

NSDA Grants Program Resource Guide

The National Special District Association (NSDA) and TFG are partnering to deliver comprehensive grant services to special districts across the country. This Resource Guide provides a review of key information and services available to special districts under the NSDA Grants Program. The program provides grants services to better guide special districts through grant identification, preparation, and writing as well as help your district better understand the opportunities that exist and, most importantly, strategically position your district to be the most competitive. Links to important grant tools for districts are provided below.

Your Team of Grant Experts



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Quick Resources



Project Funding Portal

Submit a request for research through the NSDA Project Funding Portal and then book a consultation during NSDA Grants Office Hours!



Weekly Grants Update

Be sure to sign up to receive the NSDA Weekly Grants Update which reviews all newly released federal and state grants and provides information on NSDA resources.



NSDA Member Webpage

Utilize the NSDA member webpage to get access to all base NSDA resources and learn about what additional services are available to districts, including grant writing.

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Free Grant Services

NSDA members receive the following No-Cost Grant support through the NSDA Grants Program:

WEEKLY GRANTS UPDATES

Each Friday, an issue of the NSDA Weekly Grant Update is published that provides a recap of federal grant solicitations that were released that week to ensure you don't miss out on any opportunities. [Click here](#) to sign up to receive the weekly list of grant opportunities and stay up-to-date or watch for it in materials, updates, and newsletters from your state association.

LIBRARY OF SUCCESSFUL GRANT APPLICATIONS

TFG has a database of over 1900 successful grant applications from a variety of programs to help inspire and guide the preparation of successful grant submissions. Reviewing past applications also allows TFG grant experts to identify trends in funded projects that can help frame how to present a project in a future application under the program. NSDA Members can access successful grant applications by submitting a request through [the Project Funding Idea Portal](#).

LIBRARY OF GRANT FUNDING GUIDES AND GRANT PROFILES

NSDA Members have access to TFG's Library of Grant Funding Guides and individual Grant Profiles and Summaries. Each Funding Guide provides an overview of grant programs and relevant information such as funding levels, match requirements, eligible applicants, and use of funds in a specific issue area.

TFG's Grants Library also includes a robust database of grant profiles and summaries that provide the key information you need to match a program with your needs and build a winning grant proposal. Grant Profiles and Summaries present the information included in the grant solicitation in an easy-to-follow manner and augment it with additional background information on the program and the types of projects funded in the past.

DISTRICT CONSULTATIONS AND PROJECT FUNDING PORTAL

All NSDA Members have access to the general NSDA [Project Funding Idea Portal](#), where special districts can share specifics on a project it is seeking funding for, or, information on funding available for a general topic by filling out a short questionnaire. TFG grant experts will then hold office hours to provide a customized consultation to respond to your funding needs.

GRANT TRAINING

We focus our grant training on building capacity, helping position you for success in the often-complex grant process. TFG offers training on grant basics, project prioritization, grant research, grant writing and an introduction to post-award grant management. General grants training will be provided to districts through NSDA. Specific training for individual districts will be customized to the requesting member's needs.

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Additional Available Services

The services described below are geared toward specific project and district needs and are available to all NSDA members at a discounted rate. Estimates on fees for these services can be provided upon request.

*Additional services
available to districts
at a 15% savings*

DEDICATED GRANTS EXPERT/TEAM THROUGH MONTHLY RETAINER – All retainer grant clients are assigned a dedicated grant expert who serves as a liaison to you and your staff. TFG Tier 3 and Tier 4 grant services retainer clients (see below) are assigned a team of experts, including an advocacy team member.

MONTHLY GRANT UPDATE MEETING – TFG experts will host monthly grant update calls to discuss grant funding outlook, services provided, and engagement.

STRATEGIC FUNDING PLANS – Succeeding in grants means knowing your priorities and planning ahead. To gain an in-depth understanding of priority grant projects, TFG established an online project portal where priority project information can be submitted for grant research support. Based on our team's knowledge and experience, we will closely identify, forecast, and monitor relevant funding opportunities that meet your specific needs. Our Strategic Funding Plan also allows your staff to know what is on the horizon and be prepared when a notice of funding availability is announced.

TFG FUNDING BLUEPRINT – Looking for funding for a specific project? TFG conducts grant research on the federal, state, and foundation levels and will create a customized funding strategy geared to support your project. We will provide you with relevant grant information, as well as recommendations on funding opportunities to target, specifically tailored to your project and your community. Our grant research will not only look at open, available programs, but will also focus on grant programs expected to be released in the future, helping you to stay ahead of the game” and be prepared.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND READINESS – Working alongside your subject matter experts, TFG grants team will provide strategic advice on how to get your project grant-ready. Collectively, we will work to scope or rescope your project, identify background and technical information needed to support the grant application and match project goals with funding agency priorities. You will come out of this process with a list of actionable steps that need to be taken to ensure your project is grant-ready, including where TFG can support your team.

GRANT WRITING – Preparing winning grant proposals takes time, skill, and knowledge. TFG's skilled grant writers will take your defined grant project idea from the start of the application to submission. From filling out federal forms to crafting a persuasive and compelling grant narrative and corresponding budgets, you can be assured your application will be complete, competitive, and submitted on time.

GRANT EDITING AND REVIEW – Improve your chance of success by having TFG staff review your grant proposal. TFG staff will expertly review your application against the funder's requirements, suggest content edits, and provide recommendations on how to improve your narrative before you submit. Grant editing and review does not include rewriting content.

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GRANT DEBRIEFS – Grant debriefs are important, especially if it turns out that your application didn't get funded. TFG staff will help guide you through the grant debrief process and set up consultation with the funding agency to put your next applications in the best position to effectively compete in future solicitations. As part of this process, TFG will review your past grant applications, and incorporate feedback from the Federal Agency, so that you know exactly what needs to change for your future application.

GRANT PROJECT ADVOCACY – TFG helps secure congressional support, including support letters, and backing from strategic partners, to bolster grant applications. Federal grants are highly competitive and, often, broad support for a project application can make the difference between a winning application and a highly ranked application that does not make the final list of awardees.

CONGRESSIONALLY DIRECTED SPENDING (EARMARKS) – If your congressional delegation engages in the appropriations earmarking process, TFG can assist in seeking direct federal support for your priority projects. TFG works within these processes to advance federal programs of importance and advocates for the adoption of legislative language to help increase access to federal funding for local communities. In addition to researching grant and financing opportunities for your projects, TFG will identify and pursue authorization and appropriations opportunities that support your priorities.

TFG has an extensive track record spanning several decades, demonstrating success in navigating the annual budget, appropriations, and earmarking processes. In the period preceding the 2010 ban on earmarks, TFG played a crucial role in assisting its clients in securing an average of \$500 million annually through the appropriations process. **Following the reinstatement of earmarks in 2021, TFG has continued to excel, aiding its clients in securing over \$271 million in earmarked funding in just three years.**

POST-AWARD GRANT MANAGEMENT SERVICES – TFG is delighted to offer Post-Award Grant Management Services on a per-case basis, ensuring clients receive comprehensive support. Our services encompass expert guidance in managing grants, overseeing funding utilization, compliance tracking, and reporting. With TFG's Post-Award Grant Management Services, clients can navigate the complexities of grant administration seamlessly, allowing them to focus on achieving their project goals.

NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATE AGREEMENTS (NICRA) – TFG is committed to supporting organizations in establishing robust proposals for Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreements (NICRA). Our specialized services encompass thorough analysis, strategic planning, and expert guidance to ensure compliant proposals and assistance through the negotiation process. By collaborating closely with clients, we navigate the intricacies of NICRAs, leading to a thorough cost allocation plan, NICRA proposal, negotiation, and recovery process. Additionally, we can provide compliance services to create a streamlined and efficient financial framework that maximizes funding utilization. With TFG's assistance, clients not only establish favorable NICRA terms through expert negotiation but also foster financial sustainability for their organizations.

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NSDA Pricing for Additional Grant Services

Having worked with public sector clients for over 40 years, TFG recognizes that each community is unique and has differing needs when it comes to grants. As a result, TFG has developed a grant services approach that can be customized to meet your exact needs and requirements.

GRANT SERVICES RETAINER – TFG’s Grant Services Retainers offer flexibility in the level of service provided, discounts on additional services, re and greater budget certainty. The table below outlines the four packages of grant services available and their respective monthly fees for a single entity. In addition, all retainer clients, regardless of selected tier, will receive an approximate 15% discount on additional TFG services outlined in the following tables.

	NSDA Tier 1 \$1,000 value (\$850/mo)	NSDA Tier 2 \$3,000 value (\$2,550mo)	NSDA Tier 3 \$5,000 value (\$4,250/mo)	NSDA Tier 4 \$8,000 value (\$6,800/mo)
Dedicated Grant Expert/Team	✓	✓	✓	✓
Monthly Grant Update Meetings	✓	✓	✓	✓
Grant Alerts & Tracking		✓	✓	✓
Weekly Grants Update	✓	✓	✓	✓
Access to TFG Grant Funding Hub	✓	✓	✓	✓
Access to TFG Grant Showcase	✓	✓	✓	✓
TFG Funding Strategy	15% discount	15% discount	✓	✓
Project Development and Readiness	Hourly	✓	✓	✓
TFG Funding Blueprint	15% discount	Up to 3 projects	Up to 5 projects	Up to 6 projects
Grant Writing	15% discount	15% discount	15% discount	Up to 3 projects*
Grant Editing and Review	Hourly	✓	✓	✓
Grant Debriefs	Hourly	✓	✓	✓
Grant Training	15% discount	15% discount	✓	✓
Grant Project Advocacy	Hourly	hourly	✓	✓
Congressionally Directed Spending (Earmarks) **			Negotiated Fee Based On Scope	
Post-Award Grant Management Services**			Negotiated Fee Based On Scope	
Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreements**			Negotiated Fee Based On Scope	

GRANT WRITING – AS NEEDED, PER GRANT – To provide greater transparency in the cost of grant writing services, TFG has created the grant writing service fee table below, which provides the average cost for grant writing services based on the narrative page limitations imposed in the grant application. Grant applications vary widely with respect to complexity and level of effort required to complete them. If you are interested in securing these services, TFG will provide you with a tailored cost proposal that reflects the level of effort required to draft the narrative and non-narrative elements such as forms, budgets, logic models and Benefit-Cost Analysis. Exceptions do occur based on the complexity of the grant application, but we work hard to keep costs in line with the pricing guidelines outlined.

Workload (low to high)	Type of Grant	Narrative Page Length	Approximate Average Cost	15% NSDA Discount Cost
Level 1	Small, well-defined request	6-10	\$6,000 - \$7,000	\$5,100 - \$6,050

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Level 2	Small, full grant application	11-15	\$12,000 - \$13,000	\$10,200 - \$11,100
Level 3	Medium, full grant application	16-20	\$18,000 - \$20,000	\$15,300 - \$17,000
Level 4	Large state or national foundation or medium federal grant	21-25	\$22,000 - \$24,000	\$18,700 - \$20,400
Level 5	Large federal grant application	26-30	\$26,000 - \$29,000	\$22,100 - \$24,650

**The approximate average cost to write a grant varies greatly based on several factors, including the development of narrative, required submittal forms, creation of budgets, project complexity, and other related considerations. Last minute emergency grant writing requests are subject to a 35% markup to the non-discounted grant writing fee. Where efficiencies are built into a grant writing process, such as in the case of a grant rewrite or a joint application scenario, a further discount may be applied.*

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	Non-Retainer Cost	15% NSDA Discount Cost
TFG Grant Blueprint	\$5,000/guide	\$4,250/guide
TFG Funding Strategy	\$20,000	\$17,000
Grant Writing	See grant writing table or hourly rate	
Project Development and Readiness	\$300/hour	\$255/hour
Grant Project Advocacy	See below	
Grant Editing and Review	\$300/hour	\$255/hour
Grant Debriefs	\$2,500	\$2,125
Grant Training	\$3,500 - \$7,500	\$2,975 - \$6,375
Congressionally Directed Spending (Earmarks)	Negotiated Fee Based On Scope**	
Post-Award Grant Management Services	Negotiated Fee Based On Scope**	
Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreements	Negotiated Fee Based On Scope**	

***available only to Tier 3 and Tier 4 retainer clients*

GRANT AND ADVOCACY TEAM HOURLY RATE – Additional services, such as grant research, grant review, and grant training, as well as assistance with all aspects of grant-related advocacy and policy, may be needed that extend beyond the scope of the base retainer tier selected. In those cases, TFG will perform requested grant-related services at a rate of \$205/hour. If you are a retainer client and additional services are needed beyond the scope identified, our hourly rate will be discounted to \$175/hour. Last-minute requests for additional grant-related services are subject to a 35 percent mark-up.

If the assistance of TFG’s professional lobbying staff is required for project advocacy and political positioning, services are billed at the following rates:

- \$425 Partner/Principal/Senior Advisor/Of Counsel
- \$240 Senior Associate
- \$170 Associate
- \$115 Research Assistant

EXPENSES – TFG fees include all direct labor, overhead (including general and administrative expenses), other direct costs, subcontractor costs, fixed fees, miscellaneous incidental services, and all applicable taxes. While the TFG Grant Team usually works electronically and virtually, if a client prefers an on-site meeting, estimated travel time and expenses will be billed in advance.