

American Association of Grant Professionals Annual Conference- A Look at Grants.gov

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On November 8-10, the American Association of Grant Professionals (AAGP) held its annual Conference in Washington, DC. Hundreds of grant professionals were on hand to learn, discuss, and evaluate the different techniques and best practices for grant programs and grant writing. Federal, State, and Local government officials, along with industry leaders, took part in a variety of workshops over the three day period. The workshops ranged from project development and program evaluation to preparing successful online grant applications and becoming an expert peer reviewer.

GovWin was able to attend a variety of workshops, but felt that the workshops discussing Grants.gov provided the most insight into the grant process. Grants.gov is an online website maintained by the federal government that allows government agencies, academia, not-for-profits, and other organizations to find and apply for over 1,000 grant programs totaling \$400 billion in funds. The grants.gov workshop was a question and answer forum that allowed users to discuss their problems with the system. Many people discussed the difficulty in searching for certain grant programs. One of the main concerns dealt with the lack of specific search results. Many users found that when searching using keywords, the grants.gov search engine would pull up grant programs that were not related to the keyword used. This causes many users the pain of shuffling through hundreds of search results to find the grant program they are looking for. Michael Pellegrino, Management Analyst Officer for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and speaker, confirmed that this problem had been plaguing many users, but would be corrected in the next few months through the implementation of new updates to the system.

While the workshops encompassed the majority of this conference, the one thing on everyone's mind was the administering of the first ever AAGP credentialing exam. In 2000, at the Second Annual AAGP Conference in Berkeley California, the AAGP membership voted, through formal resolution, to explore the feasibility of offering some form of professional certification. After a long seven year journey, AAGP and the Grant Professional Certification Institute (GPSI) offered the first ever credentialing exam at this year's conference. The exam allows grant professionals to be accredited and recognized for their work.

GovWin's Take:

Whether you are a government official or industry leader, grants.gov is a valuable source of information on new and upcoming programs available for funding. It can be a very beneficial tool for industry leaders in identifying new business opportunities within their market. It can also be a great starting point in identifying and building relationships with state and local agencies by helping them throughout the grant process. It should also be noted that a certification through AAGP and GPCI can be a valuable tool in helping your company stand out amongst other competitors. Blogs: