

COMMON TYPES OF EXTERNAL GRANTS

Most grants awarded by foundations and corporations can be categorized as one of two types:

*General Purpose (a.k.a. Operating Support Grants)
Program Development or Project Support Grants*

General Purpose (Operating Support) Grants

When a grant maker gives your organization an operating grant, you can use it to support the general expenses of operating your organization, from a specific program to the heating bill. An operating grant means the grant maker supports your organization's overall mission and trusts you to make good use of the money. At Lawrence, we also call these "budget-relieving" grants. These are typically secured by the development office and do not augment your existing budget.

Program or Project Support Grants

Aside from general purpose or operating support grants, there are program or project support grants. In general, a project grant is given to support a specific, connected set of activities, with a beginning and an end, explicit objectives and a predetermined cost. When a grant maker awards a grant for a specific project, it is generally a restricted grant and must be used for that project. At Lawrence, we call these "budget-augmenting" grants.

DEFINITIONS OF PROJECT GRANTS

In general, project grants are given to support efforts related to the mission of the organization receiving the money. There are dozens of kinds of project grants, but here are some of the most common:

Planning grants

If your organization is planning a major new program, you may need to spend a good deal of time and money just figuring out how it will be structured. Before you can write a proposal to fund the new effort, you may want to research the needs of your constituents, consult with experts in the field, or conduct other planning activities. A planning grant supports such initial project development work.

Seed money or start-up grants

A start-up grant helps a new organization or program in its first few years. The idea is to give the new effort a strong push forward, so it can devote its energy early on to setting up programs without worrying constantly about raising money. Such grants are often paid as a pledge over multiple years. The grant maker will assume that the grantee organization will either raise new funds from other external sources to continue the program, or that the grantee will "institutionalize" the program, meaning that costs will be folded into the organization's general operating budget.

Facilities and equipment grants

Sometimes called “bricks-and-mortar” or capital grants, these funds help an organization buy some long-lasting physical asset like a building, computer, or van, for instance. The applicant organization must make the case that the new acquisition will help it serve its clients better. Grant makers considering a request like this will not only be interested in the applicant’s current activities and financial health, but will also ask about financial and program plans for the next several years. They want to be sure that, if they help an organization move into a permanent space, for example, the organization will have the resources to manage and maintain that space.

Endowment grants

Some organizations have set aside money that is invested and earns interest. The organization spends only the interest and keeps the original sum (the principal) untouched. Such a fund is called an endowment and is commonly found within organizations with large physical plants, such as hospitals and colleges. Periodically, an organization will launch a fund-raising effort to start, or add to, an endowment. Like facilities and equipment grant proposals, endowment requests will prompt grant makers to ask hard questions about the long-term financial outlook of the applicant. The grant maker wants to be sure that its gift to an endowment will stay in the endowment earning interest, and not be drawn out of the endowment to meet annual operating costs.

Management or technical assistance grants

Unlike most project grants, a technical assistance grant does not directly support the mission-related activities of the organization. Instead, it supports the organization’s management or administration of its fund-raising, marketing, financial management and so on. Such a grant might help hire a marketing consultant or pay the salary of a new fund-raiser position. Few corporations or foundations provide these types of grants. On federal applications, consultant fees are listed on a separate line within the budget. Overhead costs associated with specific projects (*i.e.* administrative/fund-raising costs) are typically recovered through the “indirect costs” line-item in the federal grant budget.

INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Listed below are some organizations in which Lawrence holds ongoing membership. Links to the web pages of these organizations can be accessed at the Provost and Dean of the Faculty Office website at http://www.lawrence.edu/dept/faculty_dean/dev/

1. NSF Fastlane: Online portal to submitting electronic applications to the NSF. This is a “paperless agency,” meaning that all correspondence between the NSF and grantseekers is limited to electronic media. Lawrence’s Sponsored Research Officers (SRO’s) include the Associate Dean of the Faculty, the Director of Corporate, Foundation and Sponsored Research Support and the Assistant Director of Corporate, Foundation and Sponsored Research Support. Questions pertaining to accessing and using Fastlane may be directed to either of these individuals.
2. Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM): The member institutions of the Associated Colleges of the Midwest are 14 academically excellent, independent liberal arts colleges located in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Colorado. They are among the oldest, most prestigious undergraduate institutions in the region and each has a distinctive identity and set of traditions. The ACM offices annually provide a number of workshops and professional development opportunities to the faculty of its member institutions.
3. Independent Colleges Office (ICO): Located in Washington, D.C, this office provides services directed toward assisting member institutions to be competitive in the search for grants from federal agencies for faculty and curriculum development and institutional renewal. The office is headed by Dr. Jeanne Narum, Director of the ICO and congressional liaison for ICO institutions.
4. Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR): This organization helps to strengthen the research programs of faculty in predominantly undergraduate institutions and promotes research by undergraduate students in science, mathematics, and engineering education. CUR generates awareness and national support for undergraduate research. They are advocates on behalf of primarily undergraduate institutions and work with federal agencies and private and local organizations to develop and maintain research-based educational opportunities.

RESOURCES

The Provost and Dean of the Faculty Office website, “Grant and Faculty Development Information” (http://www.lawrence.edu/dept/faculty_dean/dev/), includes Internet links to many websites that can assist you in your grantseeking efforts. The page includes links to federal grant agencies, grant writing resources and tips, and searchable grants databases.

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