



# COVID-19: Selected Federal Resources for Businesses Seeking to Assist with Research and Manufacturing Efforts

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Some U.S. businesses have been [engaging in research](#) or [retooling their manufacturing operations, supply chains, or products](#) to assist with fighting the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. This CRS Insight presents selected federal resources potentially relevant to businesses that seek to support COVID-19 mobilization efforts.

At the subfederal level, [state and local economic development or commerce agencies](#) may be valuable general resources for new and established enterprises. A few local and state governments have created [their own COVID-19 grants for businesses](#) to ramp up production of critical supplies, such as personal protective equipment. These kinds of state or local government initiatives may vary widely; in many jurisdictions, they may not exist at all.

For other overviews of resources available to businesses, such as those seeking economic relief from adverse COVID-19 impacts, see CRS Insight IN11301, *Small Businesses and COVID-19: Relief and Assistance Resources*, and CRS Insight IN11368, *Larger Businesses and COVID-19: Financial Relief and Assistance Resources*.

For an in-depth analysis of COVID-19's effects on federal research and development projects, see CRS Report R46309, *Effects of COVID-19 on the Federal Research and Development Enterprise*.

For a list of all CRS products related to COVID-19, see the CRS COVID-19 Resources page.

## Selected Federal Assistance Programs for Businesses

Generally, the federal government awards grants to nonprofits, educational institutions, and state and local governments. The federal government [does not award grants for starting or expanding a business](#); however, it does have [grant programs to support research and development \(R&D\)](#) by small businesses.

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## Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR)

The [SBIR and STTR](#) grant programs were established to expand the role of small businesses in federal R&D. Eleven federal agencies operate [SBIR programs](#), and five federal agencies operate [STTR programs](#). See CRS Report R43695, *Small Business Research Programs: SBIR and STTR*.

## Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

### *Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA)*

BARDA has [funding opportunities](#) for medical countermeasures development such as vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics. Additionally, innovators and companies may submit their ideas to the [government-wide platform MedicalCounterMeasures.gov](#) (operated by BARDA) to [request discussions with U.S. government experts or funding regarding a product being developed for COVID-19](#).

According to HHS, [BARDA also collaborates with public and private entities](#) through [Operation Warp Speed](#), a public-private partnership among pharmaceutical companies, government agencies, and the military to facilitate the development, manufacturing, and distribution of COVID-19 countermeasures.

### *National Institutes of Health (NIH)*

NIH programs support [research grants, contracts, and other assistance](#) to support research and other pandemic-related activities. NIH has issued several funding opportunity notices, including for opportunities where current recipients of NIH awards may submit applications for revisions, seek supplemental funding for existing projects in order to redirect research efforts to COVID-19, or apply for new projects. Applicants can also submit proposals to NIH parent funding announcements, such as for [NIH's SBIR/STTR](#) program. NIH has also announced internal partnerships with private companies, including the [Accelerating COVID-19 Therapeutic Interventions and Vaccines \(ACTIV\)](#) partnership and the [Rapid Acceleration of Diagnostics \(RADx\)](#) initiative, a prize [competition for diagnostic test innovation](#).

### *National Science Foundation (NSF)*

NSF is funding [several research projects on COVID-19](#) and [has invited proposals from the science community](#) for “[rapid response research](#)” (RAPID) grants related to the pandemic, which allow the agency to fast-track grants for COVID-19 research proposals. NSF has also invited small businesses to submit [SBIR/STTR phase 1 proposals addressing COVID-19](#).

### *Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)*

The Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) [CDBG](#) program may be used for activities related to business and economic development. [CDBG COVID-19 guidance](#) includes the allowance of [grants or loans for supporting businesses with the manufacture of medical supplies](#) necessary to respond to infectious disease. However, funding decisions are made at the state or local level about the prioritization of CDBG's [eligible activities](#). See CRS Insight IN11315, *Community Development Block Grants and the CARES Act*, and CRS Insight IN11277, *Responding to the COVID-19 Outbreak with Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Authorities*. Interested stakeholders should contact [HUD's field offices](#) or [CDBG administrators pertaining to the state, county, or city](#). Also see [CDBG COVID-19 resources](#).

## National Institute of Standards and Technology's (NIST's) Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP)

NIST's [MEP](#) is a national network of centers located in every state that provide custom services to small and medium-sized manufacturers to improve production processes, upgrade capabilities, and facilitate product innovation. See CRS Report R44308, *The Manufacturing Extension Partnership Program*.

Manufacturing businesses can check with their [local MEP center](#) to inquire about possible COVID-19 resources. Additionally, a [current NIST funding opportunity is open to Manufacturing USA institutes](#).

## Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

FEMA has launched a [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Response page](#), which includes information on how the private sector can be involved in response efforts (e.g., selling or donating medical supplies or equipment or producing products).

## Department of Commerce, U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO)

USPTO announced a new [Prioritized Examination Pilot Program](#) for patent applications that cover a product or process for use in the prevention and/or treatment of COVID-19. Under this program, small or microentity applicants receive prioritized patent examination, and certain fees are waived. USPTO also [previously announced filing extensions](#) for certain patent and trademark documents and fees. See the [USPTO COVID-19 Response Resource Center](#).

## Federal Government Contracting Opportunities

Incumbent and potential contractors may access federal agencies' solicitations on the [beta version of the System for Award Management](#). Contracting opportunities related to the coronavirus outbreak may not necessarily include the term "COVID-19" or related terms.

Businesses may find information about the federal procurement process in the Small Business Administration's [\(SBA's\) contracting guide](#). See CRS Report RS22536, *Overview of the Federal Procurement Process and Resources*, and CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10428, *COVID-19 and Federal Procurement Contracts*.

## Department of Defense (DOD)

DOD's Joint Acquisition Task Force is accepting [inquiries from businesses](#) that seek to play a role in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. DOD also provides [resources/guidance for contracting opportunities](#).

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