

A M E R I C A N  
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JULY 2003

## Oversight, online research boost grant awards

Miami has created a Department of Grants Administration to increase the grants the city receives. The grants are earmarked to provide services, such as new parks and cultural events.

The department, led by Grant Administrator Juan Carlos Espinosa, is involved in every step of the grant process, from brainstorming and application review, to assisting with the auditing, budgeting, monitoring, reporting and closeout of a grant. Each department writes its own grants, and each is responsible for executing and auditing the resulting programs or projects.

Educating the city's staff on the grants process is a major part of the new department's effort. For example, staff members are taught how to plan for the cyclical nature of grants and how to incorporate the application process into their work schedules. The staff also is taught the nuances between grant types, such as competitive vs. formula grants.

Miami has committed to providing the necessary resources to support the search for grants, including hiring seven new staff members and three full-time grant writers. It also has signed contracts with consultants for grant-writing services.

Miami added to its grant-search capabilities by subscribing to Grants Locator, an online service from Pasadena, Calif.-based eCivis that provides the city's departments with research on federal, state and foundation fundings. Through the service, the grants department can research and track funding opportunities, while other city departments can access, search and receive notification of the grants that will directly affect the projects they are working on.

"Centralizing the grants function and improving communication and coordination within city departments has made a huge difference for Miami," Espinosa says. For

example, before the reorganization, Miami often would submit numerous grant applications for the same grant from different departments. Now, the grants department eliminates multiple applications by coordinating the process. It also ensures that the appropriate department managers are signing off on the proper grants.

"In the past 15 months, we have tripled the amount of discretionary grant funds awarded to the city compared to the prior 15 months. This is a great achievement considering that we still have quite a number of grant applications pending," Espinosa says.

