COVID Grant Best Practices

As of mid-June, ZoomGrants has facilitated over 60 unique COVID-related grant programs for our clients, giving us the opportunity to make some observations of things that have been very successful, as well as some things that have created unnecessary challenges. Here are some of the best practices that ZoomGrants has observed for RFPs anticipating several hundred (or many more) applications being received.

To view some sample programs, visit ZoomGrants.com/covid-19grantresources/ to find out if there is something similar to your programs. If so, let us know and we can copy any of those over to your account. In this case, plagiarism can be the highest of compliments.

Local Policy Points (whether using ZoomGrants, or not)

- Instead of using a 'first come, first served' approach, consider opening up the application period for several days, and select applications via a lottery system from the qualified/eligible applications. Imagine the gates opening to a football stadium, and everyone wanting to get in at the same time.
- Prepare your call center to receive a massive deluge of calls, including adding staff, and adequately training them on program content as well as any use of technology.
- Prepare for due diligence. Lots of applications require a lot of reviewers to verify the information presented by applicants in a timely manner.
- Plan ahead. Plan ahead. Plan ahead. Test your process from start to finish, including reviewing applications, as well as the logistics of getting the money out the door.
- Get a good estimate of how many applications you could receive. For example, figure out how many eligible businesses or individuals COULD be applying.
- Communicate EVERYTHING that you can to the applicants, like documents required, eligibility, expected timeframes for decisions, etc.
- Consider using an eligibility quiz before letting anyone officially apply.
- Use the nonprofit agencies in your community to manage rent & utilities payments, instead of your staff. They have capacity and established relationships in place already.
- Make sure you capture EVERYTHING you need from the applicants. It is very hard to go back to them to get more information.
- Develop a "Frequently Asked Questions" page on your website regarding your program.
- Plan ahead for collecting/protecting sensitive information/data.

ZoomGrants is 100% designed, built, and supported in the USA

ZoomGrants Points (more specific to those using ZoomGrants)

- Use the custom status feature to set up filters before the application launches. If you anticipate receiving a large volume of applications, the ability to filter applications by the criteria that is most important to you is crucial.
- Assign the program's Primary Contact to an email alias that either disperses incoming emails, or directs into some sort of support ticket tool, like ZenDesk. Depending on the size of your program, you may be receiving thousands of emails.
- Include information about Google Translate in your application instructions to reduce the number of inquiries about translation.
- Make sure your team is fully trained ahead of time, including yourself. No ZG administrator is using every feature that we offer, and even the smallest thing can dramatically improve your process. Contact our team to set up a training session if necessary. (Exploring ZGU can also be a very enlightening experience.)
- Review your message templates that are sent automatically before you start your program to ensure they are correct and in place.
- Relay to your applicants that ZoomGrants does NOT participate in the decision making process on their application and can NOT provide any direct answers to them. They gotta call you for that!
- The Funding Source features allows ZoomGrants Administrators to allocate and track funding from specific sources to programs and applications, so be sure to set up this feature in your account prior to your program's launch.
- Utilize a branching question to hide questions that may not apply to all applicants.
- Use the Reporting tool in ZoomGrants to collect future survey data from your approved applicants after they have been funded.
- ZoomGrants has a library of dozens of template applications that can quickly and easily be copied into your account for you to then edit and make your own.

We are available to brainstorm with you on your program and offer any additional insight that we can. If we are a good fit to be able to help with our technology, we will certainly do so. If not, we will help you find a better fit based on our observations.

Send an email to Sales@ZoomGrants.com to set up an appointment to discuss your programs.

Best wishes, and good luck!