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Chief Strategy Officer



Is Your Organization Grant-Ready?

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About Us

Grant Ready Kentucky's mission is to advance Kentucky by empowering communities with the capacity, confidence, and connections to turn local visions into lasting impact

Grant Ready Kentucky was created in response to a persistent gap in access to public and philanthropic funding. While meaningful opportunities exist, many communities across Kentucky face steep barriers such as complex applications and systems, limited staff capacity, and match requirements that make it difficult to compete. Grant Ready Kentucky is knocking down these barriers.

We provide expert training, one-on-one coaching, and hands-on support to help communities statewide become grant ready, develop competitive proposals, braid funding sources, and secure the investment needed to move from ideas to implementation.

By combining on-demand expertise, modern technology tools, and bold policy solutions, we are modernizing Kentucky's approach to public investment. Our work is unlocking transformative capital, fueling state-wide collaboration, and helping communities across the Commonwealth turn long-imagined projects into reality—especially in places that have historically been left behind.



Who is Melissa?

Melissa Vermillion is the Chief Strategy Officer for Grant Ready Kentucky and an Approved GPA Trainer. She served Hazard Community and Technical College for 14 years as Director of Grants and Contracts and Dean of Institutional Effectiveness Planning and Research. She has taught grant writing since 2016 and is one of only 14 individuals in Kentucky who have earned the Grant Professional Certification through the Grant Professionals Certification Institute and the first within KCTCS.

She has successfully written grant applications for both federal and state agencies, as well as private foundations, securing almost \$50 million in grant funding. Prior to joining the HCTC, she served as the Director for Aging Programs in Perry County where she was also successful in a variety of grant and fundraising opportunities, tripling the amount of funding to the program over her tenure.

Melissa has a Bachelor Degree in Business Administration, MBA, and a Doctorate of Adult and Higher Education from Morehead State University. She has been married to Kevin Vermillion for 37 years and has two adult children, Rebekah and Alex.



Live Anonymous Survey

Let's Learn About You



Scan code with your phone's
camera app to participate!



What is Grant-Readiness?



Ready to apply for a grant



**Have the resource capacity
to implement the project
as specified in the grant
application**



**Manage and close out the
grant project as instructed
by the funder**

What is Grant-Readiness?

- ✓ **Identify Funding Needs**
Clearly define the project or program that requires funding and align it with the organization's mission and strategic goals.
- ✓ **Assess Eligibility**
Ensure your organization meets the eligibility requirements for the grants you are considering.
- ✓ **Develop a Project Plan**
Create a detailed project plan with objectives, timelines, and a budget to demonstrate readiness and feasibility.
- ✓ **Create a Grant Calendar**
Develop a timeline for application deadlines, proposal drafts, and submission dates to stay organized and on track.

- ✓ **Research Grant Opportunities**
Look for grants that match your organization's needs, focus areas, and eligibility criteria.
- ✓ **Gather Documentation**
Prepare essential documents such as your organization's mission statement, financial statements, tax-exempt status, and past performance reports.
- ✓ **Build a Team**
Assemble a team responsible for writing the grant proposal, including members with expertise in finance, project management, and writing.
- ✓ **Organizational Assessment**
Develop inventory of existing resources and capacity, including documents, policies, accounting capacity, submission registrations (SAM, GRANTS.gov), mission, and vision.

Do You Have Priority Projects?

➔ **Strategic Alignment:**
Ensure priority projects are directly aligned with the organization's strategic goals and mission, maintaining focus on core objectives.

➔ **Clear Objectives:**
Define specific, measurable objectives for each project to guide development and evaluation, ensuring clarity and purpose.

➔ **Community Needs:**
Base project prioritization on comprehensive community needs assessments, addressing the most pressing issues.

➔ **Resource Feasibility:**
Evaluate the feasibility of projects in terms of available resources, including staff, time, and budget, to ensure successful implementation.

➔ **Impact Potential:**
Prioritize projects with the highest potential for meaningful impact, maximizing benefits for the community and stakeholders.

➔ **Sustainability Plan:**
Develop sustainability plans for each project, ensuring long-term viability and reducing reliance on grant funding.

Don't Chase The Money

Guide Grant Pursuits: Use identified priorities to strategically target grant opportunities, ensuring alignment with organizational needs and avoiding unrelated funding pursuits.

Educate Leadership: Provide training and resources to educate leadership about the grant process, including identification, application, and management, to ensure informed decision-making.

Eligible Applicants for Private Foundations



Nonprofits

Charitable Organizations: These are the primary recipients of private foundation grants. They must be recognized as tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. This category includes a wide range of nonprofits such as educational institutions, hospitals, and other organizations dedicated to charitable purposes.

Certain Non-501(c)(3) Organizations: Private foundations can also make grants to organizations that are not classified as 501(c)(3) entities, such as 501(c)(4) social welfare organizations or 501(c)(6) business leagues, provided the funds are used for charitable purposes and the foundation exercises expenditure responsibility.

Eligible Applicants for **Federal Grants**



Nonprofits

Nonprofits with and without 501(c)(3) status from the IRS, other than institutions of higher education

Faith-based (FBO)



Public Agencies

State governments

Local governments

City or township governments

Special district governments

Native American tribal governments (both federally- and non-federally-recognized)

Independent school districts

Public and state-controlled institutions of higher education

Private institutions of higher education

Native American Organizations



Business/Industry

In some competitions, for-profit businesses are eligible

Federal Funder Specific, for example HHS or HRSA will allow private healthcare providers

What to Expect

Private Foundation Grants

- Private foundations typically send a check for the full amount at the time of award.
- Private Foundation grants or gifts are typically smaller in size compared to federal or state grants. Private foundations often have more limited resources and donors may focus on specific areas of interest or local communities.
- Reporting requirements are generally less stringent. Foundations may ask for periodic updates and final reports, but the level of detail and frequency can vary widely.
- Eligibility is often more flexible and can include a variety of organizations, including small nonprofits, community groups, and even individuals. Private foundations may focus on specific causes or geographical areas that align with the donor's interests.
- Competition can be less intense due to the smaller pool of applicants and the specific focus of the foundation. Success rates may be higher for organizations that closely align with the foundation's mission.
- Private foundations may be more willing to fund innovative or experimental projects. They often have the flexibility to support initiatives that may not yet have proven track records but align with their philanthropic goals.
- Some Private foundations operate on an invitation-only basis.
- Grants from private foundations are sometimes considered gifts and are reported differently because they are often given with fewer strings attached.
- Successful awardees typically closely align with the mission and priorities of the private foundation.

What to Expect

Federal Grants

- Grant funded projects are not typically shovel ready projects.
- Federal Funders do not issue checks. The organization must expend, then request reimbursement for funds.
- Prepare to have legal counsel review grant agreements prior execution.
- Cultivate relationships with program officers.
- Not all grant applications are created equal, some are more complex.
- Sometimes consultants are needed to prepare reports which must be included in a grant application.
- Grant funds may only be used for the scope of work written into the grant proposal. Failure to do so can result in various penalties.
- Cultivate grant partners prior to pursuing grant funding.
- Avoid Mission Drift.

Organization Policies Federal Agencies Might Require

Conflict of Interest Policy

Whistleblower Policy

Records Retention and
Destruction Policy

Employee Compensation
Policy

Gift Acceptance Policy

Fiscal Management Policy

 [6 Operating Policies Your Nonprofit Must Have - Foundation Group](#)



Expertise for Managing a Grant

- ✓ Choose a grant manager, also known as the Principal Investigator, who will “Champion” the project and who has expertise in the area of the grant project.
- ✓ Ensure that if the Principal Investigator is already at your organization, they actively participate in the preparation of the grant application.
- ✓ If the grant manager must be hired, ensure that the job description (usually provided as documentation in the grant agreement) adequately requires the experience and explains the duties as required by the grant application’s Plan of Operation and Work Plan.
- ✓ Ensure that the Principal Investigator has the additional capacity to take on the management of a grant.
- ✓ Ensure that the Principal Investigator understands their responsibilities, if the grant is awarded.
- ✓ Ensure that the Chief Financial Officer and Principal Investigator will work together on the fiscal management of the grant award.
- ✓ Ensure the Principal Investigator has a copy of the funded grant and the executed grant agreement, drawing attention to the Plan of Operation, Work Plan and Budget.

How to Effectively Manage a Grant

Understand Grant Requirements

Thoroughly read and understand the grant agreement, including all terms, conditions, and reporting requirements.

Create a Detailed Project Plan

Develop a comprehensive project plan with clear objectives, timelines, and milestones to ensure the project stays on track.

Establish a Budget Management System

Implement a robust financial management system to track expenses, ensure funds are used as intended, and maintain accurate financial records.

Regular Monitoring and Reporting

Conduct regular monitoring of project activities and financial performance. Prepare and submit timely reports to the funder as required.

Maintain Open Communication

Keep open lines of communication with the funder. Provide updates on progress, address any issues promptly, and seek guidance when needed.

Compliance and Risk Management

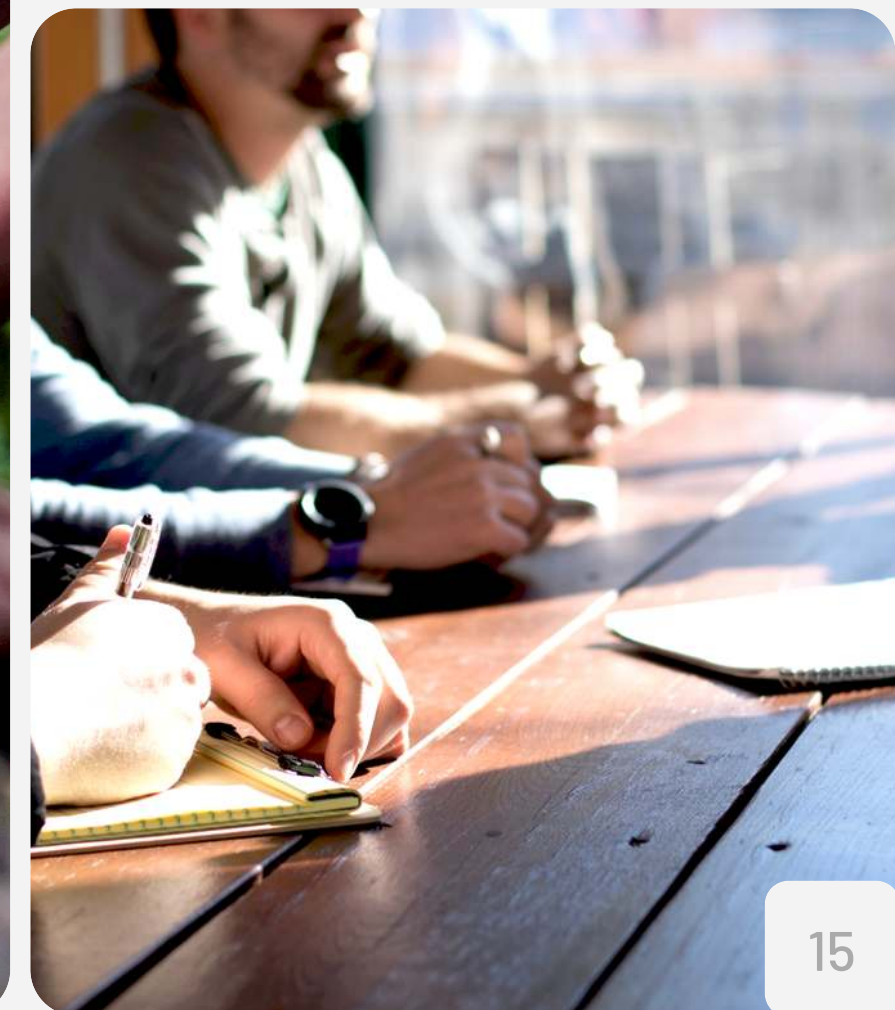
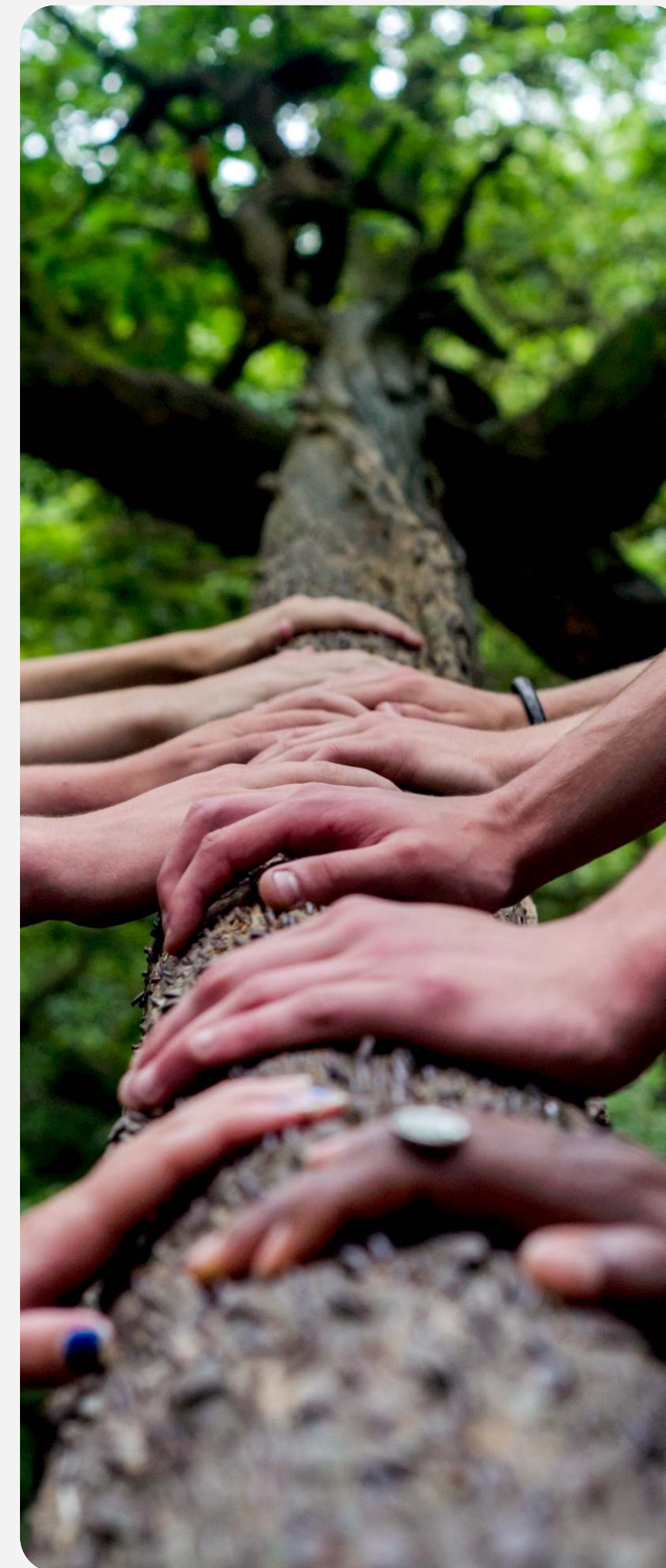
Ensure compliance with all legal and regulatory requirements. Identify and mitigate potential risks that could impact the project.

Evaluate and Document Impact

Conduct evaluations to measure the impact of the project. Document outcomes and lessons learned to inform future grant applications and project management.

Do you have **a team?**

- Grant Writing takes a Team
- Do your team members have the capacity, including time?
- Do you have subject matter experts?
- Is your data person involved?
- Sometimes your team may extend beyond your organization



Do you have **partners?**

- Funders expect collaboration
- Successful grants require partners
- Take time and cultivate partners before a grant application is open
- Involve partners in the project design phase
- Help write the partner letters
- Include meaningful commitments from partners which show engagement and actionrs



Must-have Documents to be Grant-Ready

Keep these documents In a separate file for ease of access



Mission Statement



**501(C)3 IRS
Determination Letter**



**Current Financial
Statements, Tax Returns,
and Audits**



**State Statutes verifying
your public agency
designation**



**Current board of
directors list with their
affiliations**



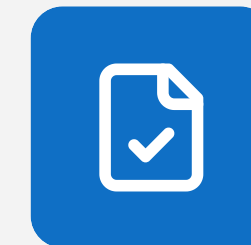
**Strategic plan or goals
and progress**



Organization chart



List of current programs



**List of prior awarded
federal grants**

Typically an Accrual Accounting System is used with Grant Funds



Accrual Accounting System

Organizations with an accrual accounting system recognizes revenue when it is earned, and expenses when they are paid.



Cash Accounting System

Organizations with a cash accounting system counts revenue when it is received and expenses when purchased.

Accrual Accounting for Grant Funds

- ☒ **Prepare for a Reimbursement Basis:**
Many federal and state grants operate on a reimbursement basis, meaning organizations must initially cover project costs and then request reimbursement from the funder by submitting detailed reports and evidence of expenditures.
- ☒ **Establish a Budget:**
Create a detailed budget that aligns with the grant proposal, outlining all anticipated expenses and revenue.
- ☒ **Track Expenses:**
Implement a system to monitor and record all expenditures related to the grant, ensuring they align with the approved budget.
- ☒ **Ensure Compliance:**
Adhere to all financial guidelines and requirements set by the funder, including allowable costs and reporting formats.
- ☒ **Conduct Regular Audits:**
Perform periodic internal audits to verify the accuracy of financial records and compliance with grant terms.
- ☒ **Maintain Documentation:**
Keep comprehensive records of all financial transactions, including receipts, invoices, and contracts, for accountability and transparency.
- ☒ **Prepare Financial Reports:**
Submit timely and accurate financial reports to the funder, detailing how funds were utilized and the status of the budget.
- ☒ **Monitor Cash Flow:**
Regularly review cash flow to ensure sufficient funds are available for project activities and adjust plans as needed.

Will the Federal Government Audit my Organization?

If your organization receives more than \$1,000,000 in federal funds in one year, it will be subject to an OMB A-133 Audit.

The Audit will be performed by an independent CPA to assure the Federal Government that funds were expended as were expected in the applicable grant agreements.



What Does Your Organization's Board of Directors Look Like?

- 01 Active Engagement:**
Ensure board members are actively involved in governance, strategic planning, and organizational activities, fostering a dynamic and supportive leadership environment.
- 02 Financial Contribution:**
Encourage board members to financially contribute, demonstrating their commitment to the organization's mission and encouraging others to follow suit.
- 03 Representation:**
Include board members who reflect the communities and populations served by the organization, ensuring diverse perspectives and insights.
- 04 Diversity:**
Strive for diversity in gender, racial, ethnic, and other identifications to enrich discussions and decision-making processes.
- 05 Board Presentation:**
Be prepared to present your board's strengths, diversity, and contributions to funders, highlighting their role in guiding and supporting the organization.

Getting Registered



Obtain an EIN:

Ensure your organization has an Employer Identification Number (EIN) for federal tax identification purposes.



Register for a Unique Entity ID:

Sign up for a Unique Entity ID through the System for Award Management (SAM.gov) to participate in federal grants and contracts. Click on the link below for more instructions.

 [Visit our Grant Ready Resource for more instructions.](#)



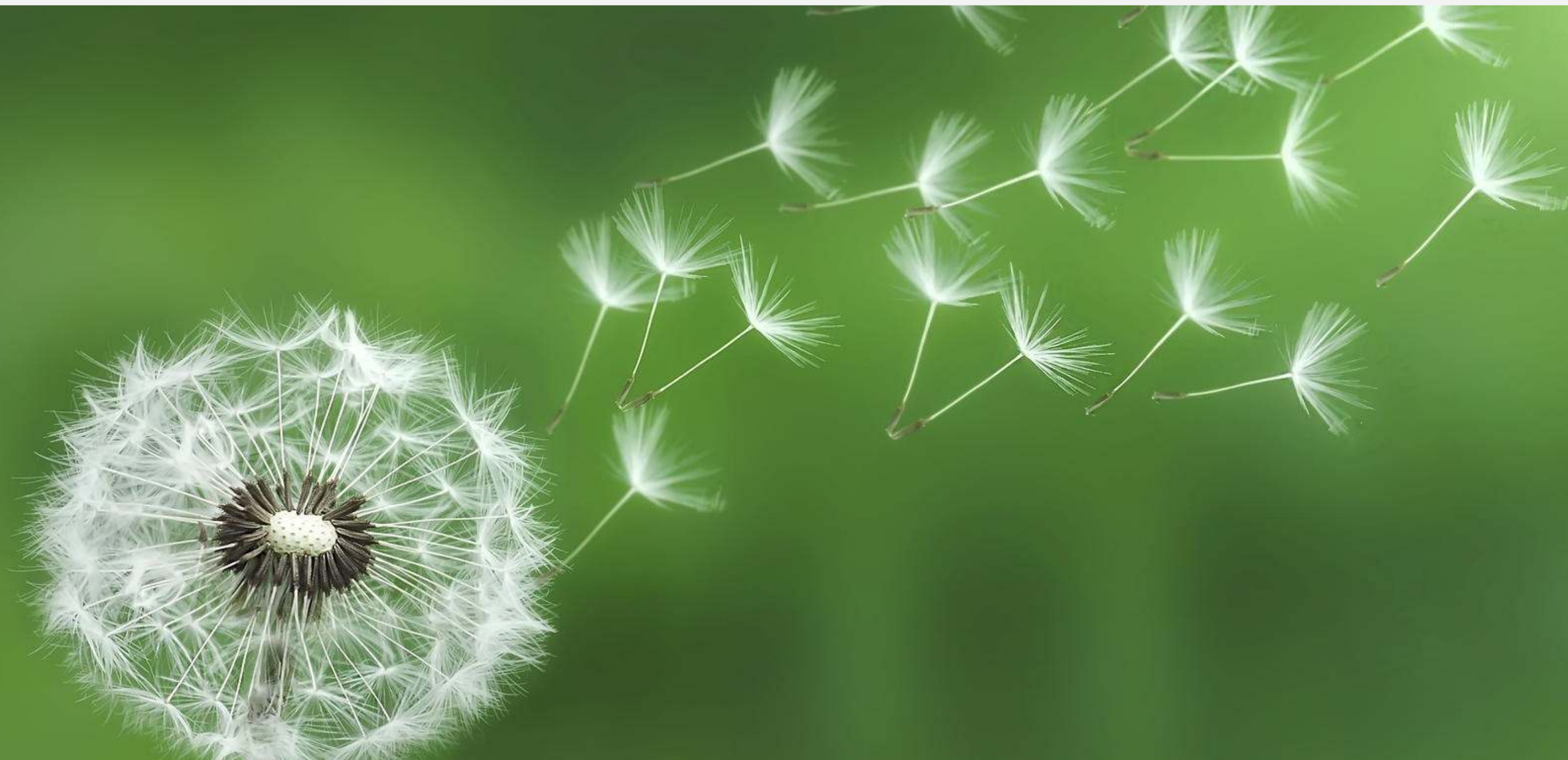
Create a Grants.gov Account:

Establish and register a user and organizational account on Grants.gov to apply for and manage federal grant applications efficiently.

OK, We May Not be Ready for a Large Federal Grant.

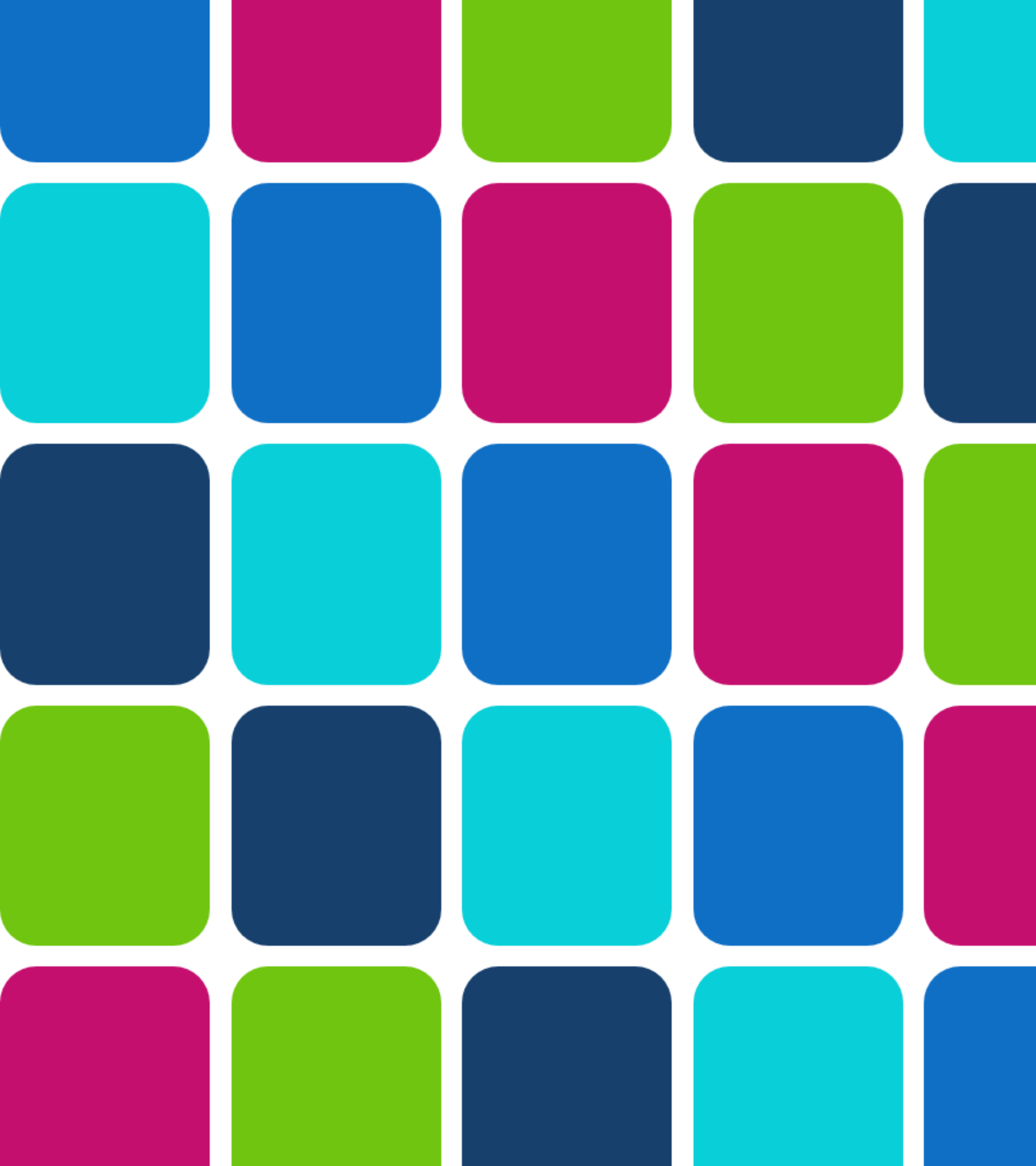
What's Next?

- Evaluate community needs
- Find organizational gaps
- Develop accounting practices
- Create data tracking processes
- Identify & build skilled teams
- Start with small grants for local opportunities
- Collaborate with others
- Gain experience through partnerships
- Seek Area Development District (ADD) help
- Build skills for larger projects through experience



Questions?

**Scan the QR code below
for a short survey!**





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www.GrantReadyKY.org



Grant Ready KY Coaching

← Scan to Book a Session with a Grant Pro

We offer Free Services:

- 1:1 reviews
- Project Alignment Coaching
- Grant Writing Services