ANNUAL SURVEY
Grants Management
RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

February 2021
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REI Systems, NGMA, and GWU
Conduct an Annual Grants Survey

- Identify issues and priorities
- Let you see how you fit
- Help advocate for what you need
What are the biggest findings?

| More time spent on compliance than anything else | Admin spend appeared to increase significantly in 2020 over 2019 | Many can’t measure performance, or don’t know if it improved (more than 56%) | COVID had a huge impact on performance (61% said more than 10% impact) |

![Clock and coins](image1.png) ![Graph and calculator](image2.png) ![Bar graph with question mark](image3.png) ![Mask](image4.png)
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REI Systems, GWU, NGMA

The **National Grants Management Association** provides tools and resources for grants professionals to support and maintain high levels of grants management competency and to establish standards of excellence for grants managers. Visit [ngma.org](http://ngma.org)

The **Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration** is a focal point for public affairs education, research, and public service at the George Washington University. Visit [tspppa.gwu.edu](http://tspppa.gwu.edu)

**REI Systems** provides grant management solutions, analysis and advice. We digitize government to produce healthier citizens, safer communities, and better lives. Visit [reisystems.com](http://reisystems.com)
Introduction and Methodology

**Purpose:** The purpose of the grants management survey and analysis is to inform the grants community of cross-cutting issues and trends so as to help improve grants management, and to support advocates for better grant management.

**Survey Design:** GWU, REI, and NGMA developed a survey of grant managers in 2016 to help identify key practices, major challenges, and related topics that could help inform the grants management community. Revisions were made to the survey for 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020, to maximize the opportunity to evaluate the trend of responses over time.

**Survey Administration:**

- During November 2020, we invited more than 5,000 professionals in grant management and related fields to take the survey online. Others (Grants.gov) also distributed the survey on our behalf.
- Those invited to respond included NGMA members, attendees of Grants Management Breakfast Forum events, and other grants professionals that REI and GWU have been able to identify. Those receiving the survey were encouraged to forward it to colleagues.
- Responses were anonymous, though respondents were offered the chance to receive these survey results if they chose to share their name and email address.
Respondents Included a Mix of Federal, State / Local & Non-Profit Grant Managers

233 Responses

- Total Count
- Grant Maker
- Grant Recipient
- Both
- Other

Years of Experience

- 0-2 Years
- 3-5 Years
- 6-10 Years
- More than 10 Years

Federal
- 32
- 2
- 4
- 6
- 9
- 5
- 1
- 20
- 15
- 3
- 3
- 3
- 1
- 4
- 16
- 7

State
- 28
- 6
- 9
- 5
- 1
- 20
- 15
- 3
- 3
- 3
- 1
- 4
- 16
- 7

Local
- 20
- 15
- 3
- 3
- 3
- 1
- 4
- 16
- 7

Other
- 32
- 2
- 4
- 6
- 9
- 5
- 1
- 20
- 15
- 3
- 3
- 3
- 1
- 4
- 16
- 7

Tribal
- 3
- 3
- 3
- 1
- 4
- 16
- 7

Non-Government
- 32
- 2
- 4
- 6
- 9
- 5
- 1
- 20
- 15
- 3
- 3
- 3
- 1
- 4
- 16
- 7
How Grant Managers Spend Their Time
Grant Managers’ Work is Consistent; The Biggest Task is Still Compliance Monitoring

Compliance takes more time than any other activity

1.3. How much time do you spend on the following grants management activities?

- Work not related to grants
- Other grant related activities
- Evaluating overall grant program outcomes and impact
- Evaluating individual recipients’ outcomes and impact
- Monitoring recipients' programmatic outputs
- Monitoring non-financial administrative requirements
- Monitoring financial administrative requirements
- Application submission/reviews & other pre-award activities
- Program policy and design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work not related to grants</td>
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<td>Other grant related activities</td>
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<td>Program policy and design</td>
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</table>
Few Organizations Require That Their Staff Receive Grants Management Training and certification requirements are even more rare.

1.8. Does your organization require formal grant training of your staff?

- Yes, with Certification: 11%
- Yes, but no certification: 29%
- No training required: 60%
Administrative Spend on Grants Management
Admin Spend on Grants Management seems to have increased significantly

Even as grant volume increased due to COVID…

1.7. What percentage of the annual value of grants processed by your organization does [your organization’s] administrative budget constitute?

Admin Spending as a percent of grant value
Performance and grantee burden
Outcome Improvements were lower in 2020

The Federal Government reported the most improvements

6.3. Have your organization’s / your recipients’ outcomes improved over the past 12 months?

- **Federal**: Performance Improved: 67%, Performance Fell, or Don’t Know: 33%
- **State & Local**: Performance Improved: 35%, Performance Fell, or Don’t Know: 65%
- **Non Government**: Performance Improved: 47%, Performance Fell, or Don’t Know: 53%
Perhaps Because The Pandemic Significantly Affected Outcomes

6.4. Were your organization’s / your recipients outcomes impacted by the pandemic declaration in March 2020?

- Federal: 67% Don't know, 11% Yes, less than 5%, 22% Yes, more than 5%
- State & Local: 62% Don't know, 17% Yes, less than 5%, 21% Yes, more than 5%
- Non Government: 55% Don't know, 21% Yes, less than 5%, 25% Yes, more than 5%
Grant Managers Use More Self Reported Than Third Party Gathered Data

3.1. Please indicate the frequency with which you submit (or expect your grantees to submit) various types of data.

- **Self Reported Quantitative**: 60%
- **Self Reported Qualitative**: 41%
- **3rd Party Quantitative**: 21%
- **3rd Party Qualitative**: 15%
- **Survey Data**: 28%

Note: Most respondents use more than one type of reporting source
Financial Data Collected Continues to be Perceived as Most Timely, Useful & Reliable

3.2. Please tell us how timely, useful and reliable different types of data are for your program.
Strongly Supported Issues – and Those That Are Not…
Of All Survey Topics, Respondents Feel Strongly About

5.4. Should state governments and federal agencies share data and automate interactions more than they do today?

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Uniform Guidance</th>
<th>Data Act</th>
<th>Great Act</th>
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<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>4</td>
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5.2. Please rate the impact of the executive and legislative directives on your day-to-day lives

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<th>Year</th>
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<td>2020</td>
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Use of Risk Strategies and Interest in Analytics remain High

4.2 To what extent is your grant program or organization using a risk-based strategy (i.e. focused attention on aspects that involve greater risk) to monitor current recipients?

4.1 To what extent are your executive leaders and managers interested in evaluation and data analytics?

USE OF A RISK-BASED STRATEGY TO MONITOR RECIPIENTS

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP INTEREST IN ANALYTICS
Respondents Also Seek Improvement

5.2 How effective are your data systems in helping you to analyze and improve the performance of you or your recipient or your grant program?

Satisfaction with data systems is not high...

5.2. How well equipped do you feel your organization is to successfully meet your grant program’s mission?

Confidence in ability to meet grant program mission increased since 2019
Grant Reporting Automation Improves But Still Has Some Way to Go

2.2 How would you describe the method used by your grantees to submit reporting

- Grant reporting isn’t sophisticated or efficient
- Reporting varies by grant, and even by grantee
2.1 Rate your satisfaction with the technology, your program or organization’s use of it and the technical assistance provided to your staff, recipients, and sub-recipients to use it.
Significant Challenges and Success Factors
Challenges: Funds Uncertainty Recedes a Bit, Concerns Over Bureaucracy Increase

6.2. What do you think are the most significant challenges facing grants management?

- Grantees who are inexperienced managing programs
- Volume and security of grants data
- Risk of fraud
- Grantees who are ineffective financial managers
- Hesitance to adapt to changing environment/context
- Attracting/retaining well-qualified grant management staff
- Disconnect between grantee needs and agency priorities
- Funding uncertainty/susceptibility to politics
- Inefficient/bureaucratic processes

Other ‘write in’ answers included:
- Poor leadership in the organization
- Funding in the aftermath of the pandemic
6.1. *What are the most significant factors in the success(es) your organization has had in grants management in recent years?*

- Anecdotes of people who have been helped by grants
- Data linking grants to improved mission results
- Strong process for selecting grantees and avoiding risk
- Passionate and skilled grantees
- Clear law/authorization to make the grant
- Clear communication about the mission of grants
- Efficient methods for overseeing grantee performance
- Org structure to support agency-wide coordination
- Effective training/technical assistance for grantees
- Well-qualified grant management staff

Other ‘write in’ answers included:
- Good local policy
- Federal efforts to standardize data
- Consistent requirements for managing grants
- Ensuring of a more equitable and inclusive grantmaking process
Key Takeaways
Improving systems, more training and streamlining processes continue to be priorities

6.7. What are your Top 5 priorities over the next 3 years?
Takeaways from Our Analysis

- Admin Spend appeared to increase significantly in 2020
- Grants managers continue to spend more time monitoring compliance than any other activity; this has continued to increase over the years.
- 56% of respondents said that Performance Outcomes did not improve or they didn’t know if they did
- 78% said that the Pandemic affected Outcomes
- The GREAT Act starts to make its impact felt
- Grants managers aren’t happy with their technology, particularly accessibility and cost.
- Systems, Training, Efficient processes remain priorities
Suggestions from Survey Respondents - Priorities for Effort to Improve

6.6 What do you think should be the highest priorities / best ways to improve grant mgmt?

Processes
- Simplification in grant making; Diversity and inclusion taken into consideration in grant making.
- Standardizing reporting
- Quarterly meetings are important between the grantor and recipient as well
- Make the indirect cost rate proposal process less onerous
- Uniform application and performance standards across federal agencies.
- Having clear and realistic expectations and expectations in grant language.
- Consistent and streamlined grants processes across the grants lifecycle
- Bring in more diverse stakeholders and intentional engagement from the communities the grants are intended to help.

Personnel
- Knowledgeable staff
- More and affordable training
- Adequate Staffing
- Attracting highly qualified, enthusiastic career-track employees
- Mandatory certification
Suggestions from Survey Respondents - Priorities for Effort to Improve

6.6 What do you think should be the highest priorities / best ways to improve grant mgmt? (cont’d)

**Systems**

- One common federal grant platform for applying, managing and data reporting
- Ensure federal agencies that have failing, long outdated IT systems have the resources to update/replace those systems.
- Automating grants management systems to tie outcomes and financial side together. We can't measure efforts against outcomes, but a good grant management system would help us as a non-profit to do so.
- Periodic "facelifts" to older, stodgier (federal) grant management portals
- Reduction of reporting burden by consolidation of electronic systems;

**Data**

- Data analytics tailored to the type of grant program - objectives.
- Standardization of data
- Improved data management via grants management system;
- Education on performance inputs and outputs
Thank you!

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