



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION

OFFICE of MANAGEMENT & BUDGET

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Who do you represent?

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What questions are you trying to answer with federal spending information?

- How many federal dollars is the state receiving?
 - By state fiscal year and federal fiscal year.
 - By type of federal funding (grant, cooperative agreement, contracts, loans, individual awards, etc.?).
 - By recipient type. Who are the recipients of federal funds? How many federal dollars are various entities in the state receiving (state agencies, IHEs, not for profits, for profits, individuals, etc.)?
- What sectors or categories do these federal dollars fund? (Human services, education, agriculture, etc.).
- What are the current expenditure levels for the federal awards?
 - How much is used to support the prime recipient agency?
 - How much is issued to outside entities through sub-awards?
- How many federal funds awarded to the state are returned unspent?
- How many non-federal dollars are required to be committed as a result of match requirements in the federal awards? How much of the match can be in-kind?
- How many non-federal dollars are committed (required to be maintained) as a result of MOE requirements? What are the MOE requirements and how are they calculated?
- What is the future federal commitment for these programs? Is it a one-time award of funds? Does the award go across multiple years but is dependent on the federal authorization/appropriation process for future funding years? What is the future funding in the out-years of the award?

What federal spending information do you need to answer these questions?

Ability to Search and Find Individual Award Level Data by State, Prime Recipient Name, CFDA or Award Number:

- Financial data –Award amount, non-federal matching funds, expenditures/drawdowns by month
- Award history – ability to track initial award, all amendments including purpose of amendment, no cost extensions
- Administrative information: Award start and end date, federal awarding agency, mandatory or discretionary, instrument type(grants, cooperative agreement, loan, awards to individuals), payment system used, administrative set-asides, MOE requirements, approved indirect rate for this award

Ability to Search and Find Aggregate Data:

- By State
- By Recipient Type: State agency, institutes of higher education, municipal government, non-profits, for-profits

Where do you find the federal spending information now?

Overall, we piece information together from multiple sources. Process is time consuming and we are dependent on many parties to ensure completeness of information.

State Sources:

- Award letters – Limited to state entities under the Governor. State Office of Management and Budget Collects federal award letters from individual agencies as part of the annual budget process. There are gaps in this data if agencies do not forward letters.
- State financial system – Used to report expenditure data against awards. Currently, our state does not have a grants module, so the level of effort to generate reliable data is high. We have tried to use USASpending.gov but have run into challenges with this system as well.

Federal Sources:

- CFDA.gov
- Grants.gov – look up and review guidance to collect various information
- Recovery.gov and FederalReporting.gov
- USASpending.gov
- Code of Federal Regulations
- Individual federal agency sites – various look-up tools
- Contact with grants management specialists at the agencies

Other Sources:

- FFIS grants database
- Congressional Research Service

Where does federal spending information need clearer instructions or explanations?

- Award letters – Standardization of format would simplify our work. Every agency has a different format. Award numbers need to be standardized across the agencies – there are references built into the numbers that help the federal agencies interpret; this information is not available to state agencies unless one calls the designated grants management specialists.
- Data dictionaries and user guides supporting FFATA reporting, USAspending, Recovery.gov are helpful. It would be more efficient to develop templates for frequently used reports. States, and other users, could use template to generate state specific data reports. This would save time and effort across the states and improve the consistency of reported data. There would still be a need for custom reports.

What suggestions do you have for prioritizing federal spending information enhancements?

- Highest priority is to have readily publicly accessible, searchable database that provides a core set of standardized information for all federal awards across all federal agencies. This is the foundation upon which spending data is built. Without this foundational data, the reliability of spending data will be in question.
 - Some federal agencies allow the public to query their grants systems for basic, critical award information. A great example is NOAA (<https://grantsonline.rdc.noaa.gov/flows/publicSearch/begin.do>). This system allows searches by state and timeframe, e.g. “Rhode Island” + “Awarded During this Period” + “Date Range”. That query provides the Award Number, Recipient, Start Date, End Date, CFDA, Project Title, Amount, and Amendment History for any new awards received by entities during the date range entered.