



Establish a single portal for the public to identify and access available state grant opportunities.

The Problem

Through the state, there are many opportunities for grant funding. However, with 22 cabinet-level agencies and several other boards and commissions, keeping track of all of funding opportunities can be daunting. The lack of a consolidated grant portal for state funding opportunities means that many non-profits or other entities who may be eligible simply don't apply because they don't know where to find the information. Additionally, this can narrow the field of applicant to just those who can afford to have a grant writer, oftentimes disadvantaging small rural providers.

Why this Matters

Getting funds directly into the community, to those who know and understand their communities best and supporting local initiatives is one of the greatest uses of our state dollars. Our current system, which lacks a single consolidated location for all Tennessee state grants, means that the state may not be getting the best, most competitive applicants each time. Many smaller organizations may not have the funds or capacity to employ a grant writer or allocate the time to search for grants. By creating a streamlined, efficient system to post grant notices we will ensure that all those eligible can apply, evening the playing field for our rural communities and smaller organizations. Our communities know best what they need, when the state has the funds to support those needs it is our responsibility to remove administrative barriers and make the process as efficient as possible. Every hour an organization spends navigating government websites to find and apply for a grant is one taken away from Tennesseans who desperately need their work.

How we can fix it

Allocate funds and designate one state agency to develop and manage the grant portal, in some states this is the State Library. Require each state agency to register every grant administered prior to solicitation or beginning the award process. To ensure clear, useful information is available to Tennesseans, each submitted funding opportunity should include the following details:¹

- The title of the grant opportunity and grant identification number.
- The revenue source allocated to fund the grant.
- The purpose of the grant.
- A brief description of the grant, including, but not limited to, the mechanism used to announce the availability of funding.
- Any eligibility requirements, including, but not limited to, any matching funds requirements.
- Geographic limitations, if any.
- The period of time covered by the grant.
- The date the grant will be issued.
- The deadline for proposals to be submitted.
- Internet address for electronic submission of the proposal.
- Contact information of a staff member responsible for communicating the grant requirements.

Additionally, requiring agencies to report data on grant recipients and awards would further government transparency and accountability.

Tennessee Children's Digital Protection Fund

Tennessee's recent \$750 million settlement with Meta creates an opportunity to put funds back into the state's efforts to support and protect children. This suit was brought based on a lack of transparency by Meta, and parents and Tennesseans deserve clear transparency regarding where these settlement funds are being used.

While TCA 9-4-217 establishes the general purposes of the fund, it does not yet provide the public and potential grantees with a clear, single spot to see what funding opportunities are available, how and where to apply, and who is eligible. This new funding stream creates an opportunity to pilot the grant portal on a small scale. This is a low-cost way to test the concept before a statewide rollout, while also giving Tennesseans a first, tangible sign that these settlement dollars are making a meaningful difference. All funds appropriated through this act should remain subject to public outcome reporting.

References

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1. Cal. Gov. Code § 8333 (as amended by Stats. 2018, ch. 318, § 1 (AB 2252)).