4 essential tips for winning a WaterSMART Water and Energy Efficiency Grant

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4 essential tips for winning a WaterSMART Water and Energy Efficiency Grant

Each year, the US Bureau of Reclamation awards WaterSMART Water and Energy Efficiency Grants to utilities and other organizations to fund projects that promote sustainability (including addressing climate-change impacts, drought resiliency, etc.) and aim to conserve and use resources more efficiently.

Grant application development consists of more than writing. The research, computation, and other work necessary to prepare a comprehensive grant proposal can be time-consuming and requires intense focus. The typical time frame from grant announcement to application submission is about 90 days, and that time moves quickly! If you plan to apply for a WaterSMART Grant this year, here are some things to consider to make sure your application is competitive, strong, and thorough.

Developing a WaterSMART Water and Energy Efficiency Grant application and don't have the time or resources?

Fill out this short form to start a conversation about your needs and how we can help.

Don't underestimate the process—plan ahead

The submission period for the WaterSMART Grant spans a few months and, while that might sound like plenty of time, it tends to go quickly and there are a lot of moving pieces. Many applicants underestimate the process and think it can be completed in a short period of time. But preparing your application may take more time than you realize, so it's best to work ahead of schedule and give yourself plenty of time to complete a thorough, detailed, and accurate application.

Pro tip: check out the Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMART Grant page for resources. It shares announcements—like the winners of the 2023 Water and Energy Efficiency Grants—info about

webinars, previous applications, FAQs, and more to assist in advance preparation. Take some time to explore common themes and develop content throughout the year.

Cross every T and dot every I

WaterSMART funding can help to offset costs for these multi-million dollar technology projects, but don't let the grant money distract you from the hard work ahead. Your application is strongest when you put the time and effort into developing a compelling narrative.

This is a competitive process, only a small fraction of the applicants receive funding each year. The process should be taken seriously so that nothing gets lost along the way.

The first step is to read the funding announcement in its entirety to understand the criteria for each category. Your project may not check every box, so it's important to highlight your strengths and acknowledge the areas that aren't applicable.

Be realistic when discussing project goals and outcomes. You'll have to regularly report on the measurable benefits from your application over the course of the whole project.

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Take advantage of community connections

One way to differentiate your utility's application is to take advantage of connections in your community. Connecting with community stakeholders to get their support and buy-in is vital to the long-term success of a utility project.

Request support documentation from governance, city or state politicians, and local organizations. Having a letter from leaders in the community backing up the benefits of the project—environmentally and locally—will go a long way!

Don't be shy—consult an expert for guidance!

Utility employees wear many hats, juggling a variety of priorities every day. It can be challenging to tackle a comprehensive project like a grant application. When there's not enough time in the day to do it all, our team can alleviate your stress by managing the application development process and completing research on your behalf.

We've secured more than $22 million in grant funding on behalf of utilities across the US.

Lucky for you, we have a strong history of writing applications and winning WaterSMART Grants for many clients. Our advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) experts can help you understand your level of preparedness and identify the steps for your business case.

We've secured more than $22 million in grant funding on behalf of utilities across the US. In addition to application development, we provide funding research and grant-reporting services. Let us put our expertise to work for you so you can find funding that will make your project even more financially viable.

Crafting a winning WaterSMART Water and Energy Efficiency Grant application for an AMI deployment

A multicommodity utility needed extra funding for its AMI deployment but had limited time to complete the WaterSMART Water and Energy Efficiency Grant application. The utility turned to E Source to perform all necessary research and collect the documentation required for a comprehensive, compelling, and on-time application.

The Bureau of Reclamation awarded the utility a $2 million WaterSMART Grant. Relying on E Source saved the utility time and resources. Staff could focus on their day-to-day priorities without the added stress of a looming deadline. And the extra funds enabled the utility to complete its AMI deployment quicker and more efficiently, giving the water portion of the project the jump start it needed.

Read the case study

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