

Elephant

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So... 3 blindfolded guys are in a room with an elephant. One grabs the trunk and tells the others that clearly an elephant is like a fire hose.. the second wraps his arms around a leg, and says that it's more like a big tree. The third pulls the tail, and is about to declare that the elephant is like a snake... when he gets kicked for tugging the tail.

These are all guys... because women tend to think more carefully before messing around with big things they don't fully understand.

The elephant stomping around in our room/garage is the effects of the covid pandemic, and everyone is grappling with it from their own viewpoint (the blindfold thing only goes so far).

Everyone is at risk, and because this situation is unprecedented, no one knows exactly what to do, and a false step can crush us. Lot's of folks are looking for someone to "save" them.

Some feel that they've been let down by associations, vendors and government. Those entities can only do so much, and none of them have any experience in elephant training.

Switching metaphors here... we can only reap what we sow. Collectively we've not pumped in enough resources over the years in terms of supporting national and state associations, lobbying, PACs and effort in making the public aware of what we really do.

They can only work with what we give them, and most of those crying loudest were not involved at all until we all got covered in elephant poop. Conspiracy theories have gained traction, which does no one any good.

A number of industries do seem to be getting better treatment than us... but in large part because they've invested millions in promotion, lobbying and marketing over many years.

The fact is, if we're to be saved, we have to do it ourselves. We can seek help, but putting our fate in the hands of others is a mistake. That includes counting on the government to rescue us, but one source of help is on the horizon.

CERTS is a bit like the elephant. It's there, large in the room, but the final shape is uncertain. It's a needs based program (as opposed to competitive) and the legislative language gives the bureaucrats a great deal of discretion. There will be a public comment period before we know if it is a tree or a snake, and you should weigh in.

Meanwhile homework includes working with your Accountant to make sure all taxes and filings are current. Refresh your "financials", so you know how far revenue has slipped and how much to ask for in future.

If you think DUNS, SAM and CAGE is a law firm, you aren't ready. Check out what they mean... and make sure you are up to snuff because you'll need them.

Applying for CERTS should be relatively straightforward if you've been keeping good records, and are current on taxes.

This program is needs based, and applying will likely be mostly involve providing information that any well run business should have handy.

Hiring someone to do this application for you comes with benefits and risks. Clearly, if a grant writer or consultant does something regularly, they should become proficient. In the case of a competitive program, they have great value. If you choose to go this route, in this instance of a needs based grant, choose carefully.

In addition to saving money by doing it yourself, you don't put sensitive information in the hands of a third party that doesn't owe you a fiduciary responsibility. Grant writing is not a regulated discipline, so there's a mix of competency and character in the field.

One advantage of doing it yourself is that you can deal directly with the grantor, and know for a fact when your application is submitted. Bet your Accountant will be happy to help, and already has almost everything you need.

Elephant permitting... the process should be straightforward. The queue of a consultant working for dozens of operators may move slowly, because yours has to be specific to your situation.

Once the process for seeking help is formalized, ABA, UMA and all of the state and regional associations will be an excellent source of information on how to apply.

The good news is that, according to a gentleman smarter than me, there are lots of protections built in to assure that minority and small businesses get their fair share of the pie.

The bad news is that the pie is small and when divided among lots of companies ... a "fair share" is not going to be a ton of money... and what you're allowed spend it on will be very specific.

You will want to leap into the fray as quickly as possible, and not be last in line... nothing is worse than following an elephant.