

Congressional Earmarks

Quick Guide

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Congressional Earmarks are items approved in the federal budget for a specific purpose. They have few limitations, but the key is to sell your project to your Congressperson.

Timeline

The ideal time to start is always immediately!

Start planning your project and developing a budget as soon as possible. The following is an “ideal” timeline, which can be adjusted to fit individual circumstances.

- Oct-Jan: Design project, start to gather community support & make initial contact with Congressional office
- Jan-Feb: Meet with Congressperson and “sell” the project
- March-May: Congressional office decides on project and submits approved project to Appropriations Committee
- May-August: Bills are voted on and approved throughout this period
- October 1: Funding usually begins with the new fiscal year

To find your Representative, visit:

<http://www.house.gov/>

To find your Senator, visit:

<http://www.senate.gov/>

What makes a good Earmark project?

- Community-wide benefit
- Involving many community leaders and stakeholders
- Innovative
- Not directly fundable by regular programs to the extent needed
- “Led” by a nonprofit or municipal agency
- Addresses an identified unmet community or social need or gap

Tips on Washington

Keep the staff happy. The Congressional staff are going to do the most work on your project, it is in your best interest to make friends.

Be prepared. Make sure all necessary information, including budgets, architectural plans and program descriptions are well thought-out and prepared in advance.

Use connections. Find out if your organization has any connections in Washington and use them!