



Connecticut's Efforts at Maximizing Federal Revenues

Background

In May 2012, the program review committee authorized a study to assess the state's success at maximizing federal revenues.

According to data from the Office of the State Comptroller and the state Auditors of Public Accounts, Connecticut state government received \$6.5 billion in federal grants in FY11. The majority of grant funding (\$5.9 billion) comes from formula grants. The Department of Social Services is by far the largest grant recipient, with over \$4.2 billion received in FY11. Nine agencies each received over \$20 million in formula grants and six state each agencies received at least \$20 million in project/competitive grants.

In July, PRI sent an electronic survey to gauge agency organization and resources dedicated to identifying, applying for, and obtaining federal grants. The survey was sent to over 80 state government entities, including all agencies, higher education, and quasi-public agencies. To date, 44 responses were received, with most agencies that received federal funding having responded.

To complete this update, PRI staff reviewed survey responses and federal grant expenditure information for state agencies, as presented in the Single Statewide Audit and the Report of the State Comptroller to the Governor (FY10 and FY11).

Additionally, staff have met with several state agencies (e.g., DHMAS, UCHC, UConn, Veterans Affairs, DPH) and several non-governmental partners (e.g., End Hunger CT, CBIA Education Foundation, Connecticut Association of Human Services, Capitol Workforce Partners) to discuss the federal grants process.

Main Points

27 state agencies report receiving federal funding in FY10 or FY11. 17 respondents indicated they received no federal grants in the prior two fiscal years.

Few agencies have staff dedicated to identifying or applying for grants. Over 80% of respondents indicated having no staff dedicated to grants, with only 6% having 5 or more staff dedicated to federal grants. Similarly, only 7 respondents (26% of those respondents who received federal grants) said that identifying or applying for grants was done in a separate grants or finance office.

Half of all respondents said their agency worked collaboratively with another state agency to apply for grants within the past two years. However, less than 40% indicated collaborating to identify grants in the same time period. The agencies most commonly listed as frequent collaborators with other state agencies were OPM, DOC, and DSS.

Agencies with the highest amounts of federal grant funding were more likely to collaborate on grant applications than agencies with little or no federal grants. This is true in collaborations with other state agencies and working with other groups, such as non-profits or advocacy groups. All respondents indicated relatively frequent contact with other state agencies, non-profits, and advocacy groups, but generally had less frequent contact with business groups, municipalities, and the Connecticut congressional delegation.

Respondents expressed positive views of a possible centralized state-level technical assistance office for federal grant applications. Views of a more broadly defined statewide grants office with duties that include coordinating applications and serving as a single point of contact for the federal government were evenly split between negative and positive.

Many agencies report being understaffed concerning grant identification and application. Respondents cited lack of dedicated staff positions, or delayed hiring of vacant positions as a major detriment to grants maximization efforts. Other factors that were mentioned as hindrances include poor access to quality supporting data and the inability to secure matching funds from the state.

Next Steps

PRI staff will review best practices and describe the organizational structure in some model states and model agencies. Staff will continue to inventory and classify existing federal grant information. Additionally, survey responses will be further analyzed to determine what connection, if any, there is between organizational structure and recent grant performance.

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Study Update
September 25, 2012

1

Preliminary State Agency Survey Results

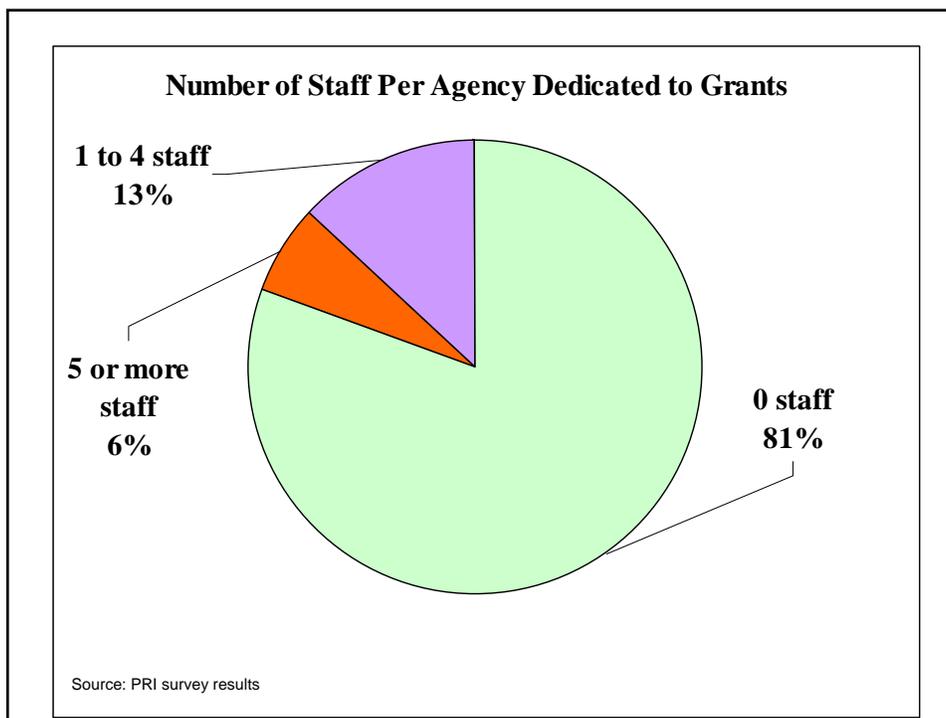
- Sent 83 survey requests
 - All CT agencies
 - Higher education
 - Quasi-publics
- Information received from 44 respondents

2

Grant Efforts and Staffing

- 27 respondents indicated receiving some federal grant funding in FY10 or FY11
 - 17 that did not receive federal funding
 - mostly small agencies and offices
- Few respondents indicated having dedicated grants office or staff
 - Identifying and applying for grants was done throughout the agency

3



Grants Efforts

- Most respondents self-reported favorably on agency efforts regarding grants
 - Overall state government effort was generally rated adequate
 - Some agencies responded that they had no interaction with federal grants whatsoever

5

Grant Collaboration

- Half of respondents who received grants indicated they had collaborated with another state agency on **an application** within the past 2 years
 - Collaboration is less common at **identification stage** (less than 1/3 of respondents)

6

Agency Collaboration

- State agencies commonly listed by respondents as frequent collaborators
 - OPM
 - DOC
 - DSS
- Most agencies with high federal grant \$ reported multiple collaborating agencies
 - Agencies with fewer \$ tended to list one or no collaborators

7

Grants Collaboration

- Frequency of collaborative contact regarding federal grants
 - Differed by agency function
 - not all agencies have cause to interact with all groups
 - larger agencies reported more frequent contact with all groups
- As collaborators:
 - Least common contact
 - business groups
 - Connecticut congressional delegation
 - municipalities
 - Mixed contact
 - other state agencies
 - non-profits
 - advocacy groups

8

Changes to Grant Process

- Little recent change in agency grants administration structure
 - Over 2/3 reported no change in last two years
 - When reported, changes were expected to have a positive impact on grant seeking
 - Most changes were personnel-based
 - some agencies reported extended position vacancies
 - a few agencies recently hired or reclassified for grants function
 - recent agency mergers had impact on some grant structures

9

Factors in Grant Process

- Respondents were asked to report whether various factors surrounding federal grants enhanced or hampered their agency's ability to apply for and/or obtain federal grants
 - Response was somewhat mixed

10

Factors in Grant Administration

- Enhancing factors:
 - Collaborative efforts
 - other state agencies
 - non-profits, towns, and other partners
 - Availability of grant opportunity information
 - Training and skills of staff
- Hampering factors:
 - Understaffed
 - Quick application turnaround time
 - Availability of high-quality supporting data

11

Statewide Grants Office

- Respondents were asked opinion on how two different centralized state-wide grant office models might impact their agencies
 - 1) “Centralized state-level single point of contact on directing and coordinating agencies in applying for federal grants”
 - split views with nearly equal numbers suggesting it would enhance or hamper the agency
 - slightly net negative response from large agencies
 - evenly split among other agencies
 - 2) “Centralized state-level technical assistance to agencies in applying for federal grants”
 - very positive views from agencies of all sizes

12

Feedback to Applications

- Respondents were asked to describe feedback they have gotten from granting federal agencies
- Positive Feedback
 - Collaboration and show of support outside main applicant agency
 - Previous history of successful grant administration
 - avoids funding lapses

13

Feedback to Applications

- Feedback from unsuccessful applications
 - Lack of demonstrated partners
 - Does not meet minimum evaluation “score” to be funded
 - Some applications approved but unfunded, or temporarily unfunded, based on federal funding constraints

14

Improving the Grant Process

- Respondent suggestions for improving their own agencies:
 - Staff resources improvement
 - staff dedicated to grants process
 - more program specialists working on grants
 - flexible hiring and contracting practices
 - Better access to supporting data
 - State grant opportunities tracking system

15

Improving the Grant Process

- Respondent suggestions for improving the statewide grant system:
 - Clear access to necessary match funds
 - Dedicated grant staff
 - Access to technical grants office
 - grant-writing seminars
 - Regular inter-agency meetings of agency grant personnel to discuss opportunities

16

State Agency Federal Funding

17

State Agency Federal Funding

- Federal Funds Expenditure Data (FY11)
 - Data provided by state fiscal agencies
 - Office of the State Comptroller
 - Auditors of Public Accounts
 - Lists all federal funds sent to state agencies
 - includes, but is not limited to, grants
- 20 agencies each received more than \$5 million in federal grants in FY11

18

State Agency Federal Funding

- 9 agencies each with \$20 million or more in federal formula grant expenditures in FY11
 - Department of Social Services
 - Department of Transportation
 - Department of Education
 - Department of Children and Families
 - Department of Public Health
 - Department of Labor
 - Department of Economic and Community Development
 - Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
 - Department of Environmental Protection

19

State Agency Federal Funding

- 7 agencies each with \$20 million or more in federal project/competitive grant expenditures in FY11
 - University of Connecticut
 - Department of Public Health
 - University of Connecticut Health Center
 - Military Department
 - Department of Transportation
 - Department of Social Services
 - Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

20

Next Steps

21

Next Steps

- Describe Best Practices:
 - Collaborative systems
 - Developed track record with federal agencies
 - Seek grants that match statewide priorities

- Describe Models and Practices
 - Other states: Maryland
 - CT state agencies: DPH, DHMAS, DOT

22

Next Steps

- Describe recent state agency federal grants
- Continue to inventory grants, assess Connecticut's participation, and identify opportunities that exist for improvement
- Analyze agency survey results
 - Examine connections of organizational structure and recent results
 - Differences between grant levels
 - formula vs competitive maximization
 - percentage of overall agency budget

23