

Why Environmental Organizations, Engineers, Planners & Nonprofits Need a Government Capital Strategist

The difference between a shovel-ready project and a stalled one often isn't the science — it's the funding.

Environmental work is among the most critically funded — and chronically underfunded — sectors in the American economy. Federal agencies, state programs, and municipal budgets are flooded with money earmarked for brownfield remediation, clean water infrastructure, climate resilience, and sustainable land development. But much of it goes unclaimed, not because the projects aren't worthy, but because the organizations doing the work don't have the right person in their corner when it counts.

That's where Don Cassano comes in.

With 50 years of commercial real estate, grant writing and economic development experience and more than \$500 million in government funding secured since 1976, Don has spent a career bridging the gap between environmental stakeholders and the government resources they need. He understands how agencies work, how programs are structured, how grants are written, and — critically — how decisions actually get made.

The Problem: Great Projects Stuck in the Pipeline

Environmental engineers produce some of the most rigorous technical work in the private sector. Planners develop thoughtful, evidence-based land use strategies. Nonprofits operate on shoestring budgets doing cleanup and advocacy work that government agencies can't replicate. And yet, project after project stalls — not because of flawed science, but because of a gap in government relations.

The funding landscape is vast and complex:

- EPA Brownfields Assessment, Revolving Loan Fund, and Cleanup grants
- EDA Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance programs
- MassWorks Infrastructure Program and MassDevelopment financing
- CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) allocations through HUD
- DEP and state-level environmental remediation programs
- Federal and state transportation and green infrastructure funds

Each program has its own eligibility rules, application windows, scoring criteria, and political dynamics. Navigating them requires more than a grant writer — it requires Government Capital Strategist who knows the terrain.

Funding doesn't flow to the best projects. It flows to the organizations that know how to ask — and how to be heard.

What a Government Capital Strategist Actually Does

The title "grant writer" understates the role. Don Cassano operates as a Government Capital Strategist — someone who functions at the intersection of policy, funding, and real estate development to move projects forward.

Here's what that looks like in practice:

1. Program Intelligence

Don monitors the full landscape of federal, state, and local funding programs relevant to environmental work. He knows when new programs are announced, when funding windows open, and which programs align with a client's specific project profile. Most firms discover programs after the deadline — Don works ahead of the clock.

2. Grant Readiness Assessment

Before a dollar is spent on an application, Don evaluates whether a project is grant-ready: Does the site have the right environmental documentation? Is the ownership structure clean? Has community benefit been articulated in terms agencies respond to? He addresses gaps before they become application killers.

3. Strategic Narrative Development

Agencies fund stories as much as they fund science. Don helps clients frame their projects in language that aligns with agency priorities — economic development, job creation, environmental justice, community resilience — without compromising technical integrity. The grant writer writes the application; the liaison shapes the story.

4. Relationship Navigation

Government agencies are run by people. Knowing who reviews applications, how offices are organized, and what a project officer needs to champion your project internally is not something you learn from a program guide. It comes from decades of engagement. Don brings that institutional knowledge to every client engagement.

5. Multi-Agency Coordination

Complex environmental projects often require funding from multiple sources — federal and state, public and private. Don coordinates across these channels, ensuring applications are complementary rather than conflicting, and that funding timelines align with project schedules.

Who Needs This — And Why Now

Environmental Engineering Firms

Environmental engineering firms like are retained for their technical expertise. But when their clients ask, "Can you help us find funding for this?" — that's a question most firms can't answer alone. A Government Capital Strategist embedded in the engagement adds immediate value to the client relationship and opens doors to projects that wouldn't otherwise move forward. Don works in association with these firms, not in competition with them.

Environmental Nonprofit Organizations

Nonprofits are often the most mission-aligned organizations in the room — and the least equipped to compete for government contracts and grants. Don's advisory role helps nonprofits present themselves credibly to government funders, structure grant applications that meet agency expectations, and build the track record that leads to larger, longer-term funding relationships.

Land Use Planners and Urban Planners

Planning firms are frequently engaged on projects with significant infrastructure and environmental components — transit-oriented development, brownfield reuse, waterfront revitalization, climate adaptation planning. These projects are eligible for a wide array of federal funding, but capturing it requires proactive grant strategy that begins at the planning stage, not after approvals. Don helps planners build the funding conversation into the project from day one.

Municipal and Regional Environmental Agencies

Local governments and regional planning agencies face the same challenge: limited staff capacity, limited grant-writing expertise, and a funding landscape that rewards sophistication. Don works with public clients to identify the most competitive funding opportunities, prepare compelling applications, and manage funder relationships through the award process.

In 50 years, Don Cassano has seen what separates projects that get funded from projects that don't. It's rarely the quality of the work.

The Don Cassano Advantage

Don operates across the United States market — dense, sophisticated network of environmental regulations, an active brownfield redevelopment pipelines, and some with robust state-level programs that reward experienced applicants.

My Government Capital Strategist Services provides my clients with knowledge and expertise with competitive environmental funding opportunities across the country:

- MassWorks grants for infrastructure supporting economic development
- MassDevelopment Brownfields Redevelopment Fund for site assessment and remediation
- EPA Brownfields programs, heavily active in the Greater Boston corridor
- CDBG allocations administered through DHCD for community-benefit projects
- EDA Economic Adjustment Assistance for communities impacted by economic disruption

But these programs are competitive, and competition is stiff. The organizations that win are those that present shovel-ready projects with clear economic and community benefits, credible budgets, and well-structured applications. Don has helped clients meet that standard for five decades.

Real Experience. Real Results.

Don's track record speaks directly to the needs of the environmental sector:

- Over \$500 million in government funding secured since 1976
- Former Grant Auditor (Semi Senior Accountant) with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Division of Water Pollution Control.
- Deep familiarity with EPA Brownfields, EDA, MassWorks, CDBG, and MassDevelopment programs
- Active engagement on large-scale redevelopment projects, including former industrial mill properties.
- Expertise in grant readiness assessment, site-specific funding analysis, and multi-agency coordination
- 50 years of commercial real estate, grant writing, environmental engineering marketing and sales as well as economic development experience informing every engagement.

This isn't theoretical. Don has been in the room when funding decisions are made — and he brings that experience to every client he works with.

The Bottom Line

The environmental sector does essential work. Brownfields get cleaned. Waterways get protected, treatment plants get built, repaired and working properly, sewer and water systems are built and maintained, alternative environmental systems are incorporated into municipalities and more.. Communities get healthier. But that work requires capital — and capital, in the public sector, requires expertise to unlock.

Don Cassano provides that expertise. For environmental engineers, planners, nonprofits, and organizations navigating the intersection of environmental remediation and government funding, a Government Capital Strategist isn't a luxury. It's a competitive necessity.

The projects that move forward are the ones with the right team behind them. Don Cassano is that team member.

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