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HOW TO SECURE GRANT FUNDING FOR PUBLIC SAFETY ORGANIZATIONS

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT FINDING GRANTS AND THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Funding. One thing every department can always use more of. The need and reliance on technology has continued to increase as budgets move in the opposite direction, or at best are flat. This often leaves departments with two difficult questions – where and how do we secure funding for technology expenses? Luckily, we are here to share how to find funding and manage the application process to limit headaches and increase funding.

TYPES OF FUNDING

There are three main types of grant funding available – national, regional, and private. Each one brings with it different advantages and challenges and knowing the differences will help determine where you apply your focus.

NATIONAL

National grants are the big grants that make headlines with massive budgets. The objective behind these grants is tied to the accomplishment of a national goal to improve the nation's overall safety and security. Some examples include national security, war on drugs, homeland security, public transit security and disaster preparedness.

The good thing about national grants is that they are easy to find and significantly funded. The downside is the competitive nature from the sheer number of agencies applying for the same money. It is really important to apply for these grants early.

Recommendation: Many of these programs are renewed annually with short submission windows ranging from a few weeks to a few months. To avoid the hectic rush of collecting the necessary quotes and support, we recommend reviewing the previous year's requirements and preparing based on those. Any adjustments will then be minor, and your application process will be much smoother.

REGIONAL

Regional grants are a bit more allusive to nail down. Based geographically, regional includes statewide, a small group of states or targeted areas based on elevated crime rates. With these decentralized initiatives, the announcement or documentation is not as detailed as national grants. Lastly, regional grants typically have a smaller pot of money available.

Luckily, the less publicized also means less competition. With a local and/or targeted approach, dollars are specifically earmarked for projects like yours. Instead of having a broad-brush objective of stopping drug trafficking, it is common for regional grants to focus specifically on a tactical element to a bigger problem. Common regional grants include in-vehicle computers in rural areas, technology upgrades for better communication back to HQ and body-worn cameras.

Due to the hyper focus on a tactical element, regional grants are typically finite and not renewed year to year like national programs. Regional grants present challenges as they are not announced prior to release. As a result, it is unlikely that previous grant requirements or information is available to prepare an application in advance.

Recommendation: Work with a technology provider or grant writer who has experience with regional grants and can pull previous similar applications.

PRIVATE

You are probably already aware of many great organizations, including for-profit, not-for-profits and family foundations, that fund projects in their communities. Many also extend funding to public safety departments to support efforts in alignment with their mission. Organizations that work to end human trafficking may be open to funding LPR initiatives. Those with a mission to improve community safety and collaboration could support a body-worn camera purchase. Additionally, general community grants looking to provide services to their community might fund an MDT purchase.

Recommendation: With private funding sources, telling a compelling story of how the technology will greatly support the organizations mission is key.

HOW TO FIND GRANTS

Funding is out there, but how to find the money is one of the biggest challenges facing departments. With the wide variety of funding types, there isn't a centralized place to quickly search for all available funding sources across various projects. The first step in your grant search process is to know what you are looking to do. Knowing the project scope narrows down available funding sources to a manageable level. Additionally, by identifying a need versus applying for anything available creates a higher chance of a compelling application.

Once the project requiring funding is identified, the search process starts. Though there isn't a single easy search location for all grant funding available, there are a number of grant collectives out there.

Brite's website is a great place to start your search: https://www.brite.com/grants/. We have done the heavy lifting on identifying technology eligible for national and multi-region grants. The Brite team frequently updates the content with relevant information and eligible technology for purchase under each grant.

After Brite's website, we highly recommend Grants.gov. This is the most centralized resource available for all grants. The main benefit of Grants.gov is the ability to set up solicitation alerts to keep on top of the latest funding available. Additionally, most national grant bids are submitted through Grants.gov. These include the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), the Department of Agriculture Rural Development, the Office of Justice

Programs and the Department of Justice. Each of these governing bodies have funding available for a variety of projects to fund infrastructure, promote improved community services and officer safety.

Finally, for regional funding sources turn to your favorite search engine. The distributor of funds for regional grants dramatically varies by area, so having the project you would like to fund first, then a bit of targeted searching will be the most fortuitus way to locate the needed financial support.

GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS

The grant application process is when a department's planning meets execution. Each grant does have its own specific application process, though there are commonalities between them. Once you have a grant selected, here is the suggested process from Brite's grant experts.

01 READ THE GRANT COMPLETELY

You cannot start a grant application journey without fully knowing what the journey entails. Take the time upfront to read the grant in its entirety. Take note of the details to ensure you are not caught off guard later in the process.

02 CHECK ELIGIBILITY

Every department is not eligible for each funding opportunity. Confirm that the department meets the requirements before going too far down the path, ensuring time is well spent.

In our experience, more funds are available for larger departments. Grant governing offices want to ensure that the available funds will have the biggest impact possible and that often means difficulty for small departments to secure funding. However, there are ways around this challenge. Smaller agencies are encouraged to create an alliance with neighboring departments and apply as a collective instead of individually. The impact of the funds is significantly greater when technology is used across a region than a few scattered smaller departments utilizing it.

03 UNDERSTAND FUNDING DISTRIBUTION

Grants are often associated to free money, and of course free money is great. However, research has shown in many different environments that items are less valued if no investment has been made to obtain them. Less valued also translates to public safety technology purchases as less utilized.

To ensure funds are going to impactful and needed locations, many federal grants have a 1:1 funding requirement when funding equipment. Knowing if you are going to be expected to pay for half of the total equipment bill up front can improve planning, budgeting and help narrow your selection.

That being said, not every equipment grant requires departments to partially fund the project, especially when it comes to state grants. Do not let the possibility of contribution halt the overall grant application process – it may just mean that particular grant is not for your department.

04 DOWNLOAD AND REVIEW RESOURCE GUIDE

Fortunately, those that release grants know the process can be complicated on the surface and provide detailed resource guides. This guide lists out the step-by-step process needed to apply for the grant. Use this as a task list to submit a successful application.

05 REGISTER FOR GRANTS.GOV (NATIONAL GRANTS)

All national grants utilize a centralized portal on Grants.gov that confirms eligibility. This is a one-time process that provides departments and users with a unique profile. Approval into the system can take a few weeks. To ensure portal access is not a barrier to funding, we suggest registering now to be prepared for all future applications

Additionally, once a profile is set up in Grants.gov, users can set up alerts for solicitations in different areas of interests. Even if you don't have your eye on a specific grant right now, this is a great resource to stay a head of the grant releases.

06 COMPLETE REQUIRED QUESTIONNAIRES

Grant money is not awarded to just anyone who throws in an application. Detailed questionaries are often required to understand how the money is going to be utilized and the impact it will have on the community or stated initiative. Dedicate adequate time to provide detailed responses to greatly increase the department's chances in securing the needed funding.

07 SUBMIT COMPLETED APPLICATION

Are you the type of person who sees 'some assembly necessary" and either does not buy the item or bother reading the directions? Then grant submissions may not be for you. If you are the person who reads the directions in detail first, then follows each and every step, you will be successful.

There can be a significant number of details and supporting materials that go into a grant submission. Be absolutely certain that each requirement is met and completed prior to submitting. Yes – it can be tedious, but patience and attention to detail will yield the desired results. Additionally, most grants only allow for one submission per agency. You will not have another chance to resubmit if your first submission was disqualified due to incompleteness. This is one part of the grant fund acquisition process that is completely in the hands of the applicant so don't let it be why the application is denied.

08 POST GRANT AWARD REPORTING

You got the funding and were able to purchase critical technology to support your department and community – woohoo! Your grant journey is not over yet. Funding bodies need to confirm that funds were used as intended and yielded anticipated results. To do that, reporting is required.

Each grant will have different reporting requirements – some may have a single report needed within the first 3 months of deployment, others will require on-going quarterly reporting for an extended period. Do not miss the reporting requirements. Departments will face ramifications including refunding the grant money and/or losing eligibility for future and other solicitations.

KEY TIPS AND TRICKS FROM BRITE'S EXPERTS

1 READ ALL THE REQUIREMENTS

Yes, we have said it multiple times and will say it some more. Read the requirements. Read the requirements. Read the requirements. Knowing what you need to successfully submit a grant up front will make the application process significantly smoother.

2 DO NOT MISS A SECTION IN YOUR APPLICATION

Triple check all necessary sections are included when submitting your final grant application. Do not let an oversite disqualify your application.

3 PARTNER WITH OTHER AGENCIES

Expand the reach of the intended project by partnering with other local agencies. Funding bodies want to see the maximum impact of the allocated funds and partnerships are a great way to achieve that goal.

OUR FAVORITE GRANTS

BJA BODY-WORN CAMERA POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM TO SUPPORT LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

Funding under this program supports agencies seeking to establish or expand comprehensive BWC programs and have specified plans to implement this technology in a manner that maximizes the benefits of BWCs. Any agency seeking to purchase to support pilots, establish or expand BWC programs are eligible. Applications will be accepted individually or in partnership with other agencies.

BJA LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT CRIME GUN INTELLIGENCE CENTER INTEGRATION INITIATIVE

Administered by BJA in partnership with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), this is a competitive grant program that provides funding to state and local entities that are experiencing precipitous increases in gun-related violent crime. The purpose of this initiative is to support local capacity to work with their ATF partners to utilize intelligence, technology, and community engagement to swiftly identify unlawfully used firearms and their sources, and effectively prosecute perpetrators engaged in violent crime. State, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies Governmental non-law enforcement agencies are all eligible to apply.

BJA EDWARD BYRNE MEMORIAL JUSTICE ASSISTANCE GRANT (JAG) PROGRAM

The Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program is the provider of federal criminal justice funding to states and units of local government. BJA will award JAG Program funds to both state and local governments to provide additional personnel, equipment, supplies, contractual support, training, technical assistance, and information systems for criminal justice. Nearly all law enforcement technology is eligible under this solicitation.

BJA RURAL VIOLENT CRIME REDUCTION INITIATIVE FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

The Rural Violent Crime Reduction Initiative is awarding grants on a competitive basis to small law enforcement agencies and prosecutors' offices in rural locations. These grants will support improved training and technology, expanded community-based crime prevention programs, and partnerships with victim services providers. This initiative is intended to improve communication and collaboration between state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve in order to address the unique criminal justice challenges in rural areas.

BRITE

At Brite, people and technology are at the core of everything we do. We're committed to proactively protecting communities and organizations through innovative technology solutions delivered by our talented team.

Beginning in 1983, Brite Computers was originally founded as a custom computer manufacturer in Rochester, NY and quickly established itself by combining the right components to solve a customer's unique needs. In 1999, we began our journey to become the largest Public Safety integrator in the country. Now, Brite expertly delivers technology to protect officers in the field, generate leads for investigators and keep command staff informed to make critical decisions with real-time details, ultimately helping to keep communities safe.

Our proven methodology of partnering with thoroughly vetted industry-leading technology vendors, delivered by the Brite team, which is evident by our numerous awards, including a seven-time Inc. 5000 honoree. Most importantly, we envision partnerships with clients where our team enables others with the technology and processes to better achieve their mission and objectives. And we're here to help with **Brite People. Brite Solutions.**

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GETAC

With over 30 years of experience, Getac is a recognized leader in global rugged device manufacturing. Since, 1989 Getac has been an Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) and consistently leads the industry in innovation, technology and design of rugged laptops and tablets. Getac's primary goal is to offer a solution that streamlines productivity and withstands the rigors of the end user environment.

Getac rugged laptops and tablets help enterprise organizations such as warehousing, automotive, healthcare, and some of the world's largest utility companies improve worker efficiency and productivity while keeping them safe on the job.

Each Getac Device undergoes rugged certification testing conducted by an independent, internationally accredited, engineering and research laboratory (MIL-STD 810G/H, IP53 – IP65). This testing guarantees our devices have the ability to withstand extreme environments, protection against drops, severe vibration and tumbling, and heat dissipation that allows the processor to stay cooler and consistently perform near full power.

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