

Notice of Funding Opportunity

Application due January 14, 2025










National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research

Merit Switzer Research Fellowships for Doctoral Dissertation Research

Opportunity number: HHS-2025-ACL-NIDILRR-SFGE-0111



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Before you begin

If you believe you are a good candidate for this funding opportunity, secure your [SAM.gov](#) and [Grants.gov](#) registrations now. If you are already registered, make sure your registration is active and up-to-date.

SAM.gov registration (this can take several weeks)

You must have an active account with SAM.gov. This includes having a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI).

[See Step 2: Get Ready to Apply](#)

Grants.gov registration (this can take several days)

You must have an active Grants.gov registration. Doing so requires a Login.gov registration as well.

[See Step 2: Get Ready to Apply](#)

Apply by January 14, 2025

Applications are due by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on January 14, 2025.



To help you find what you need, this NOFO uses internal links. In Adobe Reader, you can go back to where you were by pressing Alt + Left Arrow (Windows) or Command + Left Arrow (Mac) on your keyboard.



Step 1:

Review the Opportunity

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Basic information

Administration for Community Living

National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research

One year of funding for individual doctoral candidates to conduct dissertation research about disability and rehabilitation.

Summary

Fellowship provides one year of funding for individual doctoral candidates to conduct dissertation research in the broad area of disability and rehabilitation.

Funding details

Type: Grant

Expected funding: \$225,000

Expected Number of awards: 5

Funding range: \$40,000 to \$45,000

We plan to fund awards in one 12-month budget period for a total one period of performance of September 1, 2025 to August 31, 2026.



Have questions?

See [Contacts and Support](#)

Key facts

Opportunity name:

Merit Switzer Research Fellowships for Doctoral Dissertation Research

Opportunity number:

HHS-2025-ACL-NIDILRR-SFGE-0111

Federal assistance listing:

93.433

Statutory authority:

Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. 29 U.S.C. §762(e)

Key dates

Application Deadline:

January 14, 2025

Optional Notice of Intent Deadline:

December 20, 2024

Expected start date:

September 1, 2025

Expected award date:

September 1, 2025

Informational conference call:

December 10, 2024

Eligibility

Who can apply

Eligible applicants

Only individuals may apply.

Eligibility Requirements

To be considered eligible, you must:

- Be a doctoral candidate. This means:
 - You've completed all requirements for your doctoral degree, except for the dissertation.
 - You have formal approval of your dissertation proposal from your dissertation committee. You must have this formal approval on or before the due date for the application for this fellowship.
 - You are in good standing in your graduate program.
- Not receive other funds directly from the U.S. government during the Fellowship performance period. You may be the principal investigator of or work on federal grants awarded to your institution.
- Have a U.S. Social Security Number.
- Provide documentation that you are allowed to receive funding directly from an agency of the U.S. government if you are not a citizen of the United States.

Cost sharing

This program has no cost-sharing requirement. If you choose to include cost-sharing funds, we won't consider it during review. However, we will hold you accountable for any funds you add, including through reporting.

Cost sharing commitments

Recipients must follow through on their promise of cost-sharing funds. This includes those who have promised an amount more than the required minimum. We put these commitments in the Notice of Award.

Program description

Background

The purpose of the **Switzer Research Fellowships Program** is to provide support to highly qualified individuals, including those with disabilities, to research the experiences and outcomes of people with disabilities.

This fellowship will provide one year of funding to conduct dissertation research focused on a disability or rehabilitation topic.

Desired activities, focus areas, and priorities

The mission of the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) is to generate new knowledge and promote its effective use to:

- Improve the abilities of individuals with disabilities to perform activities of their choice in the community.
- Expand society's capacity to provide full opportunities and accommodations for people with disabilities.

NIDILRR seeks applications from doctoral candidates whose dissertation research proposal is focused on a disability and rehabilitation topic that addresses this mission. Your application must show how your dissertation proposal addresses outcomes among people with disabilities in one or more of the following outcome domains:

- Community living and participation
- Health and function
- Employment

For further information about these outcome domains and NIDILRR's research agenda and programs, applicants should consult [NIDILRR's Long-Range Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2028](#) when preparing applications.

You must demonstrate that people with disabilities from diverse racial and ethnic communities will be included in proposed samples in sufficient numbers to generate knowledge and products that are relevant to the racial and ethnic diversity of the population of people with disabilities you are studying.

NIDILRR is particularly interested in receiving applications from doctoral candidates who are:

- Investigators with disabilities.
- Investigators from underserved and underrepresented communities identified in [Executive Order 13985](#).

- Investigators from communities that are underrepresented in the extramural scientific workforce.
 - [Communities underrepresented in the extramural scientific workforce](#) include Blacks/African Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, American Indians and Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders.

Funding policies and limitations

For guidance on some types of costs we do not allow or restrictions on them, see 45 CFR part 75, [General Provisions for Selected Items of Cost](#).

Funding policies

- Meals are allowed only in limited circumstances linked to program activities, like during travel or when approved in advance by ACL. See Allowable Costs and Activities, Exhibit 4: Selected Items of Cost, Meals in the [HHS Grants Policy Statement](#).
- Certain telecommunications and video surveillance equipment. See [2 CFR 200.216](#) to make sure this does not apply to any proposed equipment in your application.
- Construction or major rehabilitation of buildings is an unallowable cost.

Indirect costs

Switzer Research Fellowship grants are awarded directly to individuals. Institutional indirect costs cannot be deducted from the award.

Statutory authority

Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. 29 U.S.C. § 762(e)



Step 2:

Get Ready to Apply

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Get registered

You should begin the application process early. There are multiple steps that you must take to apply. Each step involves a different system. Each step may take several business days before you can proceed to the next.

Sam.gov

You must have an active account with [SAM.gov](#). This includes having a Unique Entity Identifier. SAM.gov registration can take several weeks. Begin that process today.

To register, go to [SAM.gov entity registration](#) and select [get started](#). From the same page, you can also select the [Entity Registration Checklist](#) for the information you will need to register.

Because you're applying as an individual and not on behalf of an organization, you will **register yourself as a sole proprietor**. This means you'll:

- Include your own individual information whenever the SAM.gov system asks for institution or business information.
- Include your name as the legal business name.
- Provide your individual social security number instead of your employer ID number (EIN) when you are asked for the taxpayer ID number (TIN).

Grants.gov

You must also have an active account with [Grants.gov](#). To establish an account, you must:

- Set up your [Login.gov account](#) if you do not already have one.
- Log onto [Grants.gov](#) and make sure you have an **individual profile**.
- Go to the grant opportunity's package section, select Apply, and create a workspace to complete your application as an individual (i.e., sole proprietor).
- Once you are in the grants.gov workspace, you will see the required application questions, answer options, and forms.
- Because you're applying as an individual and not on behalf of an organization, include your own individual information whenever the application forms ask for institution or business information. Put information about yourself when asked for business name, supervisor, or authorizing representative.

Need Help? See [Contacts and Support](#).

Find the application package

The application package has all the forms you need to apply. You can find it online. Go to Grants Search at [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and search for opportunity number **HHS-2025-ACL-NIDILRR-SFGE-0111**. You can also find materials at [applying for grants](#) on our website.

Join the informational call

An informational conference call will be held on:

- December 10, 2024
- 1 to 3 p.m. ET

We will provide general information on this funding opportunity. You must register for this call in advance. Contact Megan.Alvarado@acl.hhs.gov to register for this call.

Get technical assistance

We will provide individual technical assistance on:

- December 10, 2024
- 3 to 4 p.m. ET

Requests for individual technical assistance must be made in advance. Contact Megan.Alvarado@acl.hhs.gov to schedule technical assistance.



Step 3:

Prepare Your Application

In this step

Application contents and format

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Application contents and format

Applications include four main components. This section includes guidance on each.

Make sure you include each of these:

Component	Grants.gov Submission Forms
Project abstract	Use the Project Abstract Summary form.
Project narrative with work plan	Upload using the Project Narrative form.
Attachments	Upload each using the Attachments form.
Standard forms	Complete the online form or upload using the designated forms.

Required format for application components

Font: Times New Roman or Arial

Format: PDF

Size: 12-point font

Footnotes and text in graphics must be 12-point.

Spacing for Project Narrative main content: Double-spaced

Spacing for project summary, tables, footnotes: Single-spaced. Please note: Applicants who unnecessarily place project narrative text in tables to avoid the double-spacing requirement run the risk of exceeding the page limit.

Margins: 1-inch

Include page numbers

Project abstract

Page limit: 1

Provide a detailed yet concise description of your proposed project, activities, and intended outcomes. The abstract can be single or double-spaced.

Project narrative

Page limit: 24

The project narrative is the most important part of the application. We use it as the primary basis to decide whether your project meets the statutory requirements and to review its merit. The project narrative should give a clear and concise description of your project.

You should address these merit review criteria as you write your project narrative.

- Applicant's previous research experience.
- Recommendations of present or former professors, supervisors, or colleagues that include an indication of the applicant's ability to work creatively in scientific research.
- Importance of the problem to be investigated to the mission of NIDILRR.
- The extent to which research methods are appropriate to address the hypotheses or research questions.
- Assurance of the availability of any necessary data resources, equipment, or institutional support, including technical consultation and support where appropriate, required to carry out the proposed research activity.

Additionally:

- Include all critical information in the project narrative and not in appendices.
- Cite all of your sources in the project narrative.
- We will instruct reviewers to disregard all content on the pages beyond the 24th page of your project narrative.

Work plan

You must provide a work plan for your project within your project narrative. The work plan connects your goals, anticipated outcomes, and the major tasks you are proposing.

To complete your work plan, see the [project work plan sample template](#) on our website.

The work plan is counted as part of the 24-page limit for the project narrative.

Attachments

You will upload the following required documents as attachments in [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov) using the Attachments form.

Table of contents

Page limit: None

Provide a table of contents that show how you organized the sections of your project narrative, including the work plan.

Eligibility and background statement

Page limit: None

Provide a description of your eligibility and your background that is relevant for the Merit Switzer Doctoral Dissertation Research Fellowship. We use this statement as the primary basis to decide whether your application meets program requirements to be considered for merit review. The panel of reviewers does not evaluate this statement during merit review.

In the statement, you must describe:

- Your education (including field and concentration of your doctoral studies), training, and experience.
- Your proposed dissertation research and how it addresses this funding opportunity.
- Your progress towards completing your doctorate, including:
 - Demonstration of your doctoral candidacy.
 - Approval of your dissertation proposal at the time of the application due date.
 - Proposed graduation timeline.
- The progress that you plan to make toward completion of your dissertation during the fellowship's one-year period.
- Your U.S. citizenship or visitation status.
 - If not a U.S. citizen, describe how that status allows you to accept funds directly from the U.S. federal government.
- Your disability status, if applicable.
- Your background as a member of a community or communities that are underrepresented or undeserved, if applicable.

You must also include:

- A letter from your department chair or head of your dissertation committee describing:

- Your doctoral candidate status.
- Your expected graduation date.
- That your dissertation proposal has been approved by your dissertation committee.
- That you are in good standing in your graduate program.
- Documentation of your eligibility to receive research funding directly from an agency of the U.S. government as a U.S. visitor, if applicable.
 - This documentation can be a photocopy of the relevant section of your visa documentation, a passage from an official federal description of your type of visa, or a letter from the sponsor of your visa.

References

Page limit: None

You must provide references for works cited in the project narrative. You can use any format (i.e., APA, AMA, MLA), though the formatting should be consistent throughout the project narrative.

Resume or CV

Page limit: None

Submit your resume or CV to demonstrate your qualifications addressing the merit review criteria. No specific format is required.

Transcripts

Page limit: None

Submit transcript(s) for your graduate degree(s) to demonstrate your relevant education. You may provide unofficial transcripts, but they must show your grades and degree status to date.

Letters of recommendation

Page limit: None

Submit letters of recommendation that address the merit review criteria.

Summary of involved individuals and organizations

Page limit: None

Submit a list of individuals and organizations that you are working with as part of your dissertation research. Describe the role of each in your dissertation research.

Data management plan

Page limit: None

You must provide a data management plan for your project. We will review the data management plan for compliance with [ACL's public access plan](#) before making an award. The contents of your data management plan will not be reviewed as part of the merit review process.

The data management plan is your plan for making your NIDILRR-funded data available to the public at the end of your grant.

Costs associated with data management can be included in your budget.

The data management plan must include the following:

- A description of the types of data you will collect for your project.
- A description of how you will organize, store, and preserve your project data.
- A description of the metadata you will provide for useful analysis by others.
 - Metadata include descriptions and labels for variables and values in your dataset.
- A description of the data repository that you will use to make your data available to the public at the end of your grant.
 - We recommend that you use the [ICPSR](#) as your data repository, but you may select a different data repository.
 - If you select a different data repository, you must provide information on how the data repository will provide long-term preservation and free public access to the project data.
- If applicable, describe why your data cannot be submitted to a data repository.
- A description of the informed consent process that will enable data sharing.

If you require technical assistance in preparing your data management plan for this application, contact ICPSR at ICPSR-help@umich.edu or 734-647-2200.

Standard forms

You will need to complete some required standard forms. Upload the standard forms listed below at Grants.gov. You can find them in the NOFO [application package](#) or review them and their instructions at [Grants.gov forms](#).

Forms	How to Submit in Grants.gov
Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)	With application.
Supplemental Information for the SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance	Upload completed form and applicable human subjects narrative.
Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B)	With application.
Project Narrative Attachment Form	With application.
Project/Performance Site Location(s)	With application.
Grants.gov Lobbying Form (Certification Regarding Lobbying)	With application.
Attachments	With application.
Project Abstract Summary	With application.

Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)

You do not have to answer any question that is not required. You provide information about yourself as an individual when questions ask for information pertaining to an institution, organization, or business.

Supplemental Information Form for the SF-424

This form gives us your name and contact information. This form also allows you to describe whether your proposed research is human subjects research. Please follow [these instructions](#) for filling out this form and sharing your human subjects narrative.



Step 4:

Learn About Review and Award

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Application review

Initial review

We review each application to make sure it meets basic requirements. We won't consider an application that:

- Is from an organization.
- Requests funding above the award ceiling shown in the [funding range](#).
- Is submitted after the [deadline](#).
- Proposes a project that exceeds 12 months.
- Proposes a project that is outside the scope of the funding priority.

If your application exceeds the 24-page limit for the project narrative, we will instruct reviewers to not review the pages that exceed the page limit. See the [required format](#) section.

Merit review

A panel reviews all applications that pass the initial review. The members use the criteria below.

Criteria

- Applicant's previous research experience (**maximum 15 points**).
- Recommendations of present or former professors, supervisors, or colleagues that include an indication of the applicant's ability to work creatively in scientific research (**maximum 15 points**).
- Importance of the problem to be investigated to the mission of NIDILRR (**maximum 20 points**).
- The extent to which research methods are appropriate to address the hypotheses or research questions (**maximum 40 points**).
- Assurance of the availability of any necessary data resources, equipment, or institutional support, including technical consultation and support where appropriate, required to carry out the proposed research activity (**maximum 10 points**).

Risk review

Before making an award, we review the risk that you will not prudently manage federal funds. We need to make sure you've handled any past federal awards well and demonstrated sound business practices. We use SAM.gov [Responsibility / Qualification](#) to check this history for all awards likely to be over \$250K. You can comment on your organization's information in SAM.gov. We'll consider your comments before making a decision about your level of risk.

If we find a significant risk, we may choose not to fund your application or to place specific conditions on the award.

For more details, see [45 CFR 75.205](#).

Selection process

When making funding decisions, we consider:

- Merit review results. These are key in making decisions but are not the only factor.
- The larger portfolio of agency-funded projects, including the diversity of project types and geographic distribution.
- The past performance of the applicant. We may choose not to fund applicants with management or financial problems.
- Reasonableness of proposed costs to the expected results and the likelihood you will achieve those results.
- Available funding.

We may:

- Choose to fund no applications under this NOFO.

The ACL Administrator makes all final award decisions.

Award notices

If you are successful, we will send you an email that provides access to a Notice of Award (NoA). We will email you if your application is disqualified or unsuccessful.

The NoA is the only official award document. The NoA tells you about the amount of the award, important dates, and the terms and conditions you need to follow. Until you receive the NoA, you don't have permission to start work.

To see what is in a NoA, see an example on our [website](#).



Step 5:

Submit Your Application

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Application submission and deadlines

See [find the application package](#) to make sure you have everything you need.

Make sure you are current with SAM.gov and UEI requirements. See [get registered](#). You will have to maintain your registration throughout the life of any award.

Deadlines

Optional notice of intent

Due on December 20, 2024.

Application

Due on January 14, 2024 at 11:59 p.m. ET.

Grants.gov creates a date and time record when it receives the application. If you submit the same application more than once, we will accept the last on-time submission.

The grants management officer may extend an application due date based on emergency situations such as documented natural disasters or a verifiable widespread disruption of electric or mail service.

If you can't submit your application because of problems with Grants.gov, you will need verification for us to consider accepting your application. Call the grants.gov helpdesk before the application due date and time and record your tracking number. Save your tracking number and any error messages you receive.

Submission Methods

Grants.gov

You must submit your application through Grants.gov. See [get registered](#).

For instructions on how to submit in Grants.gov, see the [quick start guide for applicants](#).

Make sure that your application passes the Grants.gov validation checks or we may not get it. Do not encrypt, zip, or password protect any files. The link above will also help you learn how to create PDFs.

See [Contacts and Support](#) if you need help.

Other submissions

Intergovernmental review

This NOFO is not subject to executive order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs. No action is needed.

Optional notice of intent

We ask that you let us know if you plan to apply for this opportunity. We do this to plan for the number of expert reviewers we will need to evaluate applications. You do not have to submit a notice of intent to apply.

Please email the notice to Megan.Alvarado@acl.hhs.gov.

In your email, include:

- The funding opportunity number and title.
- Applicant name.
- Institution and department in which the doctoral degree is being pursued and the dissertation is being written.
- Dissertation title.
- A brief description of your proposed dissertation project.
- A list of dissertation committee members .

See the [deadline](#) for notices of intent.

Mandatory disclosure

You must submit any information related to violations of federal criminal law involving fraud, bribery, or gratuity violations potentially affecting the federal award. See Mandatory Disclosures, [45 CFR 75.113](#).

Send written disclosures to ACL at linda.vo@acl.hhs.gov and to the Office of Inspector General at grantdisclosures@oig.hhs.gov.

Application checklist

Make sure that you have everything you need to apply:

Component	How to Submit in Grants.gov	Included in page limit?
<input type="checkbox"/> Project abstract	Use the Project Abstract Summary form.	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Project narrative, including work plan	Upload using the Project Narrative Attachment form.	Yes
Attachments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Table of contents <input type="checkbox"/> Eligibility and background statement <input type="checkbox"/> References <input type="checkbox"/> Resume or CV <input type="checkbox"/> Transcripts <input type="checkbox"/> Letters of recommendation <input type="checkbox"/> Summary of involved individuals or organizations <input type="checkbox"/> Data management plan 	Upload each in the Attachments form.	No No No No No No No
Standard forms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424) <input type="checkbox"/> Supplemental Information for the SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance <input type="checkbox"/> Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B) <input type="checkbox"/> Project Narrative Attachment Form <input type="checkbox"/> Project/Performance Site Location(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Grants.gov Lobbying Form (Certification Regarding Lobbying) <input type="checkbox"/> Attachments <input type="checkbox"/> Project Abstract Summary 	Complete the online form or upload in the designated forms.	No No No No No No No No



Step 6:

Learn What Happens After Award

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Post-award requirements and administration

Administrative and national policy requirements

There are important rules you need to know if you get an award. You must follow:

- All terms and conditions in the Notice of Award. You can find information at [Managing a Grant](#) on our website.
- The rules listed [45 CFR part 75](#), Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for HHS Awards.
- The HHS [Grants Policy Statement](#) (GPS). This document has terms and conditions tied to your award. If there are any exceptions to the GPS, they'll be listed in your Notice of Award.
- All federal statutes and regulations relevant to federal financial assistance, including those highlighted in [HHS Administrative and National Policy Requirements](#).
- The [ACL Public Access Plan](#). This plan requires grantees to:
 - Make their grant-funded publications publicly available.
 - Make their grant-funded scientific data publicly available.
- All [regulations](#) for the protection of the rights, welfare, and wellbeing of human subjects involved in research conducted or supported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. [The HHS Office for Human Research Protections](#) has information and resources related to these important requirements.

Please note the following potential implications of receiving a Switzer Fellowship grant:

- Switzer Research Fellowship grant funds are taxable income.
- It is the Fellow's responsibility to ensure compliance with their educational institution's policy on additional employment, if applicable.
- Potential applicants who receive certain federal and state benefits are cautioned that acceptance of a Fellowship may adversely affect their eligibility for services such as In-Home Supportive Services under Supplemental Security Income Section 1619.
- Because Fellowships are awarded directly to individuals rather than institutions, this can affect determinations of employment and income status.
- Potential applicants who are not U.S. residents are cautioned that acceptance of a Fellowship may adversely affect their immigration or non-immigrant visa status.

- If you are not a citizen of the U.S., the terms of your visa may not allow you to receive funding directly from an agency of the U.S. government.
- Successful applicants who are not eligible to receive research funding directly from the U.S. government will not receive the Fellowship.

Managing changes

After award, either you or ACL may request changes. We manage these using the rules at 45 CFR 75, including [45 CFR 75.308](#).

Reporting

If you are successful, you will have to submit financial and performance reports. To learn more about reporting, see Managing a Grant, [Funding Requirements](#) on our website.

Financial and performance reports

The terms and conditions in the Notice of Award will have information on performance and financial reports including:

- How often you will report.
- Any required form or formatting.
- How to submit them.

FFATA and FSRS reporting

The Federal Financial Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) requires:

- Data entry at the FFATA Subaward Reporting System for all sub-awards and sub-contracts you issue for \$30,000 or more.
- Reporting executive compensation for both recipient and sub-award organizations.

Non-discrimination and assurance

If you receive an award, you must follow all applicable nondiscrimination laws. You agree to this when you register in SAM.gov. You must also submit an Assurance of Compliance ([HHS-690](#)). To learn more, see the [Laws and Regulations Enforced by the HHS Office for Civil Rights](#).



Contacts and Support

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Agency contacts

Program and eligibility

Linda Vo

linda.vo@acl.hhs.gov

202-795-7431

Grants management

Howard Nicholas

howard.nicholas@acl.hhs.gov

202-795-7275

Review process and application status

Linda Vo

linda.vo@acl.hhs.gov

202-795-7431

Grants.gov

Grants.gov provides 24/7 support. You can call 1-800-518-4726 or email

support@grants.gov. Hold on to your ticket number.

SAM.gov

If you need help, you can call 866-606-8220 or live chat with the [Federal Service Desk](#).

Reference websites

- [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services \(HHS\)](#)
- [HHS Office For Human Research Protections](#)
- [Home Page | ACL Administration for Community Living](#)
- [Applying for Grants | ACL Administration for Community Living](#)
- [Application Tips | ACL Administration for Community Living](#)
- [How to Apply for a Competitive Grant | ACL Administration for Community Living](#)
- [Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\)](#)
- [United States Code \(U.S.C.\)](#)