

# Steer Clear of False Offers for Grant Money

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Your Better Business Bureau serving Alaska, Oregon and Western Washington alerts consumers that National Grants Conferences, a company that has an "F" rating with their local BBB, is holding conferences in Portland, OR:

Saturday, March 7: Red Lion Hotel On The River

Sunday, March 8: Portland Marriott Waterfront

Monday, March 9: Holiday Inn Portland Airport

National Grants Conferences (NGC) advertises its program through a four hour introductory conference on how consumers can collect grant money or "opportunity money" from the U.S. Government. This company also goes by Proven Methods Seminars L.L.C. According to their Web site, [www.nationalgrants.com](http://www.nationalgrants.com), the company boasts, "NATIONAL GRANTS CONFERENCES TELLS YOU WHERE THE MONEY IS AND HOW TO GET IT."

Your BBB cautions that National Grants Conferences—which is based in Boca Raton, FL—has received over one hundred complaints from consumers in the last 36 months with their local BBB: <http://www.sefflorida.bbb.org/BusinessReport.aspx?CompanyID=26001441>. This company also has a Government Action filed through the state of Vermont.

The bottom line: Be wary of all offers for free government grant money through conferences, phone calls, emails or Web sites.

**Watch out for the phrase "Free Grant Money."** These advertisements say "Never Repay Cash Grants for Business Expenses, Medical Bills, Education, or Debt Consolidation." These solicitations promote the concept that millions of dollars are available to U.S. citizens. Be suspicious of anyone who advertises it. In addition, grants do not have to be repaid; thus it is needless to advertise the word "free."

**Phone calls.** The caller claims that the consumer is eligible or approved to receive several thousands of dollars in government grant funding. In some cases, the caller claims to be with the U.S. Grant Department. The government will not call you to offer grant money.

**E-mails.** Be on guard for e-mails from people who just received thousands of dollars in government grant funds. If the e-mail has instructions to pay in order to collect a government grant, it is a scam.

**Web sites.** These companies open up Web sites and offer membership and training programs on how to acquire free government grant money. They seek an advance fee to pay for training materials or software to search for grants. The company asks for credit card information or consumers are instructed to wire the money; fees can range from a few hundred dollars to thousands of dollars. In scam situations, consumers will not receive the products or services they thought would help get them government grant funding. Then, the Web site is shut down or the company disappears altogether.

**Before paying money for assistance with government grants, your BBB offers the following advice:**

- While it's true that the Federal government does give out billions of dollars in grant money every year, organizations do not typically give out grants to pay for debt consolidation or other personal expenses. Grants are designed to serve a social good, such as: youth education, employment training programs, creating jobs in a new area, scientific research, or preserving a historical landmark. In general, obtaining a grant or other government funding is a challenging process, which requires documentation and research.
- There's no reason to pay for software or guides when applying for government grants. Instead, check with a regional or state economic development office to learn more about local grant programs. Find reference books from your public library that describe the criteria that foundations use in awarding grants. Such information is also available for free on federal government Web sites including: [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov), [www.Studentaid.ed.gov](http://www.Studentaid.ed.gov), [www.govbenefits.gov](http://www.govbenefits.gov) and [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov).
- Your BBB advises consumers to check out companies, at <http://www.bbb.org/>, before making a payment or giving out personal account information. If you believe you've been the victim of a government grant scam, report it.

**About your BBB serving Alaska, Oregon and Western Washington:**

Your Better Business Bureau is a not-for-profit organization funded by Better Business Bureau accredited businesses. The BBB's mission is to be the leader in advancing marketplace trust. For more information about the services and products provided by your BBB, call 206-431-2222 or 253-830-2924 in Washington, 503-212-3022 in Oregon, 907-562-0704 in Alaska, or visit our Web site at <http://www.bbb.org/>.

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