

2026 Nonprofit Guidance



Informational Booklet

California Department of Parks and Recreation
Office of Grants and Local Services



OVERVIEW

This informational booklet is designed to provide technical assistance for meeting OGALS' nonprofit eligibility requirements. It also provides guidance for supporting documents, using a fiscal or agency sponsor, and using "doing business as" (DBA) names. A list of resources is provided on page 10 of this booklet to assist nonprofits with meeting eligibility requirements.

Guidance provided for maintaining nonprofit eligibility does not supersede official state and federal guidance given by agencies administering required documents.

It is the responsibility of the nonprofit to ensure they are meeting the most up-to-date requirements mandated under state and federal laws.

If your nonprofit status is revoked or suspended at the application deadline, it may not be selected to move forward in the grant award process.

REQUIRED APPLICATION DOCUMENTS

When applying to an OGALS eligible competitive grant programs, nonprofit organizations are required to provide items 1-5 below:

1. IRS (Internal Revenue Service) Letter of Determination indicating approved 501 (C)(3) tax-exempt status.
2. IRS Form 990 tax filings for most recent 2-years with forms showing signature page with appropriate signature(s) and filing date. OGALS **does not** accept draft copies of 990 Forms. One, or a combination of, the following three Forms are acceptable:
 - a) 990 (first two pages)
 - b) 990-EZ (first four pages)
 - c) 990-N (e-Postcard): Nonprofits who filed an e-postcard must provide a signed copy of their Annual Treasurer's Report (FORM CT-TR-1) for the corresponding year. E-postcards don't have a signature page.
3. California Franchise Tax Board (FTB) Self-Service Entity Status Letter
 - a) Must be in good standing and show 501 (C)(3) exempt status
 - b) Must not be on the Automatic Revocation of Exemption list
4. Attorney Generals' Registry of Charities and Fundraisers - Annual Renewal Fee Report (FORM RFF-1): If "yes" was marked on any of the questions on the form, attach the provided explanation.

5. Registry of Charities and Fundraisers - Registrant Details page showing “Approved” or “Exempt” Status.
 - a) If the “Renewal Due/Exp. Date” is going to expire within four months after the application deadline, OGALS may request a copy of the submitted renewal prior to grant award.
 - b) If the Registrant Details page shows an expired “Renewal Due/Exp. Date,” then provide a copy of either of the following:
 - Signed first page of the upcoming Annual Registration Renewal Fee Report filed to the Attorney General of California (FORM RFF-1).

OR

- If the nonprofit organization has filed a Form 8868 for extension with the IRS, provide their issued letter of approved extension.

IRS EXEMPTION LETTER

Nonprofits may include an Exemption Letter in place of their Annual Registration Renewal Fee Report. However, an exemption letter is not necessary if the nonprofit’s Registry of Charities and Fundraisers’ Registrant Detail Page Says “Exempt.”

Registrant Details			
<small>Entity type: Corporate Class as registered with the Secretary of State or based on founding & registration documents.</small>			
Organization Name:	[REDACTED]	IRS FEIN:	[REDACTED]
Entity Type:	Charitable or nonprofit corporation	SOS/FTB Corporate/Organization Number:	[REDACTED]
Registry Status:	Exempt	Renewal Due/Exp. Date:	
RCT Registration Number:	[REDACTED]	Issue Date:	12/31/1990
Record Type:	Charity Registration	Effective Date:	12/31/1990
Date of Last Renewal:		DBA:	

NEWLY FORMED NONPROFITS

Nonprofits under two years old may not have all the requested documents available. OGLAS requires nonprofits to provide a letter of explanation for each missing item and their plan for correcting each missing item.

OGALS reserve the right to request the following four additional documents:

1. Articles of Incorporation
2. Mission statement
3. Balance sheet showing assets and liabilities for most recent fiscal year
4. Income statement showing revenue and expenditure projections for the next calendar or fiscal year (using the Annual Treasurer’s Report FORM CT-TR-1)

REGISTRY OF CHARITIES AND FUNDRAISERS (REGISTRY)

The State of California Department of Justice (DOJ), Office of the Attorney General (AG) requires the registration of all nonprofit organizations that wish to do business in California. Effective January 1, 2024, the Registry of Charitable Trusts changed its name to the Registry of Charities and Fundraisers. Nonprofits may submit documents containing either name as part of their application packet.

Nonprofits should have an approved registration status by the application deadline. Initial registration must be submitted by mail and typically takes 30-90 days to process. The delay in initial registration may mean the nonprofit application won't be eligible for a current grant cycle.

Initial registration with the Registry requires:

- Initial Registration Form CT-1
- Type of annual accounting period (fiscal year or calendar year)
- Founding documents:
 - ✓ Articles of incorporation
 - ✓ Bylaws
 - ✓ Trust Agreement
 - ✓ Charitable purposes
- IRS determination letter
- A copy of the Application for Recognition of Exemption (IRS Form 1023 or 1024)

Some nonprofits are required to file annually, and some are exempt from filing annually. Nonprofits exempt from annual filing will not have a Renewal Due/Exp. Date on their Registrant Details page. Organizations that fall under this category are:

- Religious,
- Educational Institutes, and
- Health: Hospitals, etc.

Registry renewals can be completed either by paper or electronic submission. Registry renewal requires nonprofit organizations to have:

- Annual Renewal Fee (FORM RRF-1)
- Form 990, 990-EZ, or 990-N filed and accepted by the IRS.
 - ✓ Nonprofits filing by 990-N must include FORM CT-TR-1
 - ✓ The Annual Treasurer's Report (FORM CT-TR-1) from the Attorney General of California's office is a financial reporting form required of all nonprofits reporting revenue under \$50,000.
 - ✓ Paid renewal fee

FISCAL YEAR VS. CALENDAR YEAR

Nonprofits may choose to file either by fiscal or calendar year. This will determine when they are required to file taxes and renew their Registry status. An organization is allowed one 6-month extension for a return each tax year.

- Nonprofits using a fiscal year must file their tax returns with the IRS by the 15th day of the 5th month after the end of their fiscal year.
- Nonprofits using a calendar year must file their tax returns with the IRS by May 15th of each year.

The Annual Renewal Fee (FORM RRF-1) is required 4 months and 15 days from the end of a nonprofits' fiscal or calendar year. Nonprofits who do not renew their registration on time must include a letter of explanation detailing the reason for the delay. A copy of the approved letter of extension from the IRS **must** be provide with an explanation and a copy forward to the Registry of Charities and Fundraisers. Failure to provide the letter may result in suspension by the Registry.

NONPROFITS OPERATING IN MULTIPLE STATES

The Attorney General's Office refers to nonprofit organizations formed outside of California as "foreign entities." Such entities are required to register with the Registry of Charities and Fundraisers when doing business in California.

The definition of doing business in California includes:

- Soliciting funds by mail, telephone, email or through advertising through media or any other direct means in California,
- Conducting charitable programs or services in California,
- Targeting Californians with programs or services holding property in California,
- Having people perform work for the charitable program in California,
- Maintaining an office or other operations in California,
- Receiving regular substantial donations from Californians, or
- Holding tangible property in California.

Foreign entities meeting any of the above definitions should complete the registration process and have approved nonprofit status before submitting a grant application. They are also required to have a federally approved 501(c)(3) status.

MAINTAINING TAX EXEMPT STATUS

Nonprofits must have an approved tax-exempt status from both state and federal governments to do business in California.

To keep California tax exempt status, nonprofits must:

- Be formed and operated as a charity or nonprofit
- File tax returns with the Franchise Tax Board (FTB) and pay balance due
- Maintain records with:
 - ✓ Attorney General's Office (AG),
 - ✓ Internal Revenue Service (IRS), and
 - ✓ Secretary of State (SOS).

To keep federal tax-exempt status, nonprofits must:

- Serve a public benefit,
- File FORM 1023 (charitable, religious, or educational) or 1024 (social welfare),
- Federally approved 501(c)(3) from IRS and have tax-exempt status at the state level
- Follow federal filing requirements.

INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE (IRS)

Generally, tax-exempt organizations are required to file an annual information return Form 990 or Form 990-EZ. Tax-exempt organizations whose annual gross receipts are \$50,000 or less can satisfy their annual reporting requirement by electronically submitting Form 990-N (if they choose not to file 990 or 990-EZ).

Churches, and some church-affiliated organizations, and certain other types of organizations are not required to file annual returns.

Nonprofit applicants are required to provide OGALS with filed tax returns containing either wet or electronic signature. Draft tax returns will not be accepted. It is important to note that the:

- Signature line on the 990 is on the second page
- Signature line on the 990 EZ is on the fourth page, and
- There is no signature line on the 990-N (e-Postcard)
 - Entities submitting Form 990-N with their grant application must also submit a copy of their signed Form CT-TR-1.

CALIFORNIA (CA) FRANCHISE TAX BOARD (FTB)

All nonprofits must register with California Secretary of State (SOS). The SOS determines if an organization meets all the necessary requirements to be determined exempt from taxes. The FTB is not directly under the SOS but coordinates a nonprofits eligibility to operate in California.

The **Entity Status Letter** verifies whether an entity is in good standing and provides proof of California exempt status. Only box 1 and 3 can be checked.

**STATE OF CALIFORNIA
FRANCHISE TAX BOARD
PO BOX 942857
SACRAMENTO CA 94257-0540**

Entity Status Letter

Date: 6/25/2025
ESL ID: [REDACTED]

Why You Received This Letter
According to our records, the following entity information is true and accurate as of the date of this letter.

Entity ID: [REDACTED]
Entity Name: [REDACTED]

1. The entity is in good standing with the Franchise Tax Board.

2. The entity is **not** in good standing with the Franchise Tax Board.

3. The entity is currently exempt from tax under Revenue and Taxation Code (R&TC) Section 23701 d.

4. We do not have current information about the entity.

5. The entity was administratively dissolved/cancelled on [REDACTED] through the Franchise Tax Board Administrative Dissolution process.

According to the SOS website (www.sos.ca.gov), the FTB has the authority to administratively dissolve inactive or suspended nonprofit organizations who fail to file required annual reports. Nonprofits that are suspended for a consecutive period of 48 months are provided with a 60-day notice that they are subject to dissolution. The FTB informs the SOS and the Registry of Charitable Trusts of any nonprofit subject to administrative dissolution.

Suspended or dissolved nonprofits are not authorized to operate in California and are not eligible to apply for any of the grant programs administered by OGALS.

SPONSORSHIPS, PARTNERSHIPS AND “DOING BUSINESS AS” (DBA)

AGENCY SPONSOR

Nonprofits may choose to use a sponsoring agency for one of the following reasons:

1. They are not eligible to apply directly to a grant program,
2. They lack the experience of administering a grant, or
3. They lack the resources necessary for completing a project/program.

If OGALS determines a nonprofit applied to a program only open to state, county, city, or districts, it may be possible to switch the name on the application to a sponsoring agency. The following conditions must exist for the switch to take place:

- Application must be highly competitive,
- Sponsoring agency must agree to take over the application,
- Sponsoring agency must sign the grant contract, and
- Sponsoring agency must agree to administer the grant funds, including:
 - ✓ Reporting requirements, and
 - ✓ Reimbursement requests

Applicants applying to grant programs open to nonprofits but do not have an approved nonprofit status **must** have a sponsoring agency willing to take over the application.

Applicants with approved nonprofit status applying to grant programs open to nonprofits should identify the sponsoring agency in their application and provide proof of support. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) from the sponsoring agency should be included with the application outlining their responsibilities. Sponsoring agencies will be scrutinized and held to the same criteria as all other applicants.

FISCAL SPONSOR

Nonprofits may choose to use a fiscal sponsor for the following reasons:

1. They want to use the fiscal sponsor to strengthen their application
2. They lack the experience of administering a grant, or
3. They lack the resources necessary for completing a project/program.

Nonprofits utilizing a fiscal sponsor should include a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with their application from the fiscal sponsor outlining their contribution. Fiscal sponsors are scrutinized and held to the same criteria as all other applicants.

PARTNERSHIPS

All nonprofits listed as a partner by an applicant, you must be eligible to operate as a nonprofit in California.

DOING BUSINESS AS (DBA)

Doing Business As (DBA) is when a business registers to trade or “do business as” an alternative name from which it formed. Generally, a nonprofit organization must register its DBA in each state. In some states, non-profits are exempt from DBA registration requirements. In California, the new name must be registered with the local County Clerk or Recorder.

A nonprofit considering a name change can either legally change its name by amending its articles of incorporation (or comparable founding document), or it can use a DBA or “fictitious business name.”

Reasons why a nonprofit business uses a DBA:

- If they do not wish to use the original legal company name to do business
- If they plan to shorten the company name or make it easier to remember
- If the founder wishes to keep their personal name out of the company name
- If a different name would be suitable for a particular business project

When processing nonprofit documents, OGALS will ensure the DBA is properly documented, and cross referenced, on required application documents. Nonprofits should make it clear on their application form they are using a DBA by including both the DBA name and the primary organization name.

How OGALS’ checks if a nonprofit organization is using a DBA name:

- The grant application has the primary organization and DBA name
- Form 990 will have primary organization name and DBA name
- Other project documents will have DBA name
- Articles of Incorporation will have primary organization name
- Registry of Charities and Fundraisers and Annual Registration Renewal Fee Report will have primary organization name
- FTB Entity Status Letter will have primary organization name

If the DBA name is not listed on the Form 990, this means either the nonprofit needs to register as a DBA or apply under the fiscal sponsor’s name.

Nonprofits who are unsure how to proceed with the application process should contact OGALS or the project officer assigned to the project’s county. An OGALS project officer link is provided under Resources on page 10.

RESOURCES

Annual Registration Renewal Fee Report Form (Attorney General of California)

https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/media/rrf1_form.pdf

IRS Exempt Organization Search

<https://apps.irs.gov/app/eos/>

Office of Grants and Local Services (OGALS)

www.parks.ca.gov/ogals

OGALS' Project Officers by County (use green column)

https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=30502

Registry of Charities and Fundraisers (Attorney General of California)

<https://oag.ca.gov/charities/initial-reg>

Registry Search Tool (Attorney General of California)

<https://rct.doj.ca.gov/Verification/Web/Search.aspx?facility=Y>

Secretary of State (SOS) Business Entities

<https://www.sos.ca.gov/business-programs/business-entities>

Self-Service Entity Status Letter (California Franchise Tax Board)

<https://webapp.ftb.ca.gov/eLetter/>

State of California Franchise Tax Board - Revoked exempt organizations list:

<https://www.ftb.ca.gov/file/business/types/charities-nonprofits/revoked-entity-list.html>