



Appendix: Explore Federal Funding in Tennessee

April 1, 2025

Sources

Federal funding data was downloaded in March 2025 from USASpending.org using the following “Custom Award Data” search terms from the [Download Center](#):

Award Types: Prime Awards (all)

Funding Agency: All

Recipient Location: USA, Tennessee

Data Type: Action Date

Date Range: FY 2024 (October 1, 2023-September 30, 2024)

The data dictionary can be found here: <https://www.usaspending.gov/data-dictionary>

A user-friendly Tennessee profile is available here: <https://www.usaspending.gov/state/tennessee/2025>

For context, we provide total funding amounts on a per capita basis, as a percent of gross domestic product (GDP), and as a percent of total personal income. Nominal (i.e., unadjusted) 2023 state- and county-level data were all obtained from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis:

<https://www.bea.gov/itable/regional-gdp-and-personal-income>.

Key Methodological Steps

Our data search generated 111,399 assistance records and 43,763 contract records for Tennessee—which were separate data files. We prepared and combined these two files based on common variables. We culled the data to only those records generating net obligations of \$100 or more in the fiscal year using the variable: federal_action_obligation. This resulted in 101,712 records for 76,548 unique awards. Other key methodological steps included:

- Federal agencies were assigned based on the funding agency (variable: funding_agency_name).
- Funding amounts provided in the dashboard and downloads are based on obligations (variable: federal_action_obligation).
- Locations were based on the location of the prime awardees/contractees (variable: recipient_county_name).
- Recipient types were based on the business type of the prime awardees (variable: business_types_code). Some smaller categories of business types were combined or rolled into larger categories or categorized as “other.” (e.g., tribal organizations were categorized as other,

HBCUs were recorded as either public or private higher education). Contract recipients were not assigned a business code in the same way and had to be manually coded based on other available variables.

- Funding type was based on assistance type (variable: `assistance_type_code`).

Limitations

Key limitations include:

- The amounts represent obligations, which reflect the U.S. government's binding agreement but are not actual outlays or expenditures. USASpending.gov does not report outlays/expenditures by fiscal year.
- The data reflect the locations of direct recipients—not sub-recipients. This means, for examples, that nearly all federal funding that goes through the state budget—like dollars for TennCare or SNAP—are reflected in Davidson County where the state agencies directly collecting those dollars are located.
- USASpending assigns nearly all Medicare payments to Davidson County and does not indicate a specific recipient type (e.g., health care providers or individuals).
- The data includes disaster- and COVID-related obligations. While the data downloads have codes for disaster-related funding, they are applied inconsistently.
- Not all funds are used for activities within the state of Tennessee or the county in which the recipient is located. According to our analysis, however, Tennessee was indicated as the “place of performance” for about 94% of total obligations.

Funding Types

- **Formula Grants** — Federal funds provided to a state or local government that the recipient may use at its discretion. Examples include grants for the National School Lunch Program, highway planning and construction, transit, and Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).
- **Project Grants** — Allocations of money to states or their subdivisions in accordance with distribution formulas prescribed by law or administrative regulation for activities of a continuing nature not confined to a specific project. Examples include grants for activities like broadband expansion, Head Start, Community Health Centers, and fish and wildlife management.
- **Block Grants** — The funding, for fixed or known periods, of specific projects. Examples include the Community Mental Health Block Grant, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, and funding for Adult Protective Services.
- **Contracts** — An agreement between the federal government and a prime recipient to provide goods and services for a fee.
- **Cooperative Agreements** — A legal instrument of financial assistance between a federal awarding agency and a recipient or passthrough entity and a sub-recipient that (a) is used to enter into a relationship, the principal purpose of which is to carry out a public purpose authorized by law and (b) is distinguished from a grant in that it provides for substantial involvement of the Federal awarding agency. Examples include funding for research through the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Department of Defense (DOD).

- **Direct Payments for Specified Use** — As a subsidy or other non-reimbursable direct financial aid — financial assistance from the Federal government provided directly to individuals, private firms, and other private institutions to encourage or subsidize a particular activity by conditioning the receipt of the assistance on a particular performance by the recipient. This does not include solicited contracts for procuring goods and services for the Federal Government. Examples include payments for Medicare, Medicaid, and rental assistance and Pell Grants.
- **Unrestricted Direct Payments** — Financial assistance from the Federal Government provided directly to beneficiaries who satisfy federal eligibility requirements with no restrictions being imposed on the recipient as to how the money is spent. Examples include Social Security, veterans' benefits, financial assistance to farmers, pension, and emergency relief payments.
- **Other** — Other reimbursable, contingent, intangible, or indirect financial assistance. Financial assistance from the Federal Government that is not described by any of the previously-defined assistance types.

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