Transcript for “Sparks Grant” video tutorial about how to find government agencies

This video is 4:28 minutes long

[On the screen: “Home” page of the ENGL& 102 Sopang Men libguide]

Hi, I’m Jennifer Snoek-Brown, one of your TCC librarians, and I’m back with another video for Sopang Men’s Sparks Grant research project. In this video, we’ll be searching for existing government agencies trying to address community issues or problems. So I’m going to start by clicking on the “Searching for non-profits and government programs” tab on your ENGL 102 library guide.

[On the screen: “Searching for non-profits and government programs” page of ENGL 102 Sopang Men libguide]

There are a couple of main ways to try to find government agencies, and one of these ways is to look at existing government websites. Under the “Starting points for finding” content box on this page, there is a sub-tab for “Government sites/programs,” where I’ve put links to some local, regional, and state government websites. For example, I have added links to the City of Tacoma website, Pierce County website, and the Access Washington site which is state-level. But if your branch of government or city or county is not listed here, know that every city or branch of government has a website that includes information about its services and programs.

So let’s take a look at the City of Tacoma website.

[On the screen: City of Tacoma website, home page]

My topic is still researching youth or teenage homeless populations in Tacoma, so I’m going to see if there’s anything about homelessness on the City of Tacoma website. I’m going to go straight for the website’s search box, located at the top right corner, and I’m going to type in “homeless.” Right away, I get results that look relevant. You can see there are additional pages here, as well, that look like they describe programs and plans. I’m going to click on the “Homelessness Services” result, as it looks like an overall page, and it’s still pretty recent. I’m going to click on that.

[On the screen: City of Tacoma website, Homelessness Services page]

On this page, I see there’s content here about the services, both in the main content page and additional links on the sub-menu in the left column here. Oh, and I see there’s a sub-page specifically for “Youth and Young Adults” under the Homelessness Services section.

Most importantly on this main page, I see contact information. So these are actual that, as a student, I can contact if I were a student for perhaps an interview and a personal perspective on this community issue.

And when I click the sub-page for “Youth and Young Adults,” I can also get a better sense of the programs and resources the City of Tacoma is highlighting for this issue and population – or what resources they are NOT for this population in the City of Tacoma.
So that’s one example of how to go about finding existing government agencies, programs, and/or services, to start with a government website.

[On the screen: “Searching for non-profits and government programs” tab on ENGL 102 libguide]

The other main way, and we’re going to go back to our guide, is to do is to do a Google search for government agencies or websites. So I’m going to the “Google search tips for finding” content box and looking at the “Government sites/programs” sub-tab.

I have screenshots of a sample search here, and I’ve embedded a Google search box. So I’m going to do this search in real time. So I’m typing in “homeless programs Tacoma” as my initial search.

[On the screen: Google search results screen]

So that’s my search, and as I scroll down, I’m seeing some county websites, City of Tacoma websites – the same one that we saw before. I’m also getting some .orgs, that’s an organization. I also see a .net. Ok, so I’m getting a mix of sources, so if I wanted to narrow down to just government websites, I can go back up to the top of my Google search, and do a “site search.” This is s-i-t-e, colon, and you can either do gov, which is gov, or dot gov. Either way, it works [gov or .gov]. And notice there are no spaces inbetween what I’m doing, because this is a code to narrow down my searches, and when I add that site search for .gov, no all of my results are government websites. And I’m seeing the relevant county and city websites right at the top.

And if you scroll down and if you see any acronyms in your search results – like for example, this link has “DSHS” in it – and if you’re not what those acronyms stand for, then click on the link, and it should be readily apparent what the acronym stands for. For example, when I click on this DSHS link...

[On the screen: Washington DSHS page for Housing Resources]

... this tells me it stands for Department of Social and Health Services in Washington state.

[On the screen: Google search results]

I hope this helped demonstrate two major ways to search for and find government agencies that are already out there and tackling community problems and issues and populations.

And remember, if you get stuck or need help, ask a librarian!