GRANTS OFFICE
empowering communities

From Crisis to Capital: Unlocking Grant Opportunities for Emergency Preparedness and Response

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Presented by Michael Paddock, Shannon Day, and Meghan Jacobsen • Grants Office, LLC
With guest presenter Scott Jobe, Public Sector Strategist, Samsara • Sponsored by Samsara

Welcome and Introductions

Michael Paddock:
Hello, everyone, and thanks for joining us for From Crisis to Capital: Unlocking Grant Opportunities for Emergency Preparedness and Response. I'm Michael Paddock, CEO of Grants Office, and I want to welcome everyone to today's session. We've got a great session for you, but before we go too far, I want to very much thank our sponsor Samsara for sponsoring today's session and making it possible for us to bring you all this information. So big thanks to Samsara.

Housekeeping

Michael Paddock:
A couple of housekeeping items for you as well. If you are listening over your computer speakers or headphones, you can continue to do that. There's no need to dial in, but if you do become disconnected, you can go to the menu bar at the top of your screen to select audio and video to find alternative ways to connect to today's audio. If you don't see the menu bar, there should be a little Show Menu Bar at the very, very top where you can access that menu.

Also, today's session is being recorded, and the replay will be available shortly after the end of today's session. Our webcast producer Kate already put the link in the chat for you. It's essentially the same place where you registered for today's session — it's just going to be switched over into a resources page after today's session is concluded.

Also, you can ask questions at any time using the question and answer interface at the bottom right-hand corner of your screen. If you don't see the question and answer interface, just click on the little three dots at the very bottom right and you can access the Q&A panel that way.

Today's Agenda and Panelists

Michael Paddock:
Okay, let's jump right in. We have a packed agenda for you, as always. The first thing we're going to do is talk about Samsara solutions — and again, big thanks to Samsara for sponsoring today's session. Then

we're going to get into an overview of grant funding and evaluating grant fit, a few thoughts on high-level thinking about grant funding and the fit as it relates to emergency response funding. We'll go through some examples of federal funding opportunities and some tips and tricks for making sure that your project and your organization are grant ready. Then we'll hear about the Samsara Grant Support Program.

Now, I should add — without giving too much away — that the Samsara Grant Support Program is going to be your go-to place to find more detailed information customized to you at no cost, customized to your specific location, the types of projects you have, and the type of organization you are. So if you're feeling like, “okay, this is a lot of great information, but what do I need to do as a fire department in Boise, Idaho?” — those are all things that the Samsara Grant Support Program can help you with. And then with the time we have remaining in the hour, I will do some Q&A.

I'm joined by a great group of panelists today. We've got Scott Jobe from Samsara public sector. We've got Shannon Day, Senior Grants Development Consultant here at Grants Office, and Meghan Jacobsen, Grants Development Associate here at Grants Office as well. Knowledgeable people who work in emergency response, emergency preparedness technology, and grants every single day. So let's jump right in. I'm going to turn it over first to Scott Jobe to tell us a little bit about the Samsara platform. Scott.

Samsara Solutions Overview

Scott Jobe:
Thank you, Michael. Great to be here, and thank you for that intro. I am Scott Jobe, a Public Sector Strategist at Samsara. It's a great role. I have the opportunity to really look 6, 12, 18 months down the road and help shape and form go-to-market and route-to-market opportunities. So I get involved in a lot of different things, including sessions like this. I really appreciate the opportunity to meet with the group today. Looking forward to sharing exactly how we're helping our customers navigate these complexities of disaster preparedness and keep their community safe.

Depending on where you're sitting right now — I'm located in Northeast Ohio, so it's a little chilly right now. We had a good bit of snow, and I think a lot of us are expecting either a combination of more snow or ice this coming weekend. Lots to talk about right now, so I do feel like this is a great, timely conversation to have as we work to navigate these challenges ahead of us. But let's dive in and start a little bit about Samsara and exactly how we fit.

Mission and Public Sector Focus

Scott Jobe:
Samsara is really a mission-driven organization dedicated to helping our customers improve their operations. We're especially passionate about the public sector because of how many lives you touch every day. Solving complex problems means the opportunity to positively impact millions of people. This is why we are really purpose-built for the public sector.

Our teams work throughout all segments and departments of the public sector. In places like public works, a lot of our conversations revolve around things like asset utilization or preventative maintenance, citizen transparency, and proof of work. In emergency response conversations, we often talk about things like fleet readiness, situational awareness of vehicles, and FirstNet integration. Transit authorities often want to talk about preventative maintenance, but in addition, route adherence or driver and passenger safety. Student transport is a lot about route optimization, things like stop-arm safety and parent transparency. Throughout all of those areas, we're essentially helping you service the communities that you support.

The Samsara Platform

Scott Jobe:
This slide here is a little busy — there's a lot on it — but I want you to think about and take away that Samsara is really the leading platform for safety and efficiency in public sector operations. Whether we're talking about the different functions in the blue bar — operations, driver capabilities, compliance, or dispatch — or we're talking about the hardware and software solutions in the center of the screen, like AI cams or multi-cams, asset tracking, route planning, and maintenance operations — or our tight integrations with over 350 other vendors that integrate all of this data — what we do is give you access to all this. We give you an opportunity to run your operations, your safety platform, and your disaster preparedness in a single dashboard. We cut through all of that and integrate all those capabilities so you have one place to go at the times you need it most.

Customer Story: Monroe County, Florida

Scott Jobe:
All of that becomes pretty foundational for how we support disaster preparedness and response. A great example would be Monroe County in Florida. For those that know Monroe County, that's where Key West is and the chain of islands there. Some of you may have even driven the whole highway from the mainland to Key West. That county has 1,700 islands that are connected by a single 120-mile highway, and any incident along that route can really impact services up and down that chain of islands. Something as simple as a loose sailboat or even a bird can knock out power to thousands of residents in either direction.

So Monroe County in particular really puts a lot of emphasis on ensuring their generators are available to power things like fire stations, toll booths, and other important infrastructure along that route. They turned to Samsara, and we help them proactively maintain those generators as well as county vehicles and other assets to keep residents safe and drive greater efficiency and cost savings. As a result, they have improved outage response times and reduced unnecessary trips. The one added benefit they got out of this is that they've been able to use our data to file more accurate and timely FEMA reports, which has been very helpful to them.

Disaster Preparedness Research

Scott Jobe:
Along the lines of the Monroe County use case, we have conducted some new research and published it in our Disaster Preparedness Report recently, which is really a deep dive into how physical operations are holding up in an era where these unprecedented events that we keep seeing have become much more normal. We conducted the study because we're seeing a pretty clear trend that natural disasters, supply chain shocks, and infrastructure crises are all increasing in both frequency and severity. To get the full picture, we surveyed about 250 emergency management and operations leaders across the public sector — state and local government, education, utilities, and the like. We really wanted to know: are we actually ready for what's coming next?

When we asked those public sector leaders where they wanted technology to step in, the answers fell into three distinct categories. One was emergency planning, modeling, and scenario testing. Another was real-world coordination across agencies and teams. And the third area was post-incident review, reporting, and lessons learned. I'd say there's probably one big common theme, which is data. Leaders don't want to operate in the dark. They want to eliminate siloed solutions so that in times of crisis they have full visibility. The last thing you want in a time of crisis is a disconnected and siloed environment that's going to cost you time and resources. Ultimately, leaders are asking for more certainty. They want technology that replaces those siloed systems so that when an event happens, they have a more clear, data-driven roadmap for actions and a platform that provides the most possible visibility.

Closing the Preparedness Gap

Scott Jobe:
There is a bit of a silver lining in the report, and that is that planning actually works. We found that organizations with an active emergency plan and real-time visibility can return to normal operations in just days after a major event. That's really where Samsara comes in. We help you close that preparedness gap, turning a reactive response into something much more proactive. We give you more real-time visibility. We give you a single pane of glass for every vehicle, generator, and response team in real time, even when infrastructure might be compromised. We give you AI-driven insights — we use AI

to help you predict impact and protect your frontline workers before they even enter a hazard zone. And we give you accelerated recovery by automating FEMA-ready reporting and asset tracking. We help you get back to serving the community days faster than manual processes might allow.

Beyond this research, Samsara is already in the field. We're tested and proven by leaders across the public sector. We've spent years working alongside agencies whose operations are as complex and mission-critical as yours. Because we work with the most innovative fleets in the industry, we aren't learning on the fly with your budget or time. Instead, we're able to share these proven insights from your peers and allow you to gain benefit from them.

That's the start of the intro. We'll be talking, like Michael said, near the end about our grants program, but that was our intro. Michael, I'm going to hand you back control and let you take it from here. Again, appreciate the opportunity to address the team.

Grant Funding Overview

Michael Paddock:
Thanks so much, Scott. Really appreciate it. Okay, now we're going to turn it over to Shannon Day and Meghan Jacobsen to talk to us a little bit about the grants landscape. Shannon, you're going to start us off?

Shannon Day:
Thank you, Michael, and thank you, Scott, and hello everyone. Thank you for joining us. Now that you've heard a little bit about the types of Samsara initiatives that are available, we want to talk about how you get them funded. First of all, most of you likely know what a grant is, but we'll have a quick refresher to ensure that we're all starting from the same page.

What a Grant Really Is

Shannon Day:
While grants are often mistaken for free money, when grant people hear that, it raises our hackles a little bit because it's not free money. It's not a prize that you win and then you walk away and spend the money as you see fit. It's really more of a strategic investment. Think of a grant as a partnership. The funder has a mission; you have the boots-on-the-ground capability to fulfill that mission. Given that organizational resources are finite — especially now, we're seeing budgets tightening further and further — grant funding does serve as a vital supplement to your core budget. It's targeted. It's a call to action to address specific community needs. By aligning these funds with your clearly defined goals, you can launch high-impact projects that might otherwise have remained on a wish list for years. This is about turning your financial award into a lasting legacy for your community, whether it's safer roads, a more efficient fleet, or faster emergency response time.

Three Sources of Grant Funding

Shannon Day:
There are three main sources of grant funding in the United States: federal, state, and foundation. There are distinct advantages and disadvantages to each type of funder, and understanding their distinct personalities will help you decide where you want to spend your energy.

Federal Grants

Shannon Day:
Federal grants represent the largest funding pool in the grant landscape — we're talking about in the hundreds of billions of dollars annually. Because these opportunities are typically open to applicants nationwide, they're often very competitive, and the application and proposal requirements can be significantly complex — sometimes over a hundred pages of documentation depending on the grant. So you want to keep that in mind. The advantage is that there is an abundance of opportunities and the award sizes are substantial, so it allows you to pursue those larger, more transformative projects.

State Grants

Shannon Day:
State grants function similarly to their federal counterparts because they are taxpayer-funded, but they possess some distinct characteristics. Generally, the average award size tends to be a little bit smaller than federal grants, but the barrier to entry is far lower. States are usually easier to communicate with — you can pick up the phone, talk to a program manager, they understand your geography and your challenges. Plus, the competition pool is smaller; it's limited to the applicants within your state rather than across the country. The total annual grant funding for all states usually hovers right around a hundred billion dollars. So yes, it's less than federal funding, but that figure is a moving target because some states are very active in the grant-making landscape and others not so much. It really depends on your state what types and amount of grant funding are available.

Foundation Grants

Shannon Day:
Foundation grants are provided by private, corporate, or community foundations. They are very varied. They're typically smaller, and again, there are exceptions to every rule, but generally they're smaller. They have a higher focus on supporting community-based projects or what we call “warm and fuzzy” projects. The application load for foundations is usually slighter, and the decision timeline — the turnaround between you applying for your grant and you receiving word — is usually shorter. For your local foundations, you have a much smaller competition pool, sometimes even limited to a specific county or even a neighborhood.

The flip side — one of the downsides of foundations — is that they're generally aimed at 501(c)(3)s. It's a little harder, though not impossible, to find foundations that are friendly toward the government sector. They do exist. This is where we often see public-private partnerships come into play.

Key Federal Funders for Emergency Response

Shannon Day:
When we look at the federal level — like Scott, I did not include all federal funders on this slide, because there are 26 different federal funding sources, and that can be overwhelming. But for the purpose of today's topic and the work that you all do on a daily basis, we tend to narrow our focus: Department of Transportation for road safety and infrastructure, Department of Homeland Security for emergency preparedness, and Department of Justice for law enforcement technology.

But pro tip: we don't want to restrict ourselves so much and narrow our focus so much that we're potentially leaving opportunities on the table, because we've seen relevant funding come through the Department of Agriculture for things like rural broadband initiatives, and the Department of Energy for electric vehicle infrastructure. When searching for grants, you want to keep your mind open. It's a delicate balance between being overwhelmed and being too restrictive.

How Grant Funding Flows: Direct vs. Pass-Through

Shannon Day:
Now that we've talked about the sources, we want to see how the grant funding actually flows between the funder and you, the grant seeker.

Direct Funding

Shannon Day:
The example on the left illustrates direct funding, wherein money flows directly from the federal agency to you. For this process, you submit your application directly to the federal grantmaker. Many of them start through Grants.gov, but not all — some may have their own application forms. Your post-award reporting is also done directly with them.

Indirect or Pass-Through Funding

Shannon Day:
Alternatively, we have indirect or pass-through funding on the right. This is where money moves from the federal source down through the state or local government and then through to you, the applicant. It is very common — a lot of grants that we see are actually pass-through grants.

For example, the federal government says, “Hey, Ohio, here's $50 million to improve road safety. Here are some things that we want you to do with that funding.” Then Ohio becomes the prime recipient. They take a portion for themselves for administrative overhead — that depends on the grant — and then they run their own sub-granting process for cities, counties, and other applicants within the state.

Why does this distinction matter? It matters because when you deal with pass-through funding, think of it as having two bosses. You follow the federal rules because it's federal funding, but you also have to follow the state's rules because they are the administrator. Intermediate agencies can — and often do — change or add to those federal funding programs. Another example: the Department of Justice provides a lot of different pass-through funding. They might give money to states to improve criminal justice services. Your state government, who is the state administering agency, may decide that this year they want 80 percent of that money to go to digital evidence management. If your project doesn't fit that, then you'll look at another opportunity.

We will probably talk a lot today — and we talk a lot always — about being flexible and being able to pivot. That is very important. If your project doesn't fit that particular grant in that particular year, think about another grant or another year. While you should be aware that the federal source is there, you will be applying to and communicating with your state agency throughout the project. So you want to establish a relationship with them.

Evaluating Grant Fit

Shannon Day:
Now that we better understand the sources of grant funding, their key differences, and how they flow — how do we consider if a grant is actually a good fit? There are a lot of things to consider, but these five questions are the first thing you want to start with to determine if a grant is a good fit for your needs. If the answer to any of these considerations is a “no,” maybe you want to evaluate the criteria more closely to determine how to proceed. And again, if it's a no, you can pivot.

Deadline and Timing

Shannon Day:
One very important piece to the application process is the deadline — the time until submission date. Make sure your organization has ample time to prepare the strongest and most competitive proposal, because everyone says they need funding — that's nothing new. How does yours stand out from the crowd? Many grants are cyclical, as I mentioned; some happen every year, some every quarter, some have rolling deadlines.

For example, if you have three days left — there's a grant that's due on Monday and you have three days left and haven't even started — do not rush a weak application. Save yourself the sanity. It's often

better to wait for the next cycle to give yourself time to build that strong proposal. Patience is crucial because you don't want to waste your reputation by submitting a bad proposal. The grant reviewers will look at it and say, “What were they thinking?” So make sure that you're able to give yourself the time and meet the funder's priorities.

Reading the Application Guidance Strategically

Shannon Day:
Really, you want to invest the time and resources now when you are evaluating a grant for whether it's something you want to apply for and that you are able to administer, by paying close attention to the right key details. You do not have to read through the application guidance word for word when you're first trying to decide if a grant aligns with yours. Look for key headings and keywords, or use Control-F to search that document, because application guidance can often be — at least in my sector, emergency and public safety — at least 50 pages long. You don't want to have to read it in one sitting.

Look for these key headers. A lot of federal funding agencies and some state funding agencies also release a supplemental one-pager that has some of this information right there. They will tell you the eligibility. They will tell you how much funding is available. They will tell you what the funder's priorities are. You can check those off the list pretty quickly before you start diving into the application guidance.

A great way to find the allowable and unallowable costs is to skip right to the budget section of that application guidance. It will tell you what allowable and unallowable costs are — or definitely what those budget categories are. Is it for personnel only? Can it be used for personnel and equipment? Review the application guidance, and then when you determine that you think this grant is a great fit, that's when you really need to look at the application guidance in detail. You want to know: am I eligible? Do I have the required partnerships? Do I have letters of support if I need them? Can I meet the funder's priorities? But you also want to know if you can meet the funder's requirements after you've put all the work into applying — because you don't want to create a beautiful proposal that wins and then find out after the fact that you aren't able to meet the funder's requirements.

Those requirements can be anything from the cost share — is this project a 25 percent cost share, or does it not require any match at all? Do we need to provide receipts? Do we need to provide quarterly reporting? Do we need to follow the new federal grant guidelines that were released in 2025? You want to know exactly what you're in for when you apply for a grant.

Federal Grant Program Examples

Shannon Day:
Finally, I want to provide a few examples of federal grant programs that may be friendly for your Samsara projects. Keep in mind, this information is just to wet your whistle — this is not nearly all the grants that could be potentials for your project.

Homeland Security Grants

Shannon Day:
First, homeland security. Scott mentioned FEMA. The Department of Homeland Security is the federal funder; FEMA is the funding office through which you apply. When we talk grants, we kind of use them interchangeably. These grants are all basically for the same thing. The main goal of DHS grants — or homeland security grants — is to help communities prepare for and protect against terrorism and other threats to national security.

What sometimes changes are the national priorities on the left of your screen. Some of them very rarely change from year to year. Three of these priority areas we have seen over the last few years. The two new ones are the homeland security task forces and the border crisis response priorities. You want to keep in mind, as I mentioned, what the funder's priorities are. Your project will reflect one or some of those priorities.

On the right, I've provided a few program examples. These are not all of the homeland security grants — these are just some great ones that I like. The top five are pass-through grants. As I mentioned, state agencies receive their funding annually — they have to apply for it, but they receive it — and then you apply through your state. Each state will either host a competitive round, distribute funds through formula — it depends. Some of these grants have to be done through a competition, like NSGP. Each program has that overarching goal, but each may have different priorities and different eligibilities.

The fortunate thing with homeland security grants is that the eligibility is often in the name. So the Nonprofit Security Grant Program is for — guess what — nonprofits. Also, Operation Stonegarden is for municipalities and counties, but it is for those municipalities and counties within states that border Canada or Mexico or have international water borders. Every DHS grant has specifics that you want to look into to determine if this is a grant that you're going to apply for. Generally, these grants open in the spring. 2025 was a bit of an anomaly. We're hoping we are back to normal in 2026, so start keeping your eyes peeled in the next couple of months for these grant programs to be released.

Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A)

Shannon Day:
Next, we'll pivot a little bit to transportation. The Safe Streets and Roads for All, or SS4A, grant program is through the Department of Transportation. It is the prime funding source right now for local governments to modernize their road safety technology. Because the program prioritizes data-driven strategies and innovative technology to eliminate roadway fatalities, it is very friendly to Samsara's solutions.

Planning and Demonstration grants can be used to pilot new technology or collect data to inform a comprehensive safety action plan — for example, if you're testing Samsara's AI cams or telematics to identify near-miss hot spots. Next is implementation. Implementation grants are used to roll out that project — to roll out that solution to scale. When you apply under this category, you've already identified the technology as a strategy in your jurisdiction's existing safety action plan.

Generally, this grant is one that Departments of Transportation apply for, but a lot of other agencies are eligible to apply. First-responding agencies — law enforcement, fire — also PSAPs and 911 centers can use this funding, because they are basically the orchestra conductor conducting these emergencies. This grant program is very friendly for emergency response, but you will need to include your Department of Transportation in the process. This one should be opening in the spring.

Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG)

Shannon Day:
Finally, I want to talk about the Assistance to Firefighters Grant, or AFG, because I want to shout out fire and EMS response. This is specifically for fire and non-affiliated nonprofit EMS agencies. Any of you on the call today are probably very familiar with this grant — it is the grant for firefighters and EMS. It can be used for the purchase of fire trucks and ambulances, which may be equipped with emitters that communicate with receiving devices on traffic signals.

This is referred to as traffic preemption or traffic priority. When an emitter is activated, the device causes all the traffic lights along the vehicle's path to immediately cycle and grant that first responder the right of way in the direction they're traveling. These preemptive signals clear a path, allowing emergency vehicles to reach their destination more safely because it's giving the red light to all other lights at that intersection, so you're not potentially plowing into each other. If you're a department looking at AFG — again, like SS4A — you want to make sure you're coordinating with your local Department of Transportation to ensure that infrastructure is in place already, because you don't want to install traffic preemption software on your truck if it's not going to communicate with anything.

Talking to your DOT — this grant is a perfect example of how vehicle technology and city infrastructure meet. We are not responding to emergencies in a bubble. We are all working toward that final goal of keeping people safe. We've covered a lot of ground today. I could talk for hours, and I will if I don't stop, so I am going to turn it over to Meghan, as Michael said, to give you some helpful tips and tricks on your grant-seeking journey.

Getting Your Organization Grant Ready

Meghan Jacobsen:
Thanks, Shannon. Today I'm going to talk about not only getting your organization grant ready, but also going a little bit further into detail on partnerships. I know Shannon mentioned that briefly. Then I'm also going to talk about, once you've actually decided what grants to apply for, some tips on creating a more competitive proposal.

Let's talk first about getting your organization grant ready. You'll know that your organization is grant ready when the items you see on the screen are planned for or completed.

Know Your Need

Meghan Jacobsen:
The first thing your organization really needs to do is to know your need — establish a reason why you're pursuing grants. You should be able to answer: why are you seeking grants? Is there a specific piece of equipment, a program or project or initiative that you wish to finance, and how is the grant funding ultimately going to help you achieve the objectives? You should really have a clear reason as to why you are seeking grants, because that's going to guide you on selecting the best-fit grants for your organization and your project.

Assemble an Internal Grant-Seeking Team

Meghan Jacobsen:
Once your needs and goals are established, it's time to put together an internal grant-seeking team. Assembling your team should be done early in the process, as it's going to make assigning responsibilities and measures for accountability easier. Grant seeking should not be a one-person initiative within an organization. If you really want it to be successful, you should have a team around you.

Folks from across your organization should be on the team — from senior leadership to finance staff, IT managers, project managers, project initiators, and grant professionals if you happen to have them. Not everybody I mentioned is going to necessarily need to be actively involved throughout the process, but

you really should have this range of people to get a more holistic view of what all is needed to implement a project and ensure that nothing is forgotten or left out.

Plan and Calendar

Meghan Jacobsen:
With your needs established and your team on board, you can start planning your project or initiative and the grant application process. A plan is essential for a successful grant-seeking endeavor. Be sure to include time in the schedule for when things don't quite go as planned or something unexpected comes up. One thing we recommend is to create a grant-seeking calendar that's going to include important dates, important milestones, and possibly even who owns what, so that everybody is in the know of what their responsibility is and what milestones are coming up. In this calendar, you should build out as much leeway as possible to avoid undue stress on the deadline and to ensure that you're one step ahead.

Complete Required Registrations

Meghan Jacobsen:
Also, make sure that you have all appropriate registrations complete. Do your research early once you determine what grant to pursue to determine what platforms or portals that funder requires. Ensure that your organization is registered and able to access those platforms well before the due date, as many registrations can sometimes take multiple weeks to finalize, and honestly some portals can be confusing. An example of this is applying for a federal UEI number, which is required for federal grants and some state grants, or registering with your state's grant portal. Just keep that in mind. Make sure you understand what all is required there.

Gather Required Documents

Meghan Jacobsen:
For the final tip, when it comes to gathering required documents, we recommend that you create a folder specifically for grant documents that are commonly requested, such as your proof of tax status, your mission statement, and your financial documents. This is going to help avoid any last-minute scramble together for something you weren't thinking of, and ultimately just help you be better prepared once that submission deadline comes.

Building Effective Partnerships

Meghan Jacobsen:
Let's talk about partnerships. Many grants either require partnerships or partnerships are going to be favored, just because grant funders really like to have their dollars have the widest reach, and

oftentimes bringing partners in does allow that wider reach to the community. So it's not necessarily always required, but sometimes it does make your proposal a little bit more competitive.

Especially when you have a partnership involved in a grant, you want to start the process as early as possible. Before you reach out to partners, use your internal team to gain insight on what all is going to be necessary to implement your project or your initiative. You're going to want to look at what you bring to the table, but also where you can bring a partner in to fill in the gaps.

With partnerships, it's important to bring them in early in the process. Engage them in discussions surrounding your project's goals and how these goals align with their own priorities. Include them in project planning and ensure people on both sides have a voice. Really frame your outreach through the lens of “what can we do for you?” or “what can we accomplish together?” That's ultimately going to foster a more productive and mutually beneficial partnership.

As those initial meetings and conversations evolve, continue cultivating that relationship throughout the project and beyond. You don't know going into it whether or not it's going to be successful — or maybe you do. Maybe you've partnered with them many times. But ultimately, you really want to foster that relationship because that could lead to opening the door for future collaborations and future grant opportunities. Lastly, you want to formalize the partnership with a Memorandum of Understanding, also known as the MOU. This is a formal statement of a commitment to partnership, and it is going to be required as part of any grant proposal.

Tips and Tricks for a More Competitive Proposal

Meghan Jacobsen:
Moving on to tips and tricks on how to make your next grant proposal more competitive — this is important. A lot of people sometimes skip through some of these steps, and it can be detrimental.

Projects, Not Products

Meghan Jacobsen:
First, I want to just say — and I believe Shannon may have said it — to always remember that grants fund projects and not products. If you're seeking technology through grant funding, technology should really be there to support the larger project. Your technology should always tie back to the project. Essentially, you need to really illustrate why that technology is necessary to ensure that the project or initiative is a success. That's why a strong need statement is so important. Start with your goal first, then figure out what you need to implement that goal or accomplish it. Put the project first and always follow with the product or technology.

Learn Everything You Can About the Grant

Meghan Jacobsen:
Another thing Shannon mentioned, and I will say it again — and we will say it as much as we can — is to make sure you learn everything you can about a grant prior to applying. Always read the guidance. Make sure you understand the requirements around the grant, as well as what is required as part of the proposal.

I'm going to say it again — Shannon said it earlier — grants aren't just free money. They are investments in you and your project, and the funder does expect things in return. That could be post-award requirements; it could be part of their priorities, their funding priorities. You just want to make sure that you understand what that is. You will not regret reading through those important pieces of the application guidance, but we have seen a few too many times people who have gotten into a situation where the post-award requirements were a little bit too much for them to handle. You really want to go into the process with your eyes wide open.

Use SMART Goals

Meghan Jacobsen:
Tip number four is to use SMART goals while developing your grant proposal. SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-focused, and Time-bound. Avoid being vague and instead be clear and direct about how you intend to implement the project, what the outcomes will be, and how those outcomes will be measured.

Get a Fresh Set of Eyes

Meghan Jacobsen:
Finally, before clicking submit, get a fresh set of eyes to look over that application. Have somebody review it, read it. Getting that second set of eyes may catch errors, may catch acronyms or abbreviations that may not make sense to the funder. Someone may notice if components are missing; they may catch typos. You get the drift. Receiving that objective feedback is going to give your application a better chance of just being more competitive and ultimately being successful.

With that, I will turn things over to Scott, who's going to discuss the Samsara Grants Program.

The Samsara Grants Program

Scott Jobe:
Thank you, Meghan. Meghan did a great job of summarizing a few things, including just the need for resources. Samsara has worked to help you bridge that gap. We partner with Grants Office to really offer you end-to-end support for this transformation. You see the QR code here. By reaching out for a

custom consultation, you'll get a couple of things. You'll get a deep dive into how Samsara's real-time visibility solves your physical operations challenges, and you'll get a dedicated team to help you identify and win the grants that you need to fund it. So take a look at that QR code and scan it real quick, and it will take you to the place where you can get next steps.

Samsara Go Beyond Public Sector Conference

Scott Jobe:
I'd also like to share this last slide from Samsara, which is pretty exciting to be honest. This is the first year that we're getting our own public sector company conference. It's called Samsara Go Beyond, specifically for public sector. It's in Chicago on May 12 this year. We're going to be speaking and talking about all things public sector related — items like what we talked about here, specific use cases, how we're solving problems. There's going to be customer interactions and vendor interactions. We're really excited about the opportunity to do this in a public sector-specific forum in Chicago coming up. Thank you again. I'm going to hand it back to Michael, and we can continue the next part of the event.

Q&A Session

Michael Paddock:
Thanks very much, Scott. Appreciate that, and thanks to all of our presenters for sharing this great information. We have a few minutes for questions, and we have a couple of questions that have come in.

Q1: How do I know which homeland security grant is right for me?

Michael Paddock:
The first one is — this is probably for Shannon — how do I know which homeland security grant is right for me?

Shannon Day:
Thank you. There are a few different ways. The first thing you want to do — and like Meghan said, it's like beating a dead horse with us — is to look at the application guidance. But before then, you can go to FEMA's website. It lists all of the preparedness grants on the left side of the screen, I think — I haven't looked at it in a minute. You just click on each grant program, and it will tell you explicitly who the grant is for. Of course, if you have any questions, you can come to us through the Samsara Grants Program, and we can tell you definitively which homeland security grant works best for your organization and your project — but also any other grants, because, like I said, there may be other grants out there that are a great fit for your needs. I hope that answers the question.

Michael Paddock:
I think so. There was a related question here. Before we get to that, I just want to let everyone know that our stalwart webcast producer, Kate, has put into the chat the link to get the recording from today's session, as well as a way to register for the Samsara Go Beyond public sector conference. If you're interested in that, those links are in the chat.

Q2: I'm still a little overwhelmed — where should I even start looking for grants?

Michael Paddock:
A related question, Shannon: I'm still a little overwhelmed. Where should I even start looking for grants?

Shannon Day:
It can be overwhelming, so please don't think that you are alone in that. There are so many different places to start, but I would recommend starting with your state. Most first-responding agencies would go through your Department of Emergency Management or Department of Homeland Security. Every state has a different name for that funding agency, but if you start googling, you will find it.

Also, Departments of Public Safety or Department of Law Enforcement — all of those state funders, many of them host the pass-through grants that I mentioned. The state DHS will host the homeland security pass-through grants. The state Department of Public Safety will host pass-through grants like the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG). That's a great place to start to dip your feet in the water of what grants are available.

Another great place for federal grants is Grants.gov. I think I mentioned it pretty quickly. That is where most federal grants are first released. It is not the friendliest interface, but I think Michael can attest that it has improved greatly over the years. They have some great filters, so you can add filters in there so you're not seeing every single funder. Those are two really good places to start.

You don't want to start just googling “grants for traffic management” or whatever, because that's where you're going to get poor results, you're going to get old results, you're going to be totally overwhelmed. And also, very quickly, don't rely on AI. I know a lot of us use ChatGPT or Gemini through Google to supplement that web searching. It can be helpful, but if you don't know what you're looking at, the results are not always great. The problem with AI is it tells you what you want to hear. If you say, “Hey, I'm looking for grants for traffic management,” it'll say, “Oh wow, here are a bunch of great grants,” and they're not. Just take the results with a grain of salt. Trust, but verify. And again, don't get overwhelmed. I know it sometimes feels like drinking from a fire hose, but when you start to poke around, you'll start to get kind of excited by what you find. At least I hope so.

Michael Paddock:
Grants Office has a free trial on a grant search and grant management tool at communities.grantsoffice.com. I'm going to put that in the chat as well. That's comprehensive — it includes federal, state, and foundation grants as well.

Q3: How do I engage with the Samsara Grants Program?

Michael Paddock:
Okay, one quick question for Scott. How do I engage with the Samsara Grants Program? You did mention that, Scott. I'm going to take us back to that QR code.

Scott Jobe:
Right there, yep. That would be the way to start, because we have a team of people that are interacting with that landing page that will help you get engaged with not only Samsara folks but then Grants Office folks as well. That is absolutely the best way to do it.

Michael Paddock:
Grants Office is very happy to be working with Samsara on this grant support program. We couldn't be happier or prouder of the program that we've created there together. It's good stuff, and it's a lot of free support that is really quite valuable. I don't think there's anyone who has engaged with the Samsara Grants Program that has felt like it was not worth every bit of the time they spent on it, and then some. So I highly recommend that.

Q4: We are so small — we don't have a grant writer. Do you have any tips?

Michael Paddock:
Okay, one more question came in. We'll point this one to Meghan: we are so small, we don't have a grant writer. Do you have any tips? You've given some tips already — any additional tips?

Meghan Jacobsen:
Yes, there are a few things that come to mind. First, by engaging with the Samsara Grants Program, you get access to us here at Grants Office. One of the ways that we can help is by editing and reviewing any proposal that you do come up with. We're here to guide you through that process. We work with a lot of people who have never written grants before and don't have a grant-writing profession, and we guide them along the way and make recommendations.

Another thing that you can do is — we do also work with grant writers, and you can engage us for an investment from your organization to actually put pen to paper and write the grants on your behalf. That may be worth it for you in an instance where it's a very complex application with a large potential award. Lastly, one thing that I would recommend not doing is using AI to write your entire proposal. I know that a lot of people have been talking about doing that. Some funders are paying attention and

are putting rules in around that. Generally speaking, AI is still very young and can't entirely be trusted. AI is an excellent tool if you're dipping your toes into grants and you need a little bit of help on rewriting some things, but don't trust it to write an entire proposal. Utilizing the Samsara Grants Program, we're going to help you put your best foot forward.

Closing

Michael Paddock:
Okay, thanks. Alright, fantastic. I want to thank our speakers today — Scott Jobe, Shannon Day, and Meghan Jacobsen — for sharing your knowledge and insights with us. Big thanks to Samsara for sponsoring today's session and making it possible for us to bring you all this information. And to all of you, I hope you found this a valuable use of your time, and we'll look forward to seeing you again on a future webcast. Have a great day, everybody. Thanks, everyone.

— End of Transcript —

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