment Tool or K-12 School Security Assessment Tool
- State-specific vulnerability assessment forms, if your state provides such an option

Whichever route you choose, make sure to document who conducted the assessment and their qualifications to give further credibility.

3. Vulnerability assessments must be renewed every three to five years

Most SAAs require that a vulnerability assessment not be older than three years at the time of application, while FEMA recommends updating at least every five years. If your last assessment is older than that, or if you have made changes to your facility such as renovations or security updates, get a new assessment before you apply.



4. Address the most important components

A strong assessment should address the following:

- Threat: What specific risks does your organization face? If applicable, include any documented history of threats or incidents at your site or at comparable organizations (such as a similar house of worship or mission type).
- Vulnerability: Where are the actual gaps? Look closely at perimeter security, access control, lighting, cameras, locks, visitor screening, cybersecurity issues, and staff training. Be specific about what's missing or outdated.
- Mitigation: What is needed to address your security vulnerabilities? Address what investment needs to be made to reduce or eliminate the vulnerability.

5. Align your proposed project with the vulnerability assessment

As stated earlier, the vulnerability assessment is the foundation of the NSGP application. The assessment serves as evidence of the need for an investment to address security gaps within your organization. It is vital to ensure all security gaps are covered in the assessment. Avoid requesting equipment or services that aren't clearly justified by something in the assessment itself. A direct line from the findings to the funding request is what reviewers look for in an application.

6. Provide supporting evidence

When possible, back up your vulnerability assessment with:

- Photos of vulnerable entry points, inadequate lighting, or damaged fencing
- A site diagram or floor plan marking access points and blind spots
- A log of past incidents, police reports, or threats received

When including this information, it is best to combine it into a single document along with the assessment, as some SAAs do not allow for additional attachments.

7. Start early!

Between coordinating with law enforcement or a consultant, walking the site, and writing up findings, a good assessment can take several weeks to complete properly. This is a process that should be started well in advance of your SAA opening NSGP. Keep in mind that many NSGP application windows are as little as two weeks, so not having a vulnerability assessment ready in advance could mean you will need to wait another year to apply.

A final note: NSGP requirements vary by state. Always check your specific state administrative agency's current NOFO and application guidance for exact formatting, deadlines, and submission requirements before finalizing your assessment. And if you'd like a second set of eyes on your assessment before you apply, Grants Office is glad to help.

Rural Healthcare Funding Extends Well Beyond the Rural Health Transformation Program

Amber Walker, Grants Development Consultant (Healthcare)



Healthcare grant writers pursuing capital projects, workforce initiatives, technology investments, or service line expansion opportunities may have noticed a trend that is becoming increasingly common, rural healthcare is a major federal funding priority, beyond just the Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP).

Over the past year, the RHTP has captured much attention. With **$50 billion** expected to flow to states over five years, the program represents the largest investment in rural healthcare in decades. If rural healthcare organizations focus solely on RHTP, though, they may miss out on alternative funding opportunities.

Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) is implementing investments that address the financial, workforce, technology, and infrastructure challenges facing rural providers. These grant programs are broad in scope and cover topics from direct financial payments to opioid response and tele-nutrition, extending beyond a single program.

Healthcare leaders are all too familiar with a continuously strained workforce, aging infrastructure, and shifting population needs. Federal grants are beginning to catch up and reflect the reality of rural healthcare.

Long-standing initiatives continue to receive support while new programs are being introduced to strengthen care delivery, improve provider collaboration, and stabilize rural health systems.

TELEHEALTH CONTINUES TO EXPAND

Technology remains one of the federal government's highest priorities for improving rural access to care, which is represented in both new and old programs. The **Distance Learning and Telemedicine Program**, administered through the U.S. Department of Agriculture, has long supported investments that connect rural patients with specialists through real-time telehealth services. The program continues to help providers overcome geographic barriers while expanding access to care.

Additional investments have opened through the **Telehealth Nutrition Services Network Grant Program**, which supports healthcare professionals providing nutrition services through integrated telehealth networks. The initiative is designed to improve access to nutrition counseling within primary and specialty care settings serving rural and medically underserved populations.

As virtual care becomes a permanent component of healthcare delivery, federal funding continues to support technologies that improve both access and care coordination.

COLLABORATION IS KEY

Independent rural hospitals continue to face structural disadvantages in an increasingly consolidated healthcare market. The **Rural Health Network Advancement Program** addresses that challenge by supporting networks of independent rural hospitals and clinics working collaboratively to improve care delivery.

This pilot program recognizes that coordinated regional networks can improve efficiency, strengthen sustainability, and preserve local access to care.

The program also reflects a broader trend appearing across federal grant announcements: partnership is no longer optional. Increasingly, collaborative applications are viewed more favorably than projects developed in isolation.

KEEPING RURAL HOSPITALS OPEN

The financial stability of rural hospitals should remain a local and national concern, as rural hospitals are eliminating services and closing at alarming rates.

Hospital closures continue to reduce access to emergency services, obstetrics, surgical care, and behavioral health across many rural communities. In response, the **Rural Hospital Provider Assistance Program** provides direct financial assistance to eligible rural hospitals experiencing structural payment disadvantages.

The program aims to maintain essential healthcare services and prevent avoidable hospital closures before access is permanently lost. These stabilization programs could make a real difference and be an essential bridge while broader payment and delivery reforms continue to evolve.

FUNDING FOR PROVIDER INITIATIVES

Funding for the rural healthcare workforce is another important key to the overall federal picture. Recruiting and retaining physicians remain some of the greatest challenges facing rural communities.

The **Rural Residency Planning and Development (RRPD) Program** addresses this issue by supporting the creation of new accredited rural residency programs, including Rural Track Programs. Developing physicians within rural communities has consistently demonstrated long-term workforce benefits, as physicians frequently establish practices near where they complete residency training.

The **Rural Communities Opioid Response Program–Technical Assistance (RCORP-TA)** provides rural communities with technical assistance, implementation support, and resources to strengthen prevention, treatment, and recovery services addressing opioid use disorder and related substance use concerns.

Rather than funding a single intervention, the program focuses on helping communities build sustainable behavioral healthcare systems tailored to local needs.

RURAL ELIGIBILITY

Many organizations mistakenly assume they are not considered rural. However, eligibility is determined using federal criteria that extend beyond simple county designations. Organizations should verify eligibility before dismissing potential opportunities.

The HRSA Rural Health Grants Eligibility Analyzer allows providers to determine whether their facility qualifies for rural health funding consideration. You can search by state and county or the exact location of a service delivery site.

Healthcare leaders should also regularly monitor the Rural Health Information Hub, for news, case studies, rural funding opportunities, policy updates, and more.

While the Rural Health Transformation Program represents a historic investment, it is only one component of a much broader federal strategy. From telehealth and workforce development to behavioral health, provider collaboration, hospital stabilization, and care innovation, federal agencies continue to expand funding opportunities designed specifically for rural providers.

Rurality is not just a geographic designation when it comes to grant funding. It has come to mean a specific advantage in the types and quantity of programs an organization may be eligible for.

The Criminal Justice Process: From Response to Reentry

Shannon Day, Senior Grants Development Consultant



The criminal justice process is a series of interconnected phases, each with its own unique challenges. In this series of articles, I break down that process, piece by piece. In our last issue of Funded®, I addressed Reentry, and, moving backward through the process, this article will talk about courts, prosecution, and defense.

Find our last article on Corrections and Reentry in our Spring Issue of FUNDED.

Courts are essential public institutions, and the COVID pandemic shed light on the need for safety and modernization of court systems. While the world shut down, the justice process had to continue, and technologies like teleconferencing helped keep the process moving while keeping everyone safe (I hope we all remember the "I'm not a cat" lawyer).

Courts continue to face growing pressure to modernize services, address complex community needs, improve case processing, and maintain safe, accessible facilities. Grant funding can help courts pursue these improvements, supplementing already strapped local operating budgets, focusing on innovation, collaboration, access to justice, treatment and recovery, child welfare, public safety, data improvement, training, and technology modernization through two main areas:

- One-Time Capital Investments: Grants cover hard-to-fund upgrades like modernizing technology, building robust data systems, and launching comprehensive staff training.
- Emerging Community Needs: Grants provide the resources necessary to address challenges such as mental health and substance use recovery, remote services, language access, domestic violence, and improvements to juvenile or family court systems.



EXAMPLES OF FEDERAL GRANT FUNDING FOR COURTS

Specialty Court Grants

The U.S. Department of Justice supports a variety of grant programs through its various funding offices to strengthen criminal justice systems. Courts may find opportunities related to adult treatment courts, veterans treatment courts, juvenile drug treatment courts, family courts, and other problem-solving court models. These grants can support planning, implementation, enhancement, training, case coordination, treatment partnerships, drug testing, data collection, and evaluation. They are especially useful for jurisdictions seeking to reduce recidivism, improve accountability, and connect participants with evidence-based treatment and recovery supports.

State Court Improvement Program

The State Court Improvement Program, administered through the Administration for Children and Families (an office within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services), provides federal formula funding to help state courts improve child welfare court practice. Funding supports collaboration between courts, improving legal representation, hearing quality, and joint efforts with child welfare agencies. Common focus areas include efforts to improve court data, timeliness and quality of permanency, Indian Child Welfare and tribal collaboration, foster care prevention, and safety decision-making.

State Justice Institute Grants

The State Justice Institute (SJI) is federally funded and supports projects that improve the administration of justice in state courts. Its grants often emphasize innovation, education, training, technical assistance, and projects that are replicable across jurisdictions. While SJI funds generally may not be used for routine court operations, they can be valuable for strategic planning, demonstration projects, process improvement, and statewide or national initiatives that advance court effectiveness.

Elder Justice Innovation Grants

An opportunity through the HHS Administration for Community Living, the Elder Justice Innovation Grants support the development and advancement of emerging practices to prevent and respond to the abuse of older adults and adults with disabilities. The program supports the development and advancement of knowledge and approaches to new and emerging issues related to elder justice and adult maltreatment prevention, including reducing the number of adults experiencing or at risk of experiencing maltreatment, preserving autonomy, restoring healthy living situations, and increasing well-being.

Example Funded Project:

The Supreme Court of Virginia received an Elder Justice Innovation Grant for modernizing guardianship tracking across 119 circuit courts to protect vulnerable individuals. By implementing statewide data standards, enhancing case management, and introducing e-filing, the initiative aims to improve oversight, increase access to justice, and better support less restrictive alternatives to guardianship.

Upholding the Rule of Law and Preventing Wrongful Convictions Program

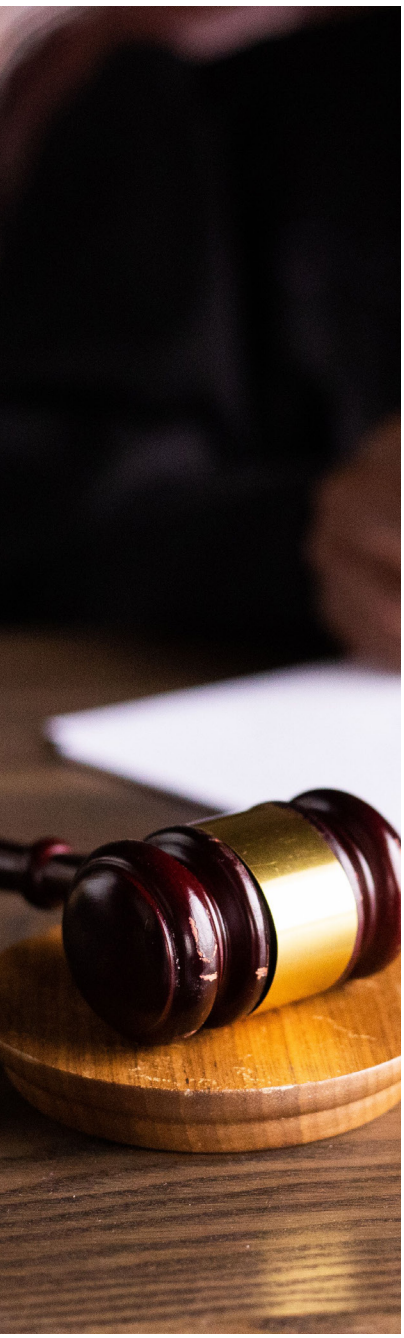
Offered through the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance, Upholding the Rule of Law and Preventing Wrongful Convictions strengthens the capacity of conviction integrity units (CIUs) and wrongful conviction review (WCR) entities and their criminal justice and victims' services partners to more effectively and efficiently identify, assess, and manage post-conviction claims of innocence. It also aims to prevent future errors, identify and apprehend actual perpetrators of crimes, and deliver justice to victims. Funding may be used for collaborative partnerships between state and local prosecutors' offices, defense counsel, law enforcement, and other criminal justice agencies to review post-conviction claims of innocence, identify actual perpetrators, and advance evidence-based reforms to prevent future wrongful convictions.

I've covered a few very important grant programs in this article, but the list is not exhaustive. While the primary source of grant funding for courts is federal, many states also offer funding opportunities, such as the Ohio Court Technology Grant or the California Expanded Public Defense Services Grant. There may also be private foundation funding for your court's needs, like the Arnold Ventures Foundation nationally or the Foundation of the Monroe County Bar Association in New York. Check with your state agencies and local foundations to find the right grants for your court, or contact Grants Office for help!

Courts sit at the center of this process, and the strongest awards fund comprehensive projects that touch technology, training, treatment, and access all at once. Every dollar that modernizes a docket, funds a treatment court, or supports a wrongful-conviction review ripples outward to the people and institutions around it, extending well past the courthouse into the safety and stability of the community it serves. In our next and final installment, we'll step one phase further back, into the investigations and first response that set this whole process in motion.

Program Snapshot

State Justice Institute (SJI) Grants



SUMMARY

The State Justice Institute (SJI) was established by federal law in 1984 to improve the quality of justice in State courts, facilitate better coordination between State and Federal courts, and foster innovative, efficient solutions to common issues faced by all courts. To fulfill this mission, SJI awards grants that benefit the nation's judicial system and the public it serves through Project Grants, Technical Assistance Grants, Curriculum Adaptation and Training Grants, Strategic Initiatives Grants, and the Education Support Program.

Each fiscal year, SJI allocates significant financial resources to support its Priority Investment Areas. In FY2026, the Priority Investment Areas include:

- Opioids and Other Dangerous Drugs, and Behavioral Health Responses Implementation Grants
- Promoting Access to Justice and Procedural Fairness
- Protecting Victims, Underserved, and Vulnerable Populations
- Advancing Justice Reform
- Transforming Courts

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible applicants are: State and local courts and their agencies; National nonprofit organizations controlled by, operating in conjunction with, and serving the judicial branches of state governments; National nonprofit organizations for the education and training of judges and support personnel of the judicial branch of state governments; Nonprofit organizations with expertise in judicial administration; Institutions of higher education; Individuals, partnerships, firms, corporations (for-profit organizations must waive their fees); and Private agencies with expertise in judicial administration

DEADLINE

Applications for most programs are accepted quarterly: February 1st, May 1st, August 1st, and November 1st, annually.

Strategic Initiatives Grant applicants are required to submit a concept paper prior to the full application process. Potential applicants are strongly encouraged to contact SJI prior to submitting a concept paper for guidance on this initial step.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

https://www.sji.gov/grants

Grants Office Communities: https://communities.grantsoffice.com/s/grant/a0B3300000KeW5SEAV/state-justice-institute-sji-grants

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Find the Fit: Identifying Funders that Best Support Your Mission

A Grants Office Production

About: In this Grantscast®, we take a deeper look at mission alignment — one of the most overlooked factors in competitive grant applications. We'll examine what strong mission statements have in common across nonprofits and public organizations, walk through real examples of effective and ineffective language, and explore what it actually means to read a funder's mission the way a reviewer would.

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Funding Public Safety: A Complete Guide to the Grants Landscape

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About: Join Grants Office, along with Genetec, for a comprehensive Grantscast covering the grants landscape for public safety. From federal formula funding to competitive programs, we'll map out where the money is, what it funds, and how to position your agency or organization to win.

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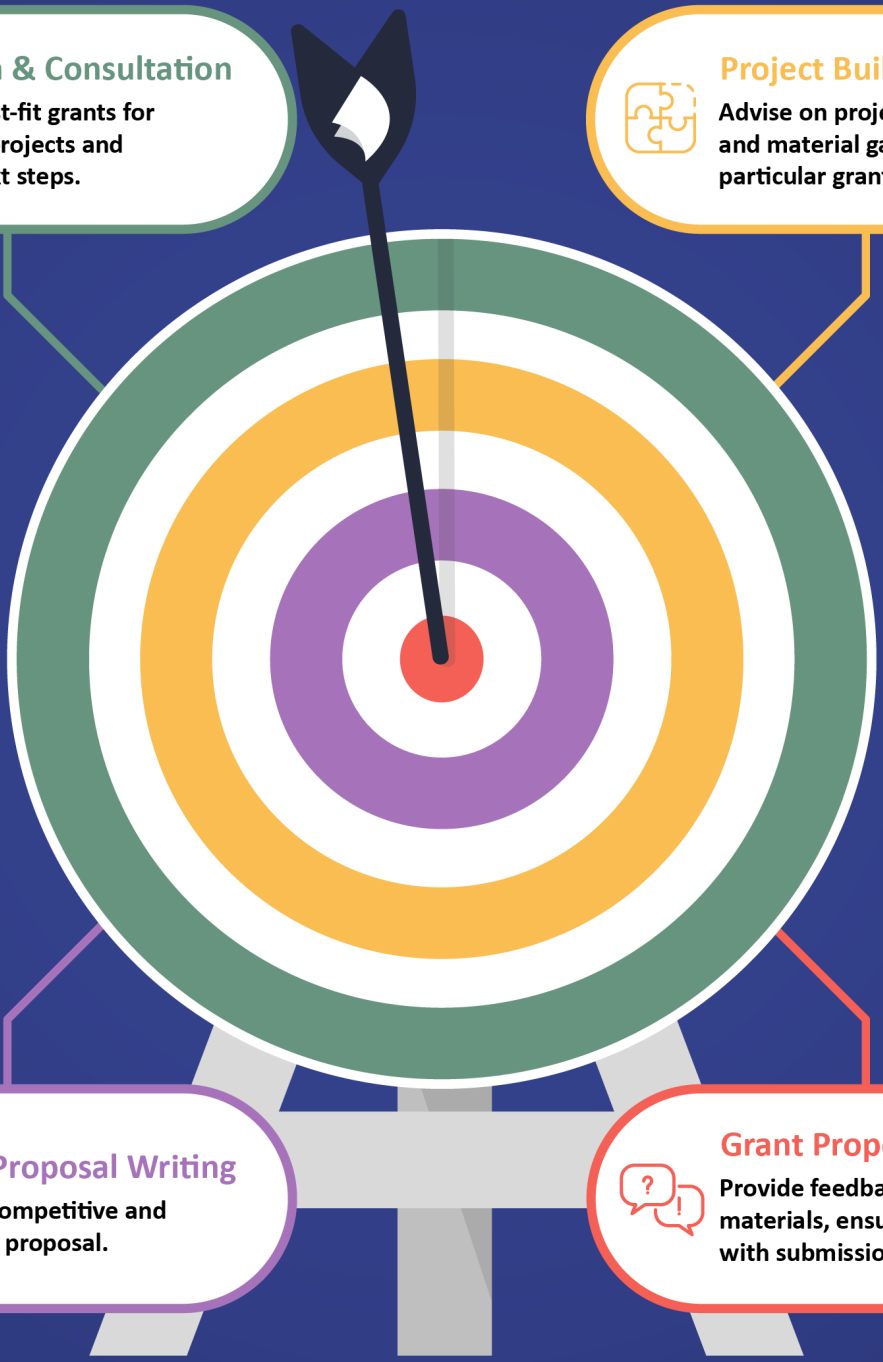

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Identify best-fit grants for upcoming projects and provide next steps.

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