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**Executive Orders Under the Trump Administration:  
Emerging Trends and Recommendations for Grant  
Professionals**

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**Abstract**

In the first year of his administration, President Donald Trump signed more Executive Orders (EOs) than any president in 50 years, representing major funding, political, and environmental policy changes in the United States. EOs are often proxies for larger changes and therefore can assist grant professionals in preparing for and navigating future changes. This Strategy Paper reviews EOs from January 20, 2017 to January 20, 2018 to identify several emerging trends and offers recommendations for grant professionals to adapt to these trends and changes.

**Introduction**

Following the 2016 presidential election, grant professionals began asking what effects the change in administration may have on their fields. This paper analyzes EOs, as a proxy for larger changes, affecting grant professionals. Overall, EOs in the first year of the Trump administration are relatively prolific (58 EOs) compared to the same time period under the Obama administration (37 EOs), but consistent with the previous Republican administration under George W. Bush (56 EOs) (Federal Register, 2018). Thus, EOs can be used as a guide for grant professionals during this period of administrative transition and larger changes in the United States.

**Limitations**

This Strategy Paper assumes EOs are good proxies to demonstrate the effects of larger shifts in the perception of the public sector's role and those perceptions' effects on grant professionals. The paper's scope does not include analyses of presidential EOs in previous administrations, bipartisan and partisan activities, nor detailed trend analyses across previous presidential administrations.



### *Global Roles*

EOs under the new administration state that U.S. international interests have not been protected nor violators prosecuted (e.g., in trade, national security, and national resource security). Immigration, as it relates to national security, is a dominating topic. For example, EO Nos. 13767, 13768, 13769, 13776, 13780, 13788, 13802, 13815, and 13818 all reference immigration as a topic (Federal Register, 2018). Decreasing international cooperation via trade deficits, anti-dumping and countervailing duties, and trade agreements are priorities in these EOs. However, they also increase international cooperation for investigation of transnational criminal organizations and for prevention of international trafficking. These two exceptions for international cooperation may imply an opportunity for grant professionals working in these areas.

### *Domestic Roles*

With few exceptions, EOs clearly indicate a decrease in federal agencies' domestic mandate and an increase in local agencies' responsibilities. EOs describe federal agencies as regulating local agencies to the detriment of local communities. Therefore, EOs seek to remedy over-regulation and excessive federal funding by reducing the role of federal agencies and increasing the role of local agencies, especially with regard to local economies, workforce development and growth, business, and natural resources. However, the EOs' increased focus on local responsibilities and federal deregulation does not equate to increased local funding. For example, EO No. 13809 (2018) provides for the deregulation or restoration of local law enforcement access to equipment from federal excess equipment transfers, asset forfeitures, and federal grants. In contrast, the proposed budget allocates fewer financial resources to local agencies (Myers, 2017). For grant professionals, focusing at local levels may yield better results as federal financial support becomes scarcer. Understanding the nuanced impact of reduced federal regulations, guidance, and funding will be paramount for grant professionals.

### *Potential Increased Resources in Specific Areas*

EOs increase resources for a few key policy areas—access to and use of natural resources, higher education at historically black colleges and universities, immigration regulation, infrastructure, national security, and prosecutions of transnational criminal organizations. Of note, expanding resources for higher education in EO No. 13779 (2017) contrasts with EO No. 13801 (2017) which aims to defund higher education support programs and lessen the regulatory burden of apprenticeships and work programs. Furthermore, EOs seek to increase resources for national and international cooperation on enforcing federal law with respect to transnational criminal organizations to prevent international trafficking (primarily drug and human) and public safety. EOs also reference national security in combination with topics such as immigration, trade deficits, information technology, cybersecurity, supply chains, equipment access, sanctions, national emergencies, and personal property, in EO Nos. 13767, 13786, 13794, 13800, 13806, 13809, 13810, 13814, 13815, 13817 (Federal Register, 2018).

Increasing resources, however, does not always translate to increases in funding. Grant professionals working within these areas of increasing resources should carefully consider how and which resources they can best leverage. For example, EO No. 13779 (2017) establishes a special initiative to advance opportunities for historically black colleges and universities through an interagency work group and board of advisors. However, this EO supports efforts largely focused on capacity building and coordinating access to preexisting resources for historically black colleges and universities, rather than providing new financial resources to these institutions.

### Decreased or No Attention in Other Areas

There are several other noteworthy changes in EO trends from preceding administrations. EOs do not include references to public health (with the exception of opioid drug addiction) nor to environmental protection. EOs imply competing, finite resources between economic growth and national security versus public health and environmental concerns; EO No. 13778 (2017) is an example. These noteworthy changes are important for grant professionals who may work in these areas.

### **Recommendations**

Based on this analysis of the first year of EOs under the new administration, this Strategy Paper offers two main recommendations:

#### Expand Advocacy Efforts

Grant professionals should forgo assumptions that historically funded programs (such as entitlement and discretionary programs) will continue receiving the same levels of funding. EOs indicate that most programs' public-sector funding sources will be reduced, with the few exceptions noted above—but local resources may increase. Advocacy has traditionally centered on political efforts, but grant professionals must think more broadly. Grant professionals need to become advocates or influencers within public agencies (at both federal and local levels), civil society, and the private sector in order to secure resources. To this end, grant professionals should embrace an expanding definition of advocacy and their role in this broader definition of advocacy.

Grant professionals should also carefully consider the motivations of their target audiences for this advocacy, in order to influence effectively for program funding in a highly competitive environment. Grant professionals need to bring in the whole package with these advocacy efforts—a clear and relatable need personalized for target audiences, robust monitoring and evaluation (or other proof of program effectiveness), and a means to make the initiative or program stand out among competitors. Grant professionals should leverage data to become proactive advocates for high-priority and demonstrably impactful programs.

#### Become Even More Agile

Grant professionals must be even more agile in response to external factors and trends, such as those exemplified within these EOs. Grant professionals' agility includes working with leadership to pivot resources, varying tactics, and exploring new approaches as external factors change with potentially increasing frequency. Change is coming regardless of the subject or geographic service area. The best strategy to becoming more agile is to plan strategically. Strategic planning is not the traditional single plan, but fully developed contingency plans to mitigate risks and environmental factors outside one's control. The Government Accountability Office reports that "The government is on an unsustainable path... To change the long-term fiscal path, policymakers will need to consider policy changes to the entire range of federal activities and spending... and revenue" (Government Accountability Office, 2017). Similarly, grants professionals must also prepare for change.

## Conclusion

Amid the trends indicated by EOs in the first year of the new presidential administration, grant professionals have opportunities in this changing political and fiscal environment to identify and pursue potential grant funding. Specifically, by being aware of declining federal roles and expanding local roles, tracking areas of higher and lower priority for the administration, expanding advocacy efforts, and becoming even more agile in grantseeking strategies, grant professionals can find ways to adapt and thrive in this changing world.

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