GRANTS OFFICE
empowering communities

The US Grant Funding Landscape for Tribal Governments and Organizations

Webinar Transcript • December 3, 2025

Presented by Ashley Schultz and Amanda Day • Grants Office, LLC

Welcome and Introductions

Ashley Schultz:
Hello everyone, my name is Ashley Schultz. I'm the Manager of Community Engagement here at Grants Office, and today we'll be discussing the US grant landscape for Tribal governments and organizations. Our event today is going to discuss funding opportunities for these organization types, whether you're here from a government body or perhaps you're representing a Tribal college, a school, a healthcare center, an arts or cultural institute, or any other type of nonprofit organization that benefits Tribal residents here in the United States.

Housekeeping

Ashley Schultz:
Before we get started, I've just got two quick housekeeping items for you. First, you can ask questions at any time during today's event. Just look for the question and answer interface on the bottom right-hand corner of your screen. Feel free to submit as many questions as you'd like — we'll get to as many as possible toward the end of today's presentation.

Also know that this session is being recorded. The recording is going to be available for download at the Grants Office website starting tomorrow, and the PowerPoint slides that we're going to share here today will also be available in that same location.

Today's Speaker and Agenda

Ashley Schultz:
So again today we're talking about the funding landscape for Tribal organizations. I'm joined today by Amanda Day, who is one of our in-house experts on funding for Native American groups. Amanda works with folks every day who are just like you. They're out there searching through the Department of the Interior or the Department of Homeland Security websites for grants. She's keeping track of state and local infrastructure funding. She's polishing up DLT proposals, et cetera, etc. And if you're a regular reader of our free magazine FUNDED — which you should be — you will also recognize Amanda from her ongoing series that she's been writing on Tribal funding for at least one, if not two, years at this

point. She's got a wealth of grants expertise in this area, and I think you guys are going to learn a lot from her today.

Here's a quick run-through of our agenda over the next 30 minutes or so. We'll discuss high-level the funding landscape for Tribal organizations — where is funding coming from, and how is it getting to your organization. Then we'll talk about some federal, state, and foundation funding opportunities, including some named grant programs that you can go on and search and learn more about after today's presentation. And then Amanda will end with some grant-seeking tips: tips for grant seekers just in general, but also tips zoomed in on Tribal organizations and how you can stand out on your next grant application. Like I said before, we'll end with a little Q&A and a discussion of Grants Office Communities and our services. So with that, I will pass things on to Amanda to get us started. Amanda? Thank you.

Eligibility Considerations

Amanda Day:
Thank you, Ashley, and hello, everyone. Thank you for joining us today for our Tribal grants funding webinar. The goal of this webinar is to help you understand major funding sources, the grants landscape, types of grants, and some tips for successful grant seeking.

First I want to talk a little bit about eligibility considerations. Grant funding plays a critical role in helping Tribal Nations strengthen their communities and advance their priorities. But eligibility is an important factor to think about when you're finding grants that fit your project.

Three Main Eligibility Categories

Amanda Day:
There are basically three main categories when you look at grants to keep in consideration when you're thinking about applying.

Number one is the grants that are open to all. These grants are unrestricted and open to all entities, including Tribal organizations.

The second type is Tribal-specific. That's what we'll talk about today. They are expressly designed for Tribal entities, and only federally recognized Tribal organizations may apply for these funds.

The third is the ones that are open to specific entity types. We're talking things like a Tribal police agency, a Tribal educational institution, or a Tribal healthcare facility.

So today we're going to focus on those Tribal-specific grants, but keep in mind that there are a lot more grants out there that can help you fund your projects. Don't limit yourself to just these Tribal-specific grants.

Types of Grant Funding

Amanda Day:
When you're looking for grants, it's important to understand that there are basically four types of grant funding.

Federal Grants

Amanda Day:
Federal funds come directly from the federal government, so you're competing against applicants from all over the country. These grants usually have a much higher funding amount. They're obviously much more competitive, because we're competing against all of the applicants from 50 states. Federal grants are often harder to secure because they have stricter eligibility rules, more detailed application requirements, and more intensive reporting after the fact. The compliance obligations are also a consideration for federal.

Pass-Through Funding

Amanda Day:
The second type is pass-through funding. The federal government awards money to state, Tribal, or other intermediaries, and then that entity passes a portion of those funds down to local governments, nonprofits, or other eligible sub-recipients. If you think of it in this way, the primary recipient acts as a manager or distributor of the funds, setting local priorities, running the application process, monitoring compliance, and ensuring the money is used according to the federal rules.

State-Level Grants

Amanda Day:
Next are the state-level grants. These provide funding directly from state governments to support local applicants and tend to have a much simpler application, simpler requirements and reporting than federal programs, and a shorter timeline. Money comes from state budgets, so when those grantmakers are deciding what priorities to fund, they're looking at things like the data they've collected about their state, identifying gaps in funding, identifying those high-risk areas that need grant money, and then gathering stakeholder input. They want to hear feedback from local Tribal and community partners as to what kind of funding they're looking for. So that's something you can communicate to your Tribal leaders — that the state can use their feedback to figure out what funding buckets they're going to open.

Foundation Funding

Amanda Day:
And finally, we have foundation funding. These are public, corporate, and private foundations. Typically foundation funds are provided to support nonprofit projects and community initiatives, usually with much more flexible requirements and a more mission-focused priority than those government grants. Foundation grant applications are generally less complicated than state and federal grants — a lot less complicated.

So it's important to consider all types of grant funding from each source, as they offer different opportunities, different amounts of funding, levels of flexibility, and match requirements. This will allow your Tribal community to diversify resources, reduce reliance on a single funding stream, and better support a wider range of projects.

Federal Funding Sources for Tribal Organizations

Amanda Day:
Some of the sources I want to go over: these are federal sources, since they're the major funder for grants. They provide the largest share of Tribal grant funding, supporting infrastructure, broadband, public safety, housing, natural resources, health, and cultural preservation.

Federal sources include the Department of the Interior — specifically the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Bureau of Indian Education — Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Transportation, and the Department of Homeland Security provide a lot of the grant money. Other major contributors can include the Department of Agriculture, Department of Justice, the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency), and the Department of Energy. Each of these agencies offers specialized programs aligned with their priorities, so they will provide funds based on what their priorities are at the federal level. Understanding which agency is funding which priority area helps Tribes target the right opportunities and build a stronger, more diverse funding strategy.

Major Funding Priorities

Amanda Day:
Here at Grants Office, when we're working with our Tribal partners, these are some of the major funding priorities that we typically see: strengthening infrastructure, improving health and public safety services, supporting education and workforce development, protecting natural and cultural resources, and advancing economic development and community resilience. When we're searching for grants, we're really looking at the priorities that those Tribes are looking for, but obviously there's a lot more to accomplish. These are just some categories that we see most often when Tribes are searching for grant opportunities.

Homeland Security Grants

Amanda Day:
Let's take a look at some of the specific grants for these initiatives. I'm going to start with federal funding, since that's the largest bucket. This is not an exhaustive list — this is just an example from each category of what grants are out there.

First are the Homeland Security grants. These are designed to help Tribal communities prevent, prepare for, and respond to natural disasters, terrorist attacks, cyber threats, and other emergencies. The two main programs from DHS are the Tribal Homeland Security Grant Program and the Tribal Cybersecurity Grant Program, and these are aimed at protecting us from physical and cyber threats and terrorist attacks.

Transportation Grants

Amanda Day:
For transportation, the funds are coming through mostly from the Federal Highway Administration and the Department of Transportation. These grants provide funding to plan, build, maintain, and improve transportation systems on Tribal lands. These grants help ensure safe, reliable, and sustainable transportation for Tribal members, while supporting economic development and increasing community connectivity.

Criminal Justice and Public Safety Grants

Amanda Day:
For criminal justice, the public safety grants provide critical funding to strengthen law enforcement, improve emergency services, and community safety programs on Tribal lands. These grants often support police and sheriff's departments, Tribal courts, victim services, and crime prevention initiatives. Grants like the Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation, or CTAS, and the Indian Highway Safety Grants can fund technology, equipment, and infrastructure improvements that help Tribes respond effectively to emergencies and protect their communities.

Education Grants

Amanda Day:
This next set starts off with the education grants. These support programs that enhance learning opportunities and outcomes for Native students. These grants can fund early childhood, K-12, higher education scholarships, vocational training, and workforce development. They often support curriculum and programs that preserve Native languages and Native heritage. Grants like the Title VI formula grants and the Tribal Colleges and Universities Program, or TCUP, can help improve access to quality education, strengthen community capacity, and empower the next generation of Tribal leaders.

Healthcare Grants

Amanda Day:
Historically, healthcare remains a challenge for many Tribal communities due to a combination of historical, structural, and geographical factors. Many Tribes are rural, so healthcare seems to be one of the main issues — having access to quality healthcare. Grants like the Native Public Health Resilience grant and the Indian Health Grant Program can help Tribes by providing the funding needed to improve access, quality, and outcomes for their communities.

Broadband and Connectivity Grants

Amanda Day:
And finally, broadband and connectivity ties in with almost all of the previous areas that I spoke about. Broadband access is essential for Tribal communities because it supports education, healthcare, economic development, public safety, and pretty much all of the things that we talked about already. Grants like the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program and the National Tribal Broadband Grant provide the funding needed to build and expand internet infrastructure on Tribal lands, which are often rural and underserved.

Federal support for Tribes is growing as the government increasingly acknowledges Tribal sovereignty and community priorities, leading to increased funding, broader program eligibility, and new initiatives to meet the needs of Native American communities.

State Programs for Tribal Organizations

Amanda Day:
Next, we have some state programs. There are a lot more federal programs than state programs at this point, but we are seeing growth in this area. California and Montana are some of the leaders in these state-level programs. They support priorities such as infrastructure improvements, education, public safety, healthcare, housing, and economic development. Unlike federal programs, state grants may have more flexible requirements, faster application timelines, and funding tailored to local needs within that state, because they are familiar with what's going on in their own states and can streamline that funding to the right areas.

Example State-Level Tribal Grants

Amanda Day:
Including: in California, we have Tribal-specific grants such as the Tribal Capacity Building Pilot Program and the Tribal Wildlife Resilience grants. In Washington state, the Tribal Cultural Grant, Tribal Clean Energy Grant Program, and Tribal Climate Capacity Grants. In Minnesota, we have the Indian Health

Program and the Tribal Nations Tourism Grant Program. And Montana has several — I couldn't fit them all on the screen. Montana is one of the leaders in state-level grants. They have a Tribal Business Development Grant, a Tribal Small Business Development Grant, and the Indian Equity Fund Small Business Grant.

Each state is going to have a different program, different funding opportunities, and different funding levels based on their state budget. So just make sure to check with your state to see what opportunities are available to you. You can do that by checking state agencies, checking different departments within your state, and using your search engines to search for grants within your state.

Foundation Funding for Tribal Organizations

Amanda Day:
The final type of funding is the foundation funding. This is a very expansive area to look for, and there are some resources that you can use to look for foundation funding either federally or within your state. These are great resources for Tribal grant funding because they often offer flexible, mission-driven support that aligns with Tribal priorities.

Example Tribal Foundations

Amanda Day:
Some of the specific Tribal foundations include the American Indian College Fund. This foundation invests in Native students and Tribal college education to transform lives and communities. The Wild Horse Foundation funds grants in areas like arts, education, and public safety — these grants are up to $30,000 a year. First Nations Development Institute provides grants to continue to keep Native languages alive for future generations, restore and protect ancestral lands, and build sustainable Native food systems. And the Potlatch Fund provides grants, capacity-building training, and leadership development opportunities to Tribal communities in Washington, Idaho, Oregon, and Western Montana.

A lot of the foundations you will find have focused areas, whether it's within one state or whether it's a specific Tribal unit like the Navajo, or a grant specifically targeted. It's just a matter of finding those resources.

Foundation Directory Resource

Amanda Day:
One excellent resource for finding foundations is the Foundation Center directory at FoundationCenter.org. Kate, if you could put that in the chat — FoundationCenter.org. This is a

comprehensive list of all foundations within the US, and it gives a description of what the foundation is focused on and some information about the programs.

Grant-Seeking Tips for Tribal Organizations

Amanda Day:
Now that we've talked about the types of funding that's out there, some of the example grants that are out there, and given you some information on how to find those grants, we want to talk about some grant-seeking tips.

Start with a Strong Needs Statement

Amanda Day:
First, we need to get our project ready. We need to have a project ready to go before we start looking for what grants to apply to. Your needs statement is your first step. Your needs statement communicates why your proposed project is needed, and is an opportunity to present specific data that provides the broader context behind your project. Demonstrating an urgent need significantly increases the chances that mission-driven grant funders will support and invest in your proposed solution.

Plan Out Project Execution

Amanda Day:
Once you've established the need for your project, the next step is to plan how you'll execute it: what specific activities will take place, when they'll occur, who will be responsible for each task, what outcomes or deliverables will result. This information can be organized in a standard Gantt chart or described in a narrative, whichever approach is most useful at that point in the application process.

Document Project Goals

Amanda Day:
Next, it's helpful to formally document your project goals, ensuring that each can be tied to your project activities. Once you've done that and have your project well thought out, and you're planning goals in place, it's helpful to think through what resources will be required to implement the project within a specific time frame. So start thinking about what personnel, equipment, supplies, travel, and other direct costs are required for your project to be implemented.

Consider Scalability

Amanda Day:
In addition, consider whether it's possible to easily scale up or scale down that project depending on funding amounts. If you're applying for a foundation grant, it's going to be a lot less funding than a federal grant. So can you scale up or scale down your project?

Tell a Compelling Story

Amanda Day:
Next, we continue to think about various project components and focus on the who, what, where, when, why, and how. Taking the time to draft a compelling story about your identified need and the resulting project that you wish to support will go a long way in building understanding between you and the prospective funder.

Build Relationships with Funders

Amanda Day:
If you have an opportunity to actually speak with the program manager or someone at the organization that is funding a project, make sure that you reach out to them. This enables you to present your project outline and further build the funder's understanding and buy-in early on in the process. Creating relationships is a lot of what we talk about when we talk to grant seekers — either reaching out to the foundation or reaching out to program managers on federal programs just to introduce your project and get an idea of what the requirements are, and really establishing relationships is important.

Select Grants Strategically

Amanda Day:
Finally, select those grants strategically. Now that you have a general understanding of what you want to do, why you want to do it, how long it will take, and how much funding you'll need, it's time to begin reviewing specific grant opportunities. Again, check federal, state, and foundation resources to find the right grant for your project.

Tribal-Specific Considerations

Amanda Day:
Tribal entities have some specifics that other organizations don't have to worry about.

Eligibility and Tribal Authorization Documents

Amanda Day:
First, make sure you're reading the eligibility requirements in the Notice of Funding. Make sure your organization is eligible to apply for the grant. Most Tribal grants require a Tribal council resolution or official letter of support authorizing the application. Additionally, some grants will actually need proof of Tribal governance, such as a charter or a constitution. That may be required — again, reading the Notice of Funding on these is very important.

Follow Tribal Decision-Making Processes

Amanda Day:
Make sure that all grant activities follow the Tribe's official decision-making and approval processes. That includes aligning the project with community priorities, adhering to Tribal policies on financial management and reporting. Essentially, this ensures that your project is fully authorized and supported by the Tribe's governing bodies, respecting Tribal authority and sovereignty.

Respect Tribal Customs and Legal Requirements

Amanda Day:
Next is understanding any rules, traditions, or regulations that could impact your grant-funded projects. This includes respecting Tribal customs, sacred sites, languages, and heritage, as well as complying with Tribal, federal, and state laws like environmental regulations, land use policies, and historic preservation requirements. Some grants also have specific requirements tied around cultural or legal compliance, and that will be outlined in the Notice of Funding.

Examine Grant-Specific Rules

Amanda Day:
Finally, examine the rules, eligibility criteria, and expectations unique to the grant program. This includes confirming Tribal eligibility, understanding allowable costs and funding limits, meeting reporting and compliance obligations, and ensuring that the project aligns with the program's mission. Reviewing all of these requirements can only help to strengthen your application and increases the chances of successful funding and project implementation.

Wrapping Up: Steps to a Successful Application

Amanda Day:
To wrap up, to make sure your grant application is a successful one:

Step one is, again, plan out your project thoroughly. Draft your needs statement, your goals, and other necessary components. Then identify the grants that fit your needs. Find out what grants align with the project and your organization — use federal, state, and foundations to find the best fit.

Next, finalize your plan by solidifying partnerships, internal and external, finalizing details, and making sure it aligns with the grant you've chosen.

Next, be sure to use measurable outcomes. What are you trying to accomplish, and how will you measure it? Be specific in this.

Finally, start the application process early and always have a second or even a third set of eyes reviewing the application to make sure there are no errors, to make sure you have the best application going forward, and finally hit the submit button.

I hope I've given you some practical tools, clear guidance, and new insights to support your Tribal grant planning and funding effort. As you continue your work, remember that Tribes have unique strengths, priorities, and opportunities, and the funding landscape is evolving to better support your Tribal sovereignty, infrastructure, and community-driven projects. So with that, I will turn things back over to Ashley. Thank you.

Grants Office Communities

Ashley Schultz:
Thank you so much, Amanda, for that great information. I'm just going to give you a quick minute to grab a glass of water before we start our Q&A session. We do have two questions so far in the Q&A, so folks, look down in the bottom right-hand corner if you have some questions about the information Amanda just presented and you'd like her to answer a question about it.

Again, while Amanda grabs a quick glass of water, I just want to share some information about Grants Office Communities. It's our brand-new search and collaboration platform for grant seekers. We just launched this platform in the first part of September, and we're having a really great time seeing folks log in, make projects, find grants, and work through their application process together.

So Grants Office Communities, like I said, it's a search and collaboration platform. It's this all-in-one tool where you can come up with ideas, bring in your partners, find grants in our database, and then apply for them all together. Access to the platform allows you to create an unlimited number of project pages, so this can help you start to build your vision. This can be a place where you just jot down some ideas — that would be cool to do someday — or it can be a place where you very meticulously detail out your work plan: you invite your accounting team to see your budget, you invite your boss to supervise your progress, and then you actively assign all folks inside the platform tasks to keep your initiative moving.

You can also set up separate spaces to work on proposals. These are collaborative areas that you can turn into completed grant applications and save the information there after you click Submit.

Grant Database with 10,000+ Opportunities

Ashley Schultz:
Standing behind all those collaborative spaces is this database of grant funding opportunities. I checked this morning — we have opportunities for more than 10,000 federal, state, and foundation funders inside the United States in the database, and that number grows every day. The humans here at Grants Office are constantly looking for more grants to add to that database, and we're keeping watch on existing program pages to make sure our pages get updated as soon as we can in the system.

As a user, you can search through these opportunities and then link them to those project spaces. Say you're browsing the database and you see this CTAS program that Amanda talked about — you think it would be perfect for an initiative that you're working on. You can actually link this grant to your project page, show all of your collaborators this information, and then decide as a group if you want to pursue it together.

Hands-On Services from Grants Office

Ashley Schultz:
And then last but certainly not least, the Grants Office team — folks like Amanda and her colleagues — are all here inside the platform. And even for those who do not decide to join Grants Office Communities, if you need an extra set of hands on any step of the grant-seeking process that you see here, we are more than happy to help. Just get in touch with us.

And if you are here just for the free resources — which, hello, we appreciate you, we're glad you're here — definitely encourage you to go check out our Guidance for Grant Seekers page on our website. You can click that URL right here or scan that QR code. That will take you to a series of free videos with a lot of information like what Amanda shared today on how to get that application up and over the finish line. So do go over and check that out.

Q&A Session

Ashley Schultz:
So with that, I'm going to pass things over back to Amanda. I've got a couple of questions for you here, Amanda.

Q1: How do outside partnerships work when Tribes apply for grants?

Ashley Schultz:
The first one I have here is, how do outside partnerships work when Tribes apply for grants?

Amanda Day:
Most grants, the Tribe would be the lead applicant, so an outside partner might be a local sheriff's office or a healthcare agency, something like that. The lead applicant would be the Tribe, and the outside partner — the county, the nonprofits, universities — will be supporting the project but don't control it. So you'd sign a Memorandum of Understanding, often referred to as an MOU — so if you see those letters, you know what that is — and that documents the roles and responsibilities of each applicant, so they'll know what they're responsible for within the grant application when it's awarded. I hope that answers your question.

Q2: Can more than one Tribe apply for the same grant, specifically the Tribal Cybersecurity Grant?

Ashley Schultz:
Great, thank you. And the last question I have here today — I haven't seen any more come in, so you've got 20 more seconds if you've got a burning question. The last question I have here came in, Amanda, when you were talking about the Tribal Cybersecurity Grant. Can more than one Tribe apply for the same grant, specifically about that Tribal Cybersecurity Grant?

Amanda Day:
You have to look at the eligibility requirements, but the general answer is yes — most of the time, yes. Some grants actually encourage it. The Tribal Cybersecurity Grant Program, the Tribal Homeland Security Grant Program, the healthcare grant programs — they'll say in the funding notice that they're looking for a consortium. That's what it means when they're saying a consortium. They may ask one of the Tribes to be the lead applicant, and then the other Tribes would be co-applicants — again, with that Memorandum of Understanding being signed, assigning roles to each entity. But it's often stated in the eligibility, and a lot of grants actually encourage it.

Closing

Ashley Schultz:
Fantastic. Thank you again, Amanda, for all the excellent information you shared here today. And thanks to all of you here for listening to our presentation. We hope that we see you at a future Grants Office webinar, and if you have any questions or you'd like to get in touch, please don't hesitate to do so. In the meantime, have a great day. Thanks, everyone.

— End of Transcript —

Grants Office, LLC • empowering communities • Recorded December 3, 2025

About This Transcript

This transcript was generated using Webex's automatic caption feature and subsequently reformatted with the assistance of artificial intelligence. While we make every effort to ensure accuracy, errors may remain. If you notice a discrepancy, we welcome your corrections — please reach out to education@grantsoffice.com.

Live sign language interpretation is available upon request for future Grantscast® events. To request an interpreter or learn more about accessibility accommodations, please contact accessibility@grantsoffice.com.