

Alliance Guide to Fundraising

Part Four: Government Consulting and Contracts



Alliance for Biking & Walking

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Alliance Guide to Fundraising Series

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About this Series

Since 1996, the Alliance for Biking & Walking has worked to create, strengthen and unite bicycle and pedestrian advocacy organizations across North America. As agents of change on the ground, state and local advocates are transforming their communities into great places to walk and bike.

Securing and maintaining sustainable and diverse funding streams is a key component of a successful advocacy organization — and fundraising is a top interest among Alliance members. In order to share knowledge, best practices and real-world examples, the Alliance is creating this six-part Guide to Fundraising.

This guide serves as Part Four of the evolving series. As these guides are meant to be living documents, we invite your input and examples to strengthen and enhance these resources for all Alliance member organizations.

Please contact Brigid O’Keane, Advocacy and Programs Director, with any insight or contributions for this or future guides in the fundraising series: Brigid@PeoplePoweredMovement.org.

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- Beth Bowsky, Government / Nonprofit Contracting Policy Specialist, National Council of Nonprofits
- Leah Shahum, Executive Director, San Francisco Bicycle Coalition

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- Active Transportation Alliance
- Bike Walk Mississippi
- California Bicycle Coalition
- San Francisco Bicycle Coalition
- Washington Area Bicyclist Association

Also included in this guide are notes from an interview between Susie Stephens and Randy Neufeld. A transcript from this interview is available [online in the Alliance Resource Library](#).

Cover photo credits (from left): Natalie Baker - Lending a helping hand; Derek Slagle - International Walk to School Day; Cheryl Burnette - First day on the job; Jackie Douglas - Reclaiming streets for people



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Introduction

Partnerships with governments can be a real strength for nonprofit stability and programming. Alliance organizations can take advantage of grants and contracts from state and local governments in order to boost organizational capacity and seize opportunities to institutionalize biking and walking.

When a government agency successfully contracts with a biking and walking advocacy organization, both parties can win. For the organization, working with a public agency on contract work can boost budgets, further the core mission, increase the organization's credibility and improve a group's chances of winning or subcontracting grants down the line. As the public sector cuts back on providing direct services, local governments benefit when nonprofits step up to perform important work faster and more efficiently. Plus, governments benefit when state and local advocacy organizations can apply their specialized expertise in active transportation to public needs.

Of course, contracting with public agencies is not unique to bicycle and pedestrian organizations. Nonprofits and advocacy groups working in health, environmental and human services sectors frequently perform contract work for government agencies.

This guide discusses the common types of state and local grants; how to best identify grant opportunities; best practices, challenges and tips on securing government contracts; and tips from the field on how developing agency-organizational relationships can enhance your work and institutionalize your advocacy.

As with all fundraising, look for contracting and consulting opportunities that align with your existing priorities. While it can be tempting to stretch your abilities to best position your organization for contracts or grants, is important for your organization's growth and long-term health to focus on opportunities that are the right fit with your mission.

It should be noted that this guide deals primarily with grants and contracting with state and local governments and agencies. For information on taking advantage of federal grants for better biking and walking, see [Advocacy Advance's](#) broad set of resources.



Types of Grants

Applying for and receiving grants from local and state governments for work within your organization's mission is a great way to increase and diversify your budget. While local and state governments offer and provide grants to local nonprofits through contracts, finding and receiving government grants can be a daunting process, especially at first.

First, it's important to approach local and state government grant-giving with the right mentality. Too often, nonprofits consider a city government as a funding source or as an advocacy target, while governments think of nonprofits merely as service providers under contract. However, the best relationships between local governments take advantage of the rich characteristics that both parties bring to the table in the interest of accomplishing shared goals. Remember to always approach your local government as a programmatic partner with common objectives.

There are two main types of government grants: formula funds and competitive grants.

Types of grants

1. Formula funds

Formula funds flow to local governments via federal or state governments. Community Development Block Grants, TIGER funds, **Section 402** grants and **Transportation Alternatives Program** funds are all examples of formula funds.

Many federal grants are only available to local government offices or agencies, but local governments often re-grant funds to companies or local nonprofit organizations to do the work. Under these subcontracting arrangements, the local government generally takes responsibility for the administrative and audit requirements while the local nonprofit carries out the on-the-ground work.

Formula funds are distributed on an annual basis on a regular schedule. For nonprofits relying on grants from formula funds, tracking annual notifications for these contracts is very important. Keep your calendar up-to-date with details on timelines for submittal and notification.



2. Competitive grants

Competitive grants are generally awarded to nonprofits in two ways:

- **Through RFPs.** City agencies also fund nonprofit organizations by issuing a request for proposals (RFP) and then holding a competitive application process. Some of these opportunities present themselves on a regular basis.
- **Through relationships.** A well-positioned organization with an existing relationship with a government or agency may partner with an agency in order to be considered for a grant. There may be an opportunity for a nonprofit to partner with an agency to write a grant application.

Look for competitive bid opportunities that align with your existing priorities. It can be tempting to stretch your abilities in order to get government grants, but it is important to find opportunities that are the right fit with the mission and current work your organization.

Federal grant opportunities are housed on www.Grants.gov. The [Foundation Center](#) site is also a good resource — their [webinar](#) on finding and applying for grants using Grants.gov gives a great primer.

Some states and cities have centralized systems for finding grant opportunities. For instance, the city of Denver maintains a [central support site](#) to bring agencies and departments through the grant process from beginning to end. If your community does not have a centralized forum, consider:

- Checking the public web site for each agency.
- Reading the city's annual budget book to find agency priorities, special revenue funds, and how sales tax revenues are spent.
- Networking with other nonprofits that are in touch or already have contracts with local governments.

Some government grants will only fund government agencies. If you find an opportunity for which only government groups are eligible to apply but would fit your organization's work, use it as a chance to approach a city government contact to ask about partnering with your group to apply.

There are many ways to be paid under a contract or grant: reimbursable, lump sum, and line-item.

Finding and Obtaining Grant Opportunities

“We helped the city transportation department apply for a state grant to do a city bike plan. We wrote the application for the city, and after the city won the contract, the city subcontracted with SFBC for \$200,000 per year to do outreach about the city's bike plan.”

*- Leah Shahum,
San Francisco Bicycle
Coalition*



Example Grant Process: Bike Walk Mississippi

In 2011, advocates from Bike Walk Mississippi decided to apply for federal Safe Routes to School funds for educational active transportation programs. Here is their story, as recalled by Executive Director Melody Moody.

Documents from this process — including Bike Walk Mississippi’s proposal — can be found [online in the Alliance resource library](#).

When applying for the Safe Routes to School non infrastructure grant, one of the difficulties was finding statewide that was not being done already and that could be used as a replicable program to continue past the SRTS funding cycle.

During that same time, the SRTS National Partnership put out its study on “engaging underserved communities through Safe Routes to Schools”. Since Mississippi is one of the poorest states in the nation and experiences both rural and urban poverty, this seemed like an excellent way to engage the program.

Our first step was to talk with our Safe Routes to School Coordinator to discuss current needs and their vision for the program. They quickly put us in touch with another nonprofit in a low-income community of Jackson who was also planning to submit an application.

We brainstormed and collectively created two separate applications. Our proposal focused on programs and non-infrastructure planning. Our effort was to partner with the organization’s after-school program to create a curriculum for 5th graders to teach bicycle safety, education and maintenance.

In addition, we applied for start-up funds to create the state’s first Community Bike Shop to serve as a physical location in this low income community to teach bike repair and maintenance to people of all ages.

The third component of our contract included facilitating community needs assessments and asset mapping activities. We were to work with our partner organization through their connections to community members. In conjunction with their community master plan conducted a few years earlier, BWM sought to collaborate with parents and community members to specifically find and implement ways to make the community more bike-able and walkable. Meanwhile, our partnering nonprofit would receive funds to hire an outside architecture firm to do assessments for “infrastructure” needs, funds for bike racks and helmets, and the opportunity to bring Mark Fenton — a national expert on walkability — to conduct a walkability audit within the community.

Our Safe Routes to School Coordinator felt that together, our SRTS funding would result in a replicable program that could be taken to and implemented in low-income communities throughout the state.



Challenges:

- **A lengthy process.** The submission process was long; the approval process was even longer. The time span between applying for funding and receiving the first disbursement was more than a year.
- **Reimbursement.** Once we began the project, we were able to be reimbursed for our expenditures, so we began purchasing needed items such as bike tools for the shop.
- **Confusion around disbursement.** There was some confusion about what forms needed to be submitted and the information needed on each form. For example, part of our funding was to pay for time spent on consulting and teaching, but we had not been recording these times as specifically as they were needed. We also did not realize that each paycheck to our staff would need to be submitted as proof of expenditures.
- **Small issues add up for small organizations.** We realize that these are all seemingly small issues, but for a very small organization to wait several weeks after request for disbursement can be very difficult.

Advice/Tips:

Although every state is different, the advice I would give is simple:

- **Don't count on contract support** as the bread and butter of your organization. Contracts should be a boost, not a backbone. The stress caused from trying to sustain your organization based on the funds of one contract is too much.
- **Plan ahead**, and never assume that reimbursement will be quick. Having a good relationship with agency staff does NOT translate to a faster turnaround for funds.
- **Be very clear and ask a lot of questions** from the beginning about the specifics of the disbursed funds. You may need to be keeping up with a lot more information than you realize. Ask, ask, ask — better safe than sorry.
- **Record everything.** We have found that disbursement comes easier if we can document everything we have done. In addition to pictures of each class, we scan and submit every worksheet completed by the kids or assessment groups and copies of the progress of the shop. We now also record a detailed time sheet of every hour we spend on the project and what we did.
- **Several additional documents** are submitted along with 5 copies each of any check spent, 3 other MDOT standard project documents and 5 notarized copies of our request for disbursement.

Again, all of these are small things, but for a one-person organization, it can get overwhelming quick. If your organization is small, you will always need to find a balance between the work itself, your capacity and the end result.

In our case, it's worth it — our goal after the pilot program is to replicate the process in low income communities across Mississippi. So, in our case, we hope that the learning curve will improve as we implement these ideas and successes throughout the state.



Consider organizational partnerships. Statewide organizations can build collaborative partnerships with organizations with similar agendas in local communities in order to take advantage of contract opportunities at the local or city level.

*- Dace West,
Denver Office of Strategic Partnerships*

Facts and Tips

Before applying for government funding, consider the following facts and suggestions from [GrantSpace](#).

1. **Grants usually go to organizations and agencies.** The majority of government grants are awarded to state agencies or eligible nonprofit organizations. Grants are almost never awarded to individuals.
2. **Do your research.** Research funding opportunities thoroughly. Be sure to record details on the program itself, application guidelines, the timeline for submittal and notification, agency contacts, the review process, past grants awarded and any other relevant information.
3. **Get in touch.** Because government funding programs and priorities change frequently, it is a good idea to call or email the appropriate agency contact person to obtain the most up-to-date information on funding guidelines and application information. If possible, meet with the relevant agency staff to get a better understanding of the agency's needs.
4. **Be detail-oriented.** Government grant applications often have strict content and formatting guidelines. Be sure to follow all instructions closely, especially deadlines for submission.
5. **Consider the ultimate impact.** Federal funders generally prefer projects that serve as prototypes or models for others to replicate, while state and local government funders typically look for strong evidence of community support for a project.
6. **Track, record and report.** Government grants nearly always have stiff reporting requirements. Careful record keeping is a must, since an audit is always a possibility.

Advice from the Washington Area Bicyclist Association:

Grant-supported work often requires grantees to work with Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE's) or Certified Business Enterprises (CBE's) for certain services. When working under an education grant from the District Department of Transportation, WABA needed to use a DC-based paper printing business rather than a national chain.



The strongest nonprofit-government contracting partnerships take advantage of the variety of assets each partner can offer. Local governments can bring a variety of assets to nonprofit partners, including staff time, data and analysis capabilities, office space, opportunities to develop insider community champions, assistance with working through some difficult regulations, and funding. In turn, nonprofits can help local governments by sharing expertise and performing specialized work for less money and in less time than a government agency may spend to perform the work internally.

Services

When you enter into a contract for services relationship with a local government agency, you should make sure that the work is central to your overall mission and in line with your priorities. If not, contracts can be more time-consuming and distracting than they are worth.

If you're not sure if an available contract is right for your organization, consider whether your group would look for funding elsewhere to support this work if the contract were not available. If not, the pursuing the contract may not be worth your time.

Before seeking a contract, consider your organizational capabilities. In order to work best with local government contracts, you should have strong **service**, **financial**, and **evaluation capacity**.

- **Service capacity** is the ability to do the work in a way that matches your mission. Don't forget to weigh the additional administrative work — budgeting, office management, volunteer management — that work under the contract will require.
- **Financial capacity** refers to your organization's ability to financially support the effort without being repaid for some time — an important consideration because often governments reimburse rather than pay up front, and there may be a delay between the time that the work is done and the time the cash flow comes through.
- Internal **evaluation capacity** is the ability to measure your work by tracking outputs and outcomes.

Contracting and Consulting with Local Governments

The San Francisco Bicycle Coalition's adult education bike program allows the organization to teach people the rules of the road — a central part of the organization's mission to get more people on bicycles. The contract with the city helps SFBC associate with a mainstream, popular bike education program. The program is a true partnership: SFBC teamed up with the city to move the organization's goals, and the city is getting work done far more effectively and cheaply than if they were to do it in-house. Nonprofits often work far more cheaply and flexibly than the average city agency.

*- Leah Shahum,
San Francisco Bicycle
Coalition*



Success story: Active Transportation Alliance

The very first contract we secured was in 1993. The regional planning agency was considering a network of arterials for which major capacity improvements had been proposed. They wanted to figure out the impact of those improvements on bicycling. They asked us to do the work. We developed a kind of a primitive bicycle level of service evaluation tool and had volunteers go out and assess the road conditions. We prepared a report for the agency on the impact on bicycling and current conditions for bicycling. We used an intern from the local Urban Studies program to staff that project. It was a flat fee for services: You do this; we'll give you \$5000.

*- Randy Neufeld,
Founding Executive Director,
Active Transportation Alliance
(formerly Chicagoland Bicycle
Federation)*

Today, we have 6 Active Transportation Alliance consultants working at the Chicago Department of Transportation, and we also support part of another sub-consultant. Our staff are primarily responsible for the 'public-facing' components of the City's ped/bike program — specifically education, encouragement and outreach through the Ambassadors program, and enforcement outreach events in combination with the Chicago Police Dept. One of our consultants is a pedestrian planner, too.

*-Melody Geraci,
Deputy Executive Director,
Active Transportation Alliance*

Advice from the Washington Area Bicyclist Association:

Contracts often last one year from the award date and include a number of option years. Rather than going through the entire RFP process again, an agency can extend the contract for two or three more years. There are generally escalation costs each year, so each subsequent year costs 3 – 5% more than the previous year. This helps with funding certainty — we know how much to expect for a given program over the coming years.



Types of Services for Contracting

Alliance member organizations have entered many types of contracts with city and state governments for consulting and on-the-ground, including:

- Youth bike safety education (e.g. [Bike Texas](#), [Hawaii Bicycling League](#), [Bicycle Coalition of Maine](#))
- Bicycle skills education (e.g. [San Francisco Bicycle Coalition](#), [Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition](#))
- Grassroots advocacy training (e.g. [Bicycle Coalition of Maine's Community Spokes initiative](#), [TrailNet](#))
- Safe routes to school (e.g. [Bicycle Transportation Alliance](#), [Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin](#))
- Community engagement including Bike to Work Day and bike map distribution (e.g. [Washington Area Bicyclist Association](#), [Bicycle Alliance of Washington](#))
- Promoting biking in the workplace (e.g. [Bike Pittsburgh](#), [Consider Biking](#))
- Planning services for infrastructure projects (e.g. [League of Illinois Bicyclists](#), [Active Transportation Alliance](#), [PedNet](#))
- Installing bike parking (e.g. [Washington Area Bicyclist Association](#))
- Valet bike parking (e.g. [Washington Area Bicyclist Association](#), [Atlanta Bicycle Coalition](#))
- Open Streets events (e.g. [Minneapolis Bicycle Coalition](#), [Bike Utah](#))
- Walking audits (e.g. [Living Streets Alliance](#))
- Bike Share (e.g. [Bike Walk KC](#))

Steps for getting contract work, from Susie Stephens and Randy Neufeld:

1. Put in the effort to create an environment where contracts will be available. Build relationships with people at the government agencies that are likely to issue contracts related to active transportation.
2. Consider the context you are operating in. Ask yourself if there is advocacy work you are doing that can produce contracts.
3. Apply for available contracts that fit your mission.
4. Set up and monitor the nuts and bolts, e.g. ensuring deliverables, monitoring cash flow and supervising staff.

Grant work is really intended to get something started; contracting is to finance a service. Grants can generally only go to nonprofits or community groups, while contracts are open to everybody. Remember that your nonprofit could be outbid by a business that can deliver similar services and meets all the necessary requirements. Most of a transportation department's work — from building roads and bridges to running education programs — gets done under contracts. It's a very well-established process.

*- Greg Billing,
Washington Area Bicyclist Association*



Another way to get started is to subcontract in the areas where you have expertise. Consider approaching a planning or engineering firm or someone who commonly works on government contracts. Some government agencies also are contract- and grant-dependent, like councils of government (COG) or Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). Working as subcontractors for the main contract firm can allow you to gain expertise in new areas and learn more about the process.

Build success into your contracting relationship. The State of Illinois and the Donor's Forum recently gathered foundations and nonprofit contract service providers to discuss how government agencies and nonprofits can better ensure smooth operations during a contracting process.

Consider the following recommendations from their [report](#).

Recommendations for service providers:

- Services should be dynamic and data-driven. A blueprint should be developed to describe what services are needed, when, and in what amounts.
- Providers need to be transparent. Planning should include local and regional input and contracting process should be public.

Recommendations for both service providers and government agencies:

- Employ reports and monitoring that promote efficiency. Reporting requirements should be scaled to the amount of funding provided.
- Use communications that promote shared progress throughout the community. Information about services and their impact on communities should be public.

Advice from the Washington Area Bicyclist Association:

When your organization will need to seek reimbursement for expenses, you will likely need to pay for time and resources up front. Make sure not to spend money on things that will not be eligible for reimbursement. Make sure that every single expense — down to bike tires and gas for the van — can be reimbursed.

Work very closely with your grantor, and ask your contact to take the additional steps necessary to ensure that something can be paid for. Most biking and walking groups work with the bike or pedestrian staff at an agency, and those people are likely not the staff who oversee the agency's contracting and grant requirements. You don't want to be promised reimbursement by your contact, only to have the reimbursement vetoed when it gets farther up the chain.



Contract language and terms

Be sure to read the request for proposals (RFP) and all contracts very carefully. There is not a lot of room for negotiation in standard contract language. These documents can have specific requirements about insurance, wages and bidding for subcontractors. Contract language is frequently attached to RFPs, so discuss expectations with your government contacts up front.

All government contracts will include details on the terms of the transaction and legal details. They should also include:

- Scope of work
- Maximum amount to be spent
- Method of compensation
- Term and options to extend
- Indemnification
- Insurance
- Provisions required by law (e.g. nondiscrimination)
- Special conditions and other provisions
- Signature page
- Exhibits and attachments

For more technical information on contract contents and procedures, see [Denver's Contract Basics handbook](#).

How much to charge?

It can be difficult when starting out to know how much to charge for your contracting services. It can also be hard as a thrifty nonprofit organization to realistically assess the value of the work you do. If you base what you are billing on the amount you are getting paid, you are probably undervaluing your time and not including other costs like office supplies, copy machines and messenger services.

Initially, you should determine a base rate that is competitive with the market value – slightly lower than the professional going rate. As you win more local contracts, you may need to audit your costs to set an overhead rate. A careful audit is required if your organization wins a contract for federal money and may be required for contracting with your state government, as well.

Most governmental agencies have standards or requirements to justify rates based on pay, administrative overhead and other factors. Always factor in extra staff time for navigating bureaucracy, filling out extra paperwork and performing evaluation. It is also common to be able to add a “contingency” line in the budget for as much as 10 or 15%.

Sample contracts

1. [Independent contractor boilerplate](#)
2. [SRTS Bike Education](#)
3. [Route finder \(Wisconsin\)](#)

To help you understand how much to charge for a service, call up another non-profit that is doing contract work and ask about their audit procedures. The San Francisco Bicycle Coalition has an annual budget of \$1.6 million, and about 15% — or \$250,000 annually — is contracts. That portion is growing.



Challenges and How to Overcome Them

Potential Challenges

The government-nonprofit contracting system has evolved over time to have some redundancies and requirements that can be difficult and sometimes conflicting. Be ready to encounter some challenges.

Government operations function quite differently from nonprofit operations. Generally, government offices work according to a hierarchy – elected officials are at the top, appointed officials work at their pleasure, and there are many layers of management. Decision-makers may not be the same people who are engaged in program execution, which can create difficulties with communications.

An [Urban Institute study](#) identified these most common problems that nonprofits encounter with government contracts:

- Complex and redundant application processes;
- Changes to contract terms midstream;
- Paying late; and
- Failure of government to pay the full contract amount.

Additionally, many agencies have confusing points of entry. For instance, the city of Denver has 13 different funding streams spread throughout 7 agencies, and contracting practices vary from agency to agency and from department to department. If you're a nonprofit contracting with multiple agencies and departments, each contract process may be different and could cause substantial redundancies.

Don't underestimate the administrative work that government contracts can create. Putting in place the correct systems for government contracts can be far more work than getting funding from most foundations or sponsors. Managing contracts is a mini-job in and of itself. It's important that your organization have staff in place to do high-quality, timely work.

Advice from the Washington Area Bicyclist Association:

Be sure to very clearly understand requirements for working under contracts. Your organization may be required to meet certain baselines, such as having insurance, having a place of business, and showing that instructors are certified and insured. It's also important to follow all staffing requirements — for example, certain contract work supported by federal funds may require you to follow specific federal labor laws.



Overcoming Common Challenges

To overcome these challenges, remember that working with government is a process, not an event. Every contracting process with a local government is an opportunity to improve your relationship. Keep an eye out for potential changes that would be mutually beneficial and non-aggressive, and work with your government contacts to set up structures that will play to the strengths of both your nonprofit and of the government agency.

Remember to keep your organization's funding as diverse and self-reliant as possible. Diverse funding helps with organizational stability and flexibility. Don't rely too much on grants, which may be one-time processes. While grants tend to pay up front, contract work is reimbursed after the work is done, so make sure you can make payments upfront, and include administrative costs.

Be sure to budget in overhead for bookkeeping, administrative work, and program execution, including managing volunteers. Make sure that you've got room elsewhere in your budget to be more flexible when you need to be. Since governments may have trouble paying in a timely fashion, plan your cash flow very carefully. Make sure you have enough money in the bank and be clear about when you are going to get paid.

Some agencies offer a Depends Upon Requirements (DUR) Contract, an umbrella contract that covers a stated amount of money over a certain amount of time, so all legal technicalities are taken care of regardless of what specific work the organization does for the agency over that period of time. Using a DUR agreement can help cut down on the amount of time it takes the city or state to execute contracts. When another project comes up, the agency can write a work order that is covered under the DUR agreement, instead of writing up a separate contract. This can make working with the agency much more efficient. DUR arrangements are not available everywhere, and it is important to know the context you're working in.

Show and earn respect. Contracting relationships can become strained, especially when local governments see nonprofits as complaining and needing more money and nonprofits see governments as bulky and overly regulatory. Neither is really true. Sit down with your contract partners to talk through any issues.

The number-one rule about contracts, like fundraising and movement building, is that is all about relationships.

Five Tips from the Grassroots Fundraising Journal

1. Research your local government
2. Make yourself known to your local government
3. Relate to agency staff with respect
4. Understand how decisions are made
5. Take advantage of resources other than money



It's very possible for biking and walking advocacy organizations to receive government contracts to do work that is quite explicitly advocacy. California Bicycle Coalition received a contract from the California Department of Health to help foster and develop capacity among local and regional bicycle advocacy groups.

Contracts and Advocacy

There is a delicate balance between being an advocate and being in a contracting position. Most of the time, your organization may work closely and cooperatively with the city transportation department; as advocates, though, sometimes you must aggressively lobby or push them. Be very aware of this issue and discuss it from the beginning. The best contracts are the ones where you are paid to advocate (see sidebar). Your advocacy could even result in legislation specifying the need for new biking and walking accommodations or programs — for which you can provide the services.

It's important to remain financially independent from an agency.

If your organization is interested in augmenting contract work, the most sensible way to do so is by expanding services as a part of the advocacy your group is already doing. If you are working on a project or campaign and encounter a piece of work that you want the local government to do but that is not within the local government's current resources, ask yourself how your organization can help get it done. Maybe your government partners could find a little bit of funding to support the work through a contract. Developing new contracts often entails finding new angles within current campaigns, rather than exploring new territory.

Maintain a clear line between being an advocate and being a service provider under contract. Wear the right hat at the right time. Even if an advocacy organization works with an agency to frame a contract, the advocacy group must step back and allow the process to go through formally. Once the request for bids comes out officially, you will disqualify yourself for a contract if you step outside the formal process.

WABA keeps the lines clear by delineating which staff are working under contracts and which are not. When we meet with our contracting agency about a contract, the staff who work on the contracts attend, and our advocacy staff stay away.

*- Greg Billing,
Washington Area Bicyclist Association*



Receiving grants and contracts from government agencies represent important opportunities to increase the visibility, capacity, credibility and trust of your organization and your local advocacy. When you partner with local governments to promote active transportation, your organization's role as implementer is institutionalized into local transportation and health systems.

With this increased responsibility and opportunity as a change-agent, the most important thing is to keep your mission in focus. Ask yourself: is this idea taking off towards where we want to go as an organization? Your contract work can enhance your ability to accomplish your mission, but you need to ask that question about every project you take on.

In an interview with Randy Neufeld, Susie Stephens — a co-founder of the Thunderhead Alliance and founding Executive Director of the Bicycle Alliance of Washington — said, “the increase in organization-agency contracting agreements indicates the evolution of bicycle advocacy and what we are trying to accomplish and how we operate in the world. That is, that we are institutionalizing bicycling (and walking); something we had been fighting for ten years ago. And now we have opportunities to work on the inside. Bicycling has become institutionalized. Taking advantage of that institutionalization is fertile soil that we across the nation are just beginning to dive into for creating better bicycling communities and getting more people bicycling.”

Conclusion

There are lots of opportunities to work with local governments to help develop and carry out new and important programs/ services. Being a non-profit, we can bring a lot more allies, resources, and in-kind support to the table, making us a way for governments to get much more bang for the buck. Plus (in Tucson, at least) citizens seem more open to hearing the message when we say it, rather than government.

*- Emily Yetman,
Living Streets Alliance*



References and resources

- **City and County of Denver: Contract Basics: A Handbook on Content and Procedures**
- **State of Illinois in conjunction with the Donor's Forum: Fair & Accountable: Partnership Principles for a Sustainable Human Services System**
- **GrantSpace: Find and Apply for Government Grants Using Grants.gov Webinar**
- **Grassroots Fundraising Journal: Looking Downtown: How Nonprofits Can Partner With Local Governments**
- **Alliance for Biking & Walking: Mutual Aid Call: Government Contracts and Consulting**
- **Urban Institute: National study of Nonprofit-Government Contracting with State Profiles**

Contact

Questions? Ideas?

Contact Brighid O'Keane, Advocacy and Programs Director at Brighid@PeoplePoweredMovement.org