

Consolidated Appropriations Act (CAA) and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Grant Programs

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):

Identifying Waste, Fraud, and Abuse

This resource is not intended to supersede, modify, or otherwise alter applicable statutory or regulatory requirements, the specific requirements set forth in program Notice of Funding Opportunities (NOFO), existing [Department of Commerce \(DOC\) Grants and Cooperative Agreements Manual](#) (Grants Manual) requirements, or other Departmental Administrative Orders (DAOs) and Federal Circulars. Similarly, this guidance document does not supersede or supplement the National Institute of Standards and Technology Grants Management Division (NIST GMD) policy and procedures related to their work on financial assistance awards. In all cases, statutory and regulatory mandates, and the requirements set forth in the NOFO, shall prevail over any inconsistencies contained in this guidance.

Introduction

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) administers multiple grant programs funded by the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (CAA) and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) to expand the use of broadband in America.

Grant recipients are required to use grant funds in accordance with the terms of the grant, but fraud can and does occur in grant programs. Grant fraud comes in many forms and can occur throughout the lifecycle of the grant, including during the pre- and post-award processes. A common form of grant fraud includes government funding, and ultimately taxpayer money, being spent on ineligible goods and services. Waste, fraud, and abuse can have significant impacts, including limiting funds available for other eligible grant recipients and compromising public trust.

Q: What are the signs of waste, fraud, and abuse?

A: Waste, fraud, and abuse can look different from one grant to another. Potential indicators of grant fraud could include a grant recipient or subrecipient doing the following:

- Charging personal expenses as business expenses to the grant;
- Charging for costs that have not been incurred or are not attributable to the grant;
- Charging inflated labor costs or hours;
- Falsifying information in grant applications or contract proposals;
- Billing more than one grant or contract for the same work, i.e., duplication of benefits;
- Falsifying evaluation results or other grant-related data;
- Substituting approved materials with unauthorized, unapproved, or counterfeit materials;
- Misrepresenting a project's performance status to continue receiving government funds;
- Influencing government employees to award a grant to a particular company, family member, or friend;
- Contracting with individuals or partnering with subrecipients with whom they have a conflict of interest.

Grant recipients should keep in mind that these are just a few of many potential fraud indicators. Indicators of fraud will often occur in initial estimates and invoices and can include inflated prices, mismatched invoice dates, and out of sequence invoice numbers.

Q: Is a checklist of fraud indicators available for grant recipients to consider?

A: At this time, there is no official checklist, as fraud can come in many forms. If grant recipients identify something that could indicate falsifying information, lying, cheating, misappropriation of funds or stealing, they should talk to their assigned Federal Program Officer (FPO). The FPO will have an understanding of what is allowed according to the terms of the grant. If the assigned FPO also suspects waste, fraud, or abuse, they will escalate the concerns to the Department of Commerce (DOC) Office of Inspector General (OIG). Grant recipients may also choose to contact DOC OIG directly using the contact information below.

It is important to have full knowledge of your project and what is allowed. Be sure to thoroughly read applicable regulations at 2 CFR Part 200, the project's Specific and Standard Award Conditions (SACs), and any agreements for second or third tier subrecipients. If grant recipients have any questions specific to their situation, they should not hesitate to contact their assigned FPO or the OIG.

Q: Is a comprehensive list available of companies or people who have committed fraud involving NTIA projects?

A: The Department of Justice has a running repository of press releases regarding waste, fraud, and abuse cases on its website, [justice.gov](https://www.justice.gov).

Also, [SAM.gov](https://www.sam.gov) (the government's System for Award Management) maintains a list of excluded entities and individuals who have been barred from receiving federal funding. This list is not an indication that a crime has been committed. It signifies that the subject has met the legal standard for debarment or exclusion, and it is the federal government's prerogative not to conduct business with that individual or organization. This list is especially important when considering potential subrecipients or contractors.

Q: How should grant recipients interact with state fraud agents?

A: Because NTIA grants are federally funded, grant recipients should contact the OIG first. Grant recipients should contact the OIG hotline immediately if they notice any indicators of fraud, by calling 800-424-5197 or using [the anonymous hotline line here](#). Grant recipients may also report suspicions of impropriety to their assigned FPO, who may then relay the report to the OIG. It is best for grant recipients to report potential fraud, waste, or abuse as soon as possible so that the allegations can be investigated, any problems can be stopped, and remedies can be pursued.



Report Fraud, Waste, and Abuse

Commerce OIG Hotline

800-424-5197

www.oig.doc.gov