

INTRODUCTION TO GRANTS

The U.S. Embassy in France partners with organizations, universities, and individuals to support a range of programs and activities that bring the people of the United States and France closer together. In support of our shared interests with our partners, the United States provides funding to recipients through grants. Grants are official legal instruments of the United States government that come with many different requirements for both the government and the recipient. Individuals and organizations interested in partnering with the Embassy can find information about opportunities on the embassy's website or on www.grants.gov. The funding announcement contains all the information you need to submit a competitive application. Implementing a grant, also referred to as an award, can be a challenge for foreign organizations. This document is intended to assist you in better understanding the process at the beginning so that your next project can get off to a good start.

The Embassy divides the award process into four phases, pre-award, award, post-award, and closeout, to help manage the requirements and activities. The following information is organized by the same phases, as an overview of the requirements and activities for recipients.

Pre-award phase

An announcement of funding can be presented as a Notice of Funding Opportunity, Annual Program Statement, or Statement of Interest and provides:

- A description of the proposed project
- Anticipated amount of funding for each award
- All administrative requirements for the application, submission instructions, and contact information.
- Contact information for any questions.

In addition to preparing an application, potential grant recipients may also be required to be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov). The registration is completed online and is free of charge. The purpose of the registration is to establish an organization's identity in preparation for receiving funds from the U.S. government. Applicants who are applying as individuals, not on behalf of organizations, do not need to complete these registrations. The registration process takes time, so starting the process early is recommended.

Please note: in order to be successful, please pay attention to the following recommendations:

- Read the solicitation very carefully and make sure you understand all requirements.
- Submit the application on time and in the required format.
- Describe the proposed program activities clearly and logically so it can easily be understood.
- Make the budgets realistic and don't include costs that are unreasonable or unnecessary.

Once the Embassy reviews all submitted applications, it may contact applicants to clarify some information, or perhaps to make some modifications to the original proposal. Applicants should be responsive to these requests to remain competitive. If the Embassy receives more than one application under an announcement, the Embassy will select the best proposal according to selection criteria published in the original announcement. At this point the applicant may be contacted to provide additional documentation (financial records, for example) before a grant is issued.

Award Phase

When the grant is issued, the recipient will become familiar with officials responsible for the grant at the Embassy: The Grants Officer is responsible for all legal actions for the award, and is the only person who can sign the grant document, approve payments, and make changes to the award. A Grants Officer Representative (GOR) may also be assigned to the award. The GOR has different responsibilities, including monitoring the award progress and reviewing reports and other information from the grant recipient. The GOR will also act as the primary contact for the recipient. A Financial Management Officer is responsible for processing payments.

There are several different types of awards and each works somewhat differently.

- A grant provides funding for the recipient to conduct the project.
- A cooperative agreement includes more Embassy involvement in programmatic activities.
- A fixed amount award is negotiated entirely up front with an unchanging costs and does not require financial reporting.
- Awards are also made to individuals instead of organizations.

The award documents will indicate what type of award has been issued. Recipients should discuss any questions about award requirements before starting the award activities.

There are several key points to keep in mind before starting on the project:

- Recipients should not begin to spend money on the project until they have received the official written award documents
- Take time to understand everything in the award document and in the Terms and Conditions (<https://www.state.gov/about-us-office-of-the-procurement-executive/>).
- Ask your Embassy colleagues any questions if something is not clear. The award document will include the GO and GOR contact information.
- Know the amount of funding, the start and end dates, official budget (if required), expected activities, types of required reporting and due dates.

Post award phase

The recipient conducts all award activities during the post-award phase. Additionally, the recipient is responsible for requesting funding payments, submitting the reports detailed in the award documents, tracking award expenditures, and monitoring the progress of the award activities.

The recipient also needs to understand what award changes can be determined independently and what the GO must approve in advance. For example, a recipient cannot hire a new staff member to be in charge of program activities without obtaining GO approval first. A recipient cannot change certain activities or alter the overall direction of the award without obtaining approval. If there are any questions about what changes require prior approval, check with the GO or GOR.

The recipient is also responsible for notifying the GO or GOR if there are any concerns or problems, such as an inability to meet reporting deadlines or perform proposed activities. The Grants Officer can work with a recipient to find solutions, such as extending the award to allow additional time to complete the award activities.

A grant is an important agreement that includes rules and responsibilities. A project cannot be completely successful if the rules of the grant are not followed closely. This should always be done in close partnership with the Embassy, with both the recipient and Embassy in close communication, aware of upcoming dates and events, and working together openly and transparently for the overall benefit of the program.

Finally, remember that the Embassy has a responsibility for making sure the award is progressing effectively and that the recipient organization is being a responsible partner. To this end, the Embassy may ask for additional information or even schedule a site visit to examine financial systems or observe program activities.

Closeout Phase

This final phase of the award begins when the performance period ends. Once the performance period ends, the recipient should not continue any grant-funded activities or spend any new funds. The recipient is required to submit all final reports for the grant within 90 days of this date. Recipients should refer to their award documents to confirm the types of reports they are required to submit for closeout. This is also a time for the Embassy and recipients to review the award activities to determine what worked well and what might be changed on future projects.