

STATE OF ILLINOIS

GRANT ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY ACT



10th ANNUAL REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

January 1, 2025

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Grant Accountability and Transparency Unit (GATU) Staff and Volunteers

GOVERNOR’S OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET (GOMB)

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Adriana Perez, Program Delivery Manager

Megan Pirok, Audit Report Review Specialist

Tonya Upshaw, Program Specialist

SUBCOMMITTEE AND WORKGROUP VOLUNTEERS

The Grant Accountability and Transparency Unit (GATU) is grateful to the dedicated staff of the State agencies and grantees who continuously invest their time and resources to the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA) subcommittees and workgroups. The foundation of Illinois’ grant administration lies in the collaborative efforts of these essential stakeholders. Their expertise and commitment are pivotal in shaping the design, testing, implementation, and enhancements to Illinois’ grant management frameworks. GATU appreciates the commitment and determination of those individuals to enhance grant management ultimately benefitting the citizens of Illinois who rely on programs and services funded by public funds.

Executive Summary

State government officials are entrusted with a critical responsibility: ensuring taxpayer dollars are spent wisely, efficiently, and transparently. Grants are a significant funding mechanism in Illinois, and GATA, codified at 30 ILCS 708, serves as the guiding framework for effective and efficient grant administration. The goal is not only to promote equitable access to public funds but also to ensure clear and consistent disclosure regarding the use of those funds.

On average, the State spends approximately \$26.6 billion annually in federal financial assistance.¹ Illinois distributes approximately \$15.8 billion through grant agreements between state agencies and grantees.² Given the central role that grants play in funding services and programs, the success of these initiatives is directly tied to the success of the grantees. Effective and efficient administration ensures that public funds are used to achieve meaningful outcomes for Illinois citizens.

GATU is pleased to present its tenth annual report, the GATA Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2024. The following describes the subsequent sections of this report.

- **Demonstrating GATA Performance.** State statute requires that the annual report address five GATA performance measures, each of which is discussed in its respective section of this report.
- **Statewide Grant Management System.** Illinois continues to make significant strides in enhancing its grant administration by implementing and customizing an electronic statewide grant management system (GMS) using AmpliFund software. The GMS is designed to align with established GATA frameworks and templates, ensuring a seamless integration with existing GATA systems such as the Grantee Portal for registration and prequalification and the Catalog of State Financial Assistance (CSFA). The GMS will be the system of record for statewide grant administration.³
- **Centralized Audit Report Reviews.** For grantees who receive grants from more than one state awarding agency, the centralized Audit Report Review Management System (ARRMS) annually eliminates approximately 4,500 duplicate audit report reviews. State awarding agencies collectively agree to a grantee's corrective action plans, thereby reducing the administrative burden on the grantees. In addition, expenditures reported in the Consolidated Year End Financial Report (CYEFR) provide an audit trail of completed, mandatory state awarding agency reconciliations of grantee expenditures.
- **Indirect Cost.** During Fiscal Year 2024, the GATU completed development of the Indirect Cost training course to provide additional support for grantees desiring to explore the complexities of the indirect cost rate proposal and negotiation process.
- **Training.** The GATU developed and made available comprehensive training courses for grantees, potential grantees, and state agency personnel. These trainings aim to promote equitable access to public funds. This online technical assistance was completed during Fiscal Year 2024.
- **Stakeholder Resources.** Fiscal Year 2024 saw updates to the GATA website and the resources available to stakeholders.
- **Agency Highlights.** This section of the report showcases several agencies that benefited from GATA frameworks during the fiscal year.

¹ This estimate does not include the temporary funding received to address the COVID pandemic. Roughly \$22.5 billion of the \$26.6 billion in funding is for Medicaid and agency use.

² Approximately \$12 billion of Illinois' grants are state funded with a significant portion of the grants used for match or maintenance efforts toward federal funding.

³ All state grant making agencies under the Governor will administer grants through the GMS.

GATA Fiscal Year 2024 Report

DEMONSTRATING GATA PERFORMANCE

GATA (30 ILCS 708/95) mandates that the annual report include five specific measures that are addressed below.

1. **Number of entities placed on the Illinois debarred and suspended list.** As of October 2024, there were 1,069 entities on the temporary Illinois stop payment list. In addition, the automated GATA registration and pre-qualification process had verified 17,924 entities against the federal do not pay list. The automated check enhances compliance by identifying ineligible entities, thereby ensuring that grants are awarded to organizations qualified to receive financial assistance. It also boosts financial transparency, reinforcing the State's commitment to integrity in its financial systems.
2. **Savings realized as a result of the implementation of GATA.** State awarding agencies have experienced efficiencies through streamlined, centralized grant processes based on standard rules and templates. GATA frameworks clarify "how" state awarding agencies will do what is required. When used as designed, automated systems and shared data minimize duplication of effort for grantees and state awarding agencies. Cost avoidance estimates consider state awarding agency workload pre- and post- GATA. The GATU estimates a \$266.1 million net cost avoidance impact of implementing GATA frameworks.⁴
3. **Reductions in the number of duplicative audit report reviews.** Approximately 60% of grantees with active awards in Fiscal Year 2024 received grants from more than one state agency. The GATA Audit Report Review Management System (ARRMS) allows a grantee to submit one copy of its audit, which is shared with all agencies funding that grantee, eliminating approximately 4,500 duplicate audit report reviews. In addition, ARRMS centralizes program-level grant expenditure reconciliations, which state awarding agencies are required to perform.
4. **Number of persons trained to assist grantees and subrecipients.** The GATU provides training and technical assistance to state agencies, grantees, and external stakeholders through a mix of tools. Web-based sessions and on-line learning platforms remain the primary form of training, ensuring accessibility and convenience for all participants. Additionally, the GATA website hosts a wealth of resources, including manuals, presentations, templates, and other materials. Further, the GATU staff are frequently called upon to provide guidance to state agency personnel and their grantees through the GATA frameworks, such as assistance in registering in the GATA Grantee Portal. The State's AmpliFund user base also continues to grow, with more than 10,000 individuals currently in the system. These users have access to a wide range of technical support resources, including how-to videos, step-by-step instructions, and live training opportunities through AmpliFund's Zendesk support site. Through these efforts, we aim to increase capacity and foster collaboration among all stakeholders involved.
5. **Number of grantees and subrecipients to whom a fiscal agent was assigned.** During the development of the GATA Framework for a Grantee Fiscal Agent Function, the GATA workgroup discussing the requirements determined that the use of fiscal agents falls under grantee independence. A State awarding agency may require a grantee to utilize a fiscal agent in order to receive an award, however, the assignment of fiscal agents is not a State awarding agency or GATU function. Grantees and subrecipients must self-elect to utilize fiscal agents.

⁴ This estimate is based on CSFA Fiscal Year 2024 data. Assumptions are applied to pre- and post-GATA state agency staff hours for standard financial and administrative grant functions. The federal government estimates that on average 15% of grant funds disbursed are lost to improper payment. Centralized GATA systems add transparency in the administration of funds, thereby reducing the risk of improper payment. This estimate includes a 1% calculation of Fiscal Year 2024 grants subject to GATA as the value of risk mitigated or avoided because of GATA systems.

STATEWIDE GRANT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM - AMPLIFUND

The process of implementing GATA has always included automation as one tool to streamline or simplify the management of state grants. The electronic statewide grant management system (GMS), which includes AmpliFund software as a key component, fills in a large gap in the automation of regular grant management functions. When fully implemented, all state awarding agencies under the Governor will administer grants through the system.

Grantees use AmpliFund for various essential functions, including submitting grant applications, receiving executed grant agreements, submitting periodic financial and performance reports, and requesting grant payments. By standardizing these processes and data sets, we significantly reduce duplicative data entry, streamlining workflows for all users. Additionally, the system allows for the creation of grant agreements and periodic reports directly within the platform, which minimizes data entry time and enhances consistency for state awarding agencies. This improved efficiency ultimately supports better grant management and oversight.

AmpliFund is integrated into existing GATA IT infrastructure such as the Grantee Portal, the state GATA Implementation system, and the statewide ERP accounting system, together creating the Statewide Grant Management System.

GATA subcommittees and workgroups have been enhancing existing AmpliFund off-the-shelf functionality to meet Illinois' specific needs.

In Fiscal Year 2024, Illinois made significant strides toward full adoption of AmpliFund:

- 19 state awarding agencies posted opportunities within AmpliFund, totaling 208 opportunities available during the fiscal year.
- 3,301 grant applications were received, and 1,573 awards were activated via AmpliFund, totaling approximately \$642 million.
- More than 1,700 organizations applied for funding, of which 337 submitted applications to more than one state awarding agency.
- As of the latest update, the State's AmpliFund platform supports 4,000 client accounts, which include both state agency and grantee users. In addition, AmpliFund has just over 10,000 unique individual users.
- The statewide contract includes 19 product functionality enhancements. This is part of the effort to customize AmpliFund's product for Illinois grant management requirements. Subject Matter Experts at state awarding agencies are involved throughout the process in developing the requirements, refining design plans, and participating in user acceptance testing before the features are released to production. By June 2024, two deliverables had been released to production and an additional 11 had completed discovery & refinement. During FY25, the remaining 6 will begin discovery & refinement. All are scheduled for production release no later than September 2026.
- Using business requirement documents, refinements were implemented to ensure compliance with both state and federal requirements and to reduce administrative burdens through automation.
- By the end of Fiscal Year 2024, 20 state agencies were successfully utilizing AmpliFund for pre-award management.
- Six state agencies initiated post-award management within the system during the fiscal year.
- An additional nine agencies were engaged in planning exercises for their transition to AmpliFund.

See below for the agencies' use of AmpliFund in the various grant phases as of the end of Fiscal Year 2024.



CENTRALIZED AUDIT REPORT REVIEWS

Reduction in Duplication of Effort

In Fiscal Year 2016, Illinois adopted the federal uniform audit requirements, which brought consistency to audit expenditure thresholds and auditing standards for all grantees who receive an award from a state agency. Prior to GATA, each state awarding agency set the audit requirements for its grantees. Since the implementation of the ARRMS in Fiscal Year 2018, state awarding agencies have gained the ability to determine whether their grantees meet federal and GATA-specific audit requirements. The ARRMS reduces duplication of effort relating to grantees' audit reviews in multiple ways.

Centralized audit report reviews are an important component of GATA cost avoidance and/or savings, as 59% of grantees receive funds from multiple state agencies.⁵ The ARRMS stores all grantee audit

⁵ Based on Fiscal Year 2023 CSFA records.

report reviews, if an audit case is created due to a State-issued award. Each grantee can upload its audit report or complete its Consolidated Year-End Financial Report (CYEFR) one time in a consolidated system where all state awarding agencies who award to that grantee can process their audit reviews. The implementation of the ARRMS eliminated more than 4,500 duplicative reviews of audit reports in Fiscal Year 2024.

In addition, the ARRMS consolidates the review and approval of the corrective action plans (CAPs) for each grantee. Before GATA, each state awarding agency was responsible for obtaining and reviewing the CAPs for each grantee's audit findings. In the ARRMS, state awarding agencies record their approvals on the grantee's CAPs, which substantially reduces the grantee's administrative burden of obtaining each state awarding agency's approval for each CAP.

Further, each Illinois grantee is required to complete the CYEFR. The CYEFR is used by all state awarding agencies to obtain grantee expenditure details of each program where the grantee received a State-issued award. State awarding agencies use the ARRMS to record their reconciliations of the expenditures reported by the grantee to the state awarding agency's financial records for the grant.

Changes in the Audit Report Review Process

In Fiscal Year 2024, GATU released the updated ARRMS, referred to as ARRMS 2.0. The enhancements to the audit report review process were made possible by collaboration between the GATU and representatives from state awarding agencies. Enhancements to the grantees' audit review submission include:

- Simplification of the audit certification form and CYEFR;
- Removal of the requirement for the CYEFR to tie back to the audited financial statements;
- Addition of the collection of the CPA firm information and CPA instructions; and
- Ability for edits to be made to the grantees' audit review up until the final step is submitted.

Enhancements to the state awarding agencies' audit review process include:

- Additional visibility into the information the grantee submits for its audit review;
- Automation to the CYEFR reconciliation submission process; and
- Automation to the Management Decision Letter (MDL) process.

The Audit Workgroup, made up of representatives from the grantee community, state agencies, and the GATU, continue to discuss the GATA financial statement audit requirements and the impact that audit changes at both the federal and state level have on the requirements. In Fiscal Year 2025, based on audit workgroup recommendations, the GATU is expecting to release a revision to the GATA financial statement audit expenditure thresholds, as well as guidance for GATA financial statement audit submission extensions.

Audit Committee

Grantee audit reports play a crucial role in reducing the monitoring burden for state grant-making agencies. These reports are stored in the ARRMS and reviewed under contract by a licensed CPA firm, which documents any instances of noncompliance with auditing standards. During Fiscal Year 2023, GATU established an audit committee to recommend appropriate actions for audits deemed substandard or for auditors lacking the required qualifications. By the end of Fiscal Year 2023, the GATU had analyzed 9,670 prior audit cases, identifying deficiencies in 35% of them. This analytical process will continue, helping to isolate substandard audits and improve the quality of grantee audits.

Since the Audit Committee's first meeting in October 2023, it has intensified its review of substandard audits. As of the end of Fiscal Year 2024, 12,079 unique audit cases have been reviewed, with 7,688 (60%) identified as substandard, including both preliminary and completed reviews. Given the gravity

of these findings, the GATU remains fully committed to ensuring compliance with federal and state regulations to enhance audit quality.

The Audit Committee has outlined four possible actions for addressing a substandard audit: 1) issuance of a formal letter; 2) require the audit to be reissued; 3) conduct a quality review; or 4) escalating the issue to the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation. The GATU is working in collaboration with a licensed CPA firm to perform in-depth quality reviews on more serious cases. During FY24, the Audit Committee held 9 meetings and reviewed the performance of over 20 audit firms.

GATU's ongoing efforts to strengthen audit processes reflect its commitment to improving transparency and accountability within the grantee audit system. Through rigorous analysis and collaboration with CPA firms, GATU aims to ensure high standards of audit quality and compliance, ultimately benefiting grantees, state awarding agencies, and the public.

EMPOWERING THROUGH TRAINING

Throughout Fiscal Year 2024, the GATU expanded its training options for state staff and grantees to increase their knowledge of the grant life cycle and AmpliFund. This empowers grantees to move through the GATA grant processes with confidence.

GATA Learning Management System (LMS)

In Fiscal Year 2022, GOMB entered into an agreement with the University of Illinois – Springfield's Continuing and Professional Education (UIS-CAPE) program to develop a comprehensive training on GATA and Uniform Guidance for all grant stakeholders. This training program, the Learning Management System (LMS), brings together existing GATA content and concepts into a self-paced comprehensive training curriculum. The training program consists of five courses, completed during Fiscal Year 2024:

- GATA Foundations - this course is a high-level overview of general application submission guidelines and GATA requirements;
- GATA Pre-Award - this course is aimed to ease the application process for organizations seeking grant funding;
- GATA Post-Award - this course explains the components associated with being awarded a grant;
- GATA Audit - this course highlights the GATA centralized audit report review process; and
- GATA Indirect Cost - this course includes relevant policies and procedures associated with indirect cost election and application.

Each course offers guidance and support for navigating State grant requirements, breaking down the grantmaking and grant management lifecycle to help applicants and grantee organizations understand the State's expectations and the GATA frameworks used in Illinois for administering public funds. The aim of this online training is to empower participants, enhancing their success as they manage state grant requirements.

AmpliFund Training

Agencies' progress in utilizing AmpliFund functionality and the ERP integration has fueled the need for more extensive training. Several training options are available to stakeholders.

- Monthly one-hour *Ask Me Anything AmpliFund* sessions are held as an open forum to ask AmpliFund's customer success team questions about system functionality.

- AmpliFund offers a monthly core training series, which includes live sessions focused on how to utilize AmpliFund. The training series is designed for new AmpliFund users, as well as users who may need a refresher one or more specific grant management topics.
- AmpliFund’s support site, *Zendesk*, includes a vast library of more than 900 support materials and is accessible to state staff and grantees. It covers a wide range of system-related topics, including new system release information, how-to videos and instructions, user guides, and standard templates. Zendesk also provides direct technical assistance via email, and during Fiscal Year 2024 AmpliFund introduced Chat Support and a toll-free hotline. The chat support includes chatbot functionality to quickly provide resources available within the Zendesk to aid in resolving the ask. If additional technical support is needed, there is an option for connecting, via the chat, with a member of the customer support team.

STAKEHOLDER RESOURCES

GATA frameworks support compliant grant management. To that end, the GATU offers an array of resources to state awarding agencies and grantees, as well as other stakeholders.

Bi-weekly meetings for state agency personnel provide room for discussion and interactive learning:

- *Chief Accountability Officer Meetings* for all general GATA discussions and GATU announcements;
- *ARRMS Meetings* to discuss the audit report review process;
- *Indirect Cost Subject Matter Expert Meetings* to discuss indirect cost rate election processes; and
- *Center of Excellence (CoE)* user group meetings to focus on the use of AmpliFund. State awarding agency staff share best practices and create a forum to highlight lessons learned, discuss the ‘dos and don’ts’ of change management, and AmpliFund implementation. CoE meetings are recorded for later reference.

In addition to the resources mentioned above, the GATU has actively responded to requests for targeted training sessions. This year, training was provided to state awarding agencies and nonprofit advisory groups in the following key areas:

- GATA prequalification
- Audit/ARRMS
- Indirect Costs

These training efforts continue to support stakeholder’s in maximizing their understanding and utilization of GATA systems and navigating state grant requirements.

Launched in Fiscal Year 2022, the *Illinois NOFO Notifications* email service sends weekly updates to inform subscribers of newly posted notices of funding opportunities (NOFOs) in the Catalog of State Financial Assistance. In Fiscal Year 2024, the service saw a growth of 1,400 new subscribers, bringing the total to approximately 2,700 subscribers.

STATE AGENCIES HIGHLIGHTS

State awarding agencies administer their grants using GATA frameworks. Grant administration, initiatives, and GATA compliance are led by agency Chief Accountability Officers (CAOs)⁶ and agency subject matter experts (SMEs) at the respective state agencies. This section of the report highlights some of the benefits agencies saw due to the implementation of the GATA frameworks throughout Fiscal Year 2024.

The *Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority* (ICJIA) is a state awarding agency dedicated to improving the administration of criminal justice. ICJIA works to ensure the criminal justice system in Illinois is efficient and effective.

ICJIA implemented AmpliFund for several of their NOFOs. During FY24, 12 NOFOs were posted in AmpliFund. Further, 713 applications were received and reviewed within AmpliFund. The use of AmpliFund for the posting and review of the funding opportunities expedited the merit review process.

The *Illinois State Police* (ISP) – Division of Statewide 911 administers two programs, 911 Consolidation and Next Generation 911 Expenses. ISP worked with the AmpliFund implementation team to standardize the application, grant agreement, and amendment workflows for each ISP Division managing grants. This work improved consistency across the agency’s programs and allowed each Division to tailor the workflow to each group’s specific needs.

The *Illinois Department of Transportation* (IDOT) – Bureau of Safety Programs and Engineering (BSPE) works with local and state agencies on implementing highway safety programs throughout the State. BSPE received 334 grant applications via AmpliFund in FY24. BSPE utilizes the pre-award phase of AmpliFund which helps ensure grantees are in full compliance. BSPE also posted 12 NOFOs in AmpliFund during FY24. BSPE grantees use AmpliFund to submit their Periodic Performance Reports (PPRs), which are then reviewed by BSPE Safety Grant Administrators.

⁶ By statute, each state awarding agency appoints a CAO responsible for that state agency’s implementation of and compliance with GATA rules. Bi-weekly CAO meetings provide information sharing on best practices, highlight federal and state updates, and provide a forum to discuss the challenges of grant administration. A complete list of current CAOs can be found in Appendix I to this report.

2024 GATA Annual Report Conclusion

On average, Illinois spends approximately \$26.6 billion in federal financial assistance each fiscal year. The State distributes approximately \$15.8 billion in state-issued grant agreements annually and heavily relies on grants for service and program delivery. These grants are essential for community-based organizations, not-for-profits, and other entities that deliver vital services to residents across the State, particularly to the most vulnerable populations. Illinois uses grant funds to provide training and skill development to those entering or adapting to the workforce.

The GATA statutory language mandates transparency and accountability in the use of grant funds. The goal is to ensure that public funds are spent efficiently and effectively, with measurable benefits for the public. This commitment to accountability reflects a deep desire to achieve positive outcomes for the people of Illinois and drives GATA Implementation. Illinois is successful when its grantees are successful!

The GATU is driven to continuous improvement by working closely with a broad network of partners – the grantee community, their advocates, state awarding agencies, legislators, and the Governor’s Office – to ensure that the state’s grant systems and processes serve the needs of all its residents and promote the responsible use of public funds.

Appendices

Chief Accountability Officers

GATA-related Internet Links

APPENDIX I: CHIEF ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICERS

Sandra Velaquez	Illinois Arts Council	Patrick Davis	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Matt Murphy	Illinois Board of Higher Education	Vena Nelson	Illinois Department of Public Health
Natalie Lambert	Illinois Capital Development Board	Cory Staley	Illinois Department of Revenue
Jennifer Franklin	Illinois Community College Board	Melanie Turner	Illinois Department of Transportation
Janinna Hendricks	Illinois Council on Development Disabilities	Steph Heckenkamp	Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs
Kristina Dion (Acting)	Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority	Theresa McKeon	Illinois Department on Aging
Judy Vollmar	Illinois Department of Agriculture	MyongAe Kim	Illinois Emergency Management Agency-Office of Homeland Security
Leslie Rice	Illinois Department of Children and Family Services	Max Paller	Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
Megan Buskirk	Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity	Ximenda Granda	Illinois Finance Authority
Debra Miller	Illinois Department of Corrections	Vitto Okoye	Illinois Racing Board
Linette R. Hughes	Illinois Department of Employment Security	Annie Brooks (Acting) Matt Seaton (Acting)	Illinois State Board of Education
Nathaniel Brower	Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation	Elena Goutsalenko	Illinois State Board of Elections
Michelle Bennett	Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services	Matthew Buchanan	Illinois State Police
Alan Brazil	Illinois Department of Human Rights	Susan Fields-Giberson	Illinois Student Assistance Commission
Gary Kramer	Illinois Department of Human Services	Steven Pingolt	Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board
Lindsay England	Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice	Jason Borman	Metropolitan Pier Exposition Authority
Molly Kershaw	Illinois Department of Labor	Ronny Wickenhauser	Office of the State Fire Marshal
Micheal Runkles	Illinois Department of Military Affairs		

APPENDIX II: GATA RELATED INTERNET LINKS

State Links

Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA) Statute – 30 ILCS 708
www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs3.asp?ActID=3559&ChapterID=7

GATA Website
<https://gata.illinois.gov/>

GATA Administrative Rules
ilga.gov/commission/JCAR/admincode/044/04407000sections.html

Catalog of State Financial Assistance (CSFA)
<https://gata.illinois.gov/grants/csfa.html>

GATA Grantee Portal
<https://grants.illinois.gov/portal/>

Illinois Secretary of State – Business Services
https://www.ilsos.gov/departments/business_services/home.html

Federal

Federal Uniform Guidance, 2 CFR 200 – Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards,
<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200?toc=1>

SAM.gov Registration and Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)
[SAM.gov | Entity Registrations](https://sam.gov/EntityRegistrations)

Federal Service Desk (FSD) – Learn How to Register Your Entity
https://www.fsd.gov/gsafsd_sp

COVID links – US Treasury
[The CARES Act Provides Assistance for State, Local, and Tribal Governments | U.S. Department of the Treasury](https://www.treasury.gov/press-releases/Pages/2020/04/20200413)

Federal Funds Information for States
www.ffis.org

National Grant Management Association
www.NGMA.org