Grant Application Development Helpful Hints

Section 1: Overview and Application Download and Submittal

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Grant Application Development Guide

Part 1: Grant Overview and Application Download and Submittal

This section provides a quick overview of the NOAA grant process, and abbreviated instructions on how to download and submit an application package. For more specific instructions, please review the *Applicant User Guide* and other resources located on Grants.gov (http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-resources.html).

Overview of the NOAA Grant Process

What is a grant or cooperative agreement?

Federal assistance awards are broken into two categories, grants and cooperative agreements. Mostly, the word "grant" is used for either category, as they are very similar in nature. A grant is a project that is funded by the federal government to support a public purpose. A public purpose means that there is a benefit to the general public or community. A contract is a mechanism for the federal government to obtain a good or service that is directly benefiting the federal agency to complete its mission. For example, a contract would be awarded to build a government building, but a grant could be more appropriate to fund the building of a community center or park.

Many different federal agencies issue grants to states, local governments, and community groups. The federal government refers to all these types of recipients, as non-federal entities. You will see this term often in the federal regulations that govern financial assistance awards. NOAA provides funds to support science, research, monitoring, and outreach related to NOAA's mission. Each NOAA line office, regional office, or program funds different types of activities, depending on their priorities, needs, and availability of funds. Grants are not "free money" and require the recipient to adhere to many requirements, including submit multiple reports showing the benefit and outcomes of the project.

What are the steps to submit an application?

There are multiple required steps beyond simply writing the grant narrative. It is imperative that you take time 2-3 weeks prior to the submission deadline to ensure that all of your entities accounts and paperwork are in order. These include checking the status of your DUNS number, and SAM.gov and Grants.gov accounts.

How is my application reviewed and selected?

All applications go through a rigorous review process including an internal program requirements review, technical review, and a review by the Grants Management Division. It is important to review the specific information in the Funding Opportunity on the criteria that will be used for the review, and ensure that your application includes all of these criteria factors.

Overview of Steps Required Prior to Grant Submittal

Set up

- Obtain a DUNS number
- Register/update Grants.gov Account
- Register/update SAM.gov Account

Find

- Find the grant competition that matches most closely with the proposed project.
- Identify due dates, funding restrictions, and other requirements.

Application

- Download the complete application package and instructions from Grants.gov
- Complete all government forms, narrative, budget information and all other required pieces of the application.

Submit

- Submission from the Authorized Representative though Grants.gov

Overview of Application Review Process

Minimum Requirements

- NOAA staff review all applications to ensure they are complete, recieved on time, and follow all requirements in the grant announcements.
- Applications that meet the miniumum requirements will move to the next stage.

Merit Review

- All applications will get reviewed by at least three reviewers, through either an independent merit review, a panel review, or both.
- Reviewers are experts with knowledge on the subject matter of each appliation, and provide comments, scores, and a rank order of all applications received for a specific competition.

Selection

- The selecting official receives all of the comments, scores, and rank order of the review process and provides a list of projects to recommend for funding.

Recommendation

- The Principal Investgator will be notified by NOAA if their project is being recommended for funded. NOAA may also negotiate with the projects to reduce or modify the funding amount or scope of work.

Award

- The NOAA Grants Management Division in Silver Spring, MD will review the recommended applications and issue all grant awards. Grant award notices will be issued via email to the Authorized Representative who signed the intitial application. NOAA grantees must use Grants Online to review and accept the award.

Submission Preparation

Obtain a DUNS number, SAM.gov, and Grants.gov Account

NOTE: The required registration process can take 2 weeks! Don't wait till the deadline!

Individual:

An individual is an applicant who submits grant applications on their own behalf, not representing an organization, institution or government.

Individuals wishing to submit a grant application, using Grants.gov, are required to complete a one-time registration process. All applicants are required to obtain a Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number. Registration with the System for Award Management (SAM.gov, formerly CCR), is strongly encouraged. Individuals without a valid SAM.gov account will be unable to use the automatic payment disbursement system, ASAP.gov. The instructions for obtaining a DUN and enrolling in SAM is described below.

Organization:

STEP 1: Obtain a Data Universal Number System (DUNS) Number
This step can be done in one day. If your organization does not have a DUNS number, request one by phone or online.
Phone: 1-866-705-5711
Online: http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform.

STEP 2: Register with SAM (System for Award Management) www.SAM.gov
This step can take three to five business days or up to two weeks. If you already have a TIN, your SAM registration will take 3-5 business days to process. If you are applying for an EIN please allow up to 2 weeks. If your application is selected for funding, your organizations SAM account must be active and valid. The SAM system replaces the former CCR system.

STEP 3: Grants.gov Username & Password
This step can be done in one day. Complete your AOR (Authorized Organization Representative) profile on Grants.gov and create your username and password. You will need to use your organization's DUNS Number to complete this step.

STEP 4: AOR Authorization
This can be done in one day. The E-Business Point of Contact (E-Biz POC) at your organization must login to Grants.gov to confirm you as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR). Please note that there can be more than one AOR for your organization. In some cases the E-Biz POC is also the AOR for an organization.

Application Package Download and Submital

Download Application Package

The application package needs to be downloaded from Grants.gov. Each application package is specifically for a grant competition, so do not use a previous years' package.

1. In grants.gov, search and find the opportunity in which you would like to apply for. Click on the *"Application Package"* tab and then the *"download"* button on the bottom right side of the screen. Entering your email address on the next screen will ensure that you will be notified of any changes to the competition.
2. On the next screen, click on *"Download Application Instructions"* to get a copy of the Federal Funding Opportunity (FFO). Next Click, *"Download Application Package"* and then save the file to your computer, and open it using Adobe Reader.

Application Package Contents

The completed application generally includes the following forms, documents, and restrictions. Please review section IV *"Application and Submission Information"* within the FFO for complete instructions and required forms and restrictions. If your application is incomplete, or missing even one form, it can be denied and not reviewed. The instructions in the FFO supersedes any guidance in this document.

Federal Forms

- ☐ SF-424 - Application for Federal Assistance (http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/form-instructions/sf-424-instructions.html)
- ☐ SF-424A - Budget Information - Non-construction Programs (http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/form-instructions/sf-424a-instructions.html)
- ☐ SF-424B - Assurances - Non-Construction Programs (http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/form-instructions/sf-424b-instructions.html)
- ☐ CD-511 - Certification Regarding Lobbying
- ☐ SF-LLL - Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if applicable)

Proposal and Attachments

- ☐ Title Page (limit 1 page)
- ☐ Project Summary or Abstract (limit 1-2 pages)
- ☐ Project Narrative (limit 10-25 pages, depending on competition)
- ☐ Budget Narrative (limit 2 pages, depending on competition)
- ☐ Other Attachments.
  - ☐ Documentation showing proof of non-profit status (if applicable)
  - ☐ Resumes or CV of key staff and personnel
  - ☐ Letters of endorsement, support, or collaboration
  - ☐ Permit or authorization information
  - ☐ NEPA questionnaire (http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/questionnaire.pdf)
  - ☐ Other visuals, graphs, or maps necessary to the application

Application Submission

Complete the grant application and package. The package can be worked on offline and must be saved often. Once all of the forms have been completed and documents (project narrative, budget narrative, etc) have been attached, you must be online to submit the package. Once all forms are completed and documents are attached, the *"Save & Submit"* button will be enabled. Click the *"Check Package for Errors"* button to ensure your application is complete.

1. Click the *"Save & Submit"* button. Ensure that your computer is on the internet at this time.
2. The application verification and signature page will be displayed. Select *"Sign and Submit Application".* At this point, you will need to log into Grants.gov using your username and password. The application package will be automatically uploaded to Grants.gov
3. A confirmation screen will appear. Note the Grants.gov tracking number for future reference. If you do not get a confirmation screen, please call the Grants.gov Help Desk at 1-800-518-4726.
4. After you receive the confirmation screen, check your e-mail to ensure that your application is validated and accepted. More information on this is below.

If you do not get a tracking number or any confirmation e-mails, your application was NOT submitted.

Application Validation and Acceptance

When submitting a grant application package to Grants.gov, you will receive a confirmation screen as well as up to four emails. It is vital that you ensure there is enough time to resubmit your application before the deadline if your application is rejected or not accepted by Grants.gov.

Submission Confirmation Screen and Email

After you submit your grant application package, a confirmation screen will appear on your computer screen that confirms you have submitted an application to Grants.gov. This confirmation email may take up to 2 business days to be received. This page and e-mail will include a tracking number, as well as a "Track My Application" link to use to see the progress of your submission. Write down your tracking number for future use. If you do not receive the confirmation screen or email, please call the Grants.gov help desk.

Submission Validation (or Rejection with Errors)

The second email message will be a message ***validating*** or ***rejecting with errors*** your submitted application package. The Grants.gov system is designed to check for technical errors within the submitted application package. Grants.gov does not review application content for award determination. If your application is rejected, please fix the errors and resubmit. Grants.gov help desk can be reached at: 1-800-518-4726 for additional help to resubmit the application package.

Submission Received by the Agency

The last email message will confirm that the package was received by NOAA. The package cannot be received by NOAA if it wasn't accepted and validated in the Grants.gov system.

Other Resources

Grants.gov Customer Service Center/Help Desk

It is imperative to contact the Customer Service Center if you are experiencing technical difficulties with the application or the application process. The Center will be able to troubleshoot problems and provide a trouble ticket that may be needed if submission was tardy or not completed.

Mail	Email	Phone
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Grants.gov 200 Independence Avenue, S.W. HHH Building Washington, DC 20201	support@Grants.gov	1.800.518.4726 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, Except Holidays

Grants.gov Applicant Resources

A variety of resources are available on Grants.gov: http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-resources.html