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A NEWSLETTER

GRANTS.GOV℠
SUMMER 2008

MANAGING PARTNER

Fulfilling the President's Management Agenda

UPDATE ON TRANSITION FROM PUREEDGE TO ADOBE READER

The transition from PureEdge to Adobe Reader application forms has allowed many applicants that did not previously have access to a PureEdge compatible operating system on their computer, to now apply for grants. The transition for federal agencies from PureEdge to Adobe is ongoing. December 31, 2008 is the last day Grants.gov will process PureEdge applications. For more information on the transition read the New Grants.gov System with Adobe PDF and Reader.

For more information on the transition to Adobe and the find and apply process Grants.gov offers remote (webinars) or in-person training sessions. The interactive sessions generally last an hour, educating participants on how to navigate Grants.gov while walking you step-by-step through the grant application process. The session offers information on getting started with Grants.gov, finding a grant opportunity, the registration process, guidelines to follow while submitting a grant, as well as information on what happens after you submit a grant application package. To request your own interactive session or program material, please complete and submit the outreach request form to support@grants.gov and you will be contacted by a program representative.

The transition to Adobe, interactive training and knowledgeable Contact Center Customer Support Representatives (CSRs) equate to increased accessibility, continued submission growth and applicant satisfaction. As always, we would like to hear from you on how to improve and enhance your experience; please fill out the enhancement form and email it to support@grants.gov to suggest a site enhancement.

Grants.gov strives to keep the applicant community informed about every aspect of the program. With the aid of the Updates ListServ, the new "All About Grants" page, Grants.gov has been able to disseminate program relevant information to you in real-time.

APPLICATION SUBMISSIONS INCREASE 11 PERCENT

Through June of fiscal year 2008 Grants.gov has received 158,320 submissions. This is an 11 percent growth over the 143,274 received through June of fiscal year 2007.

CONTACT CENTER CALL VOLUME REACHES ALL TIME HIGH

The Contact Center experienced a consistent increase in call volume between April (16,060), May (17,241) and June (20,921) of this fiscal year 2008. In June 2008 alone we received 20,921 calls. This is a 16.7% increase over the 17,922 calls received in June of 2007. The graph below shows a comparison between June 2007 and 2008.

Grants.gov Contact Center Call Volume Comparison
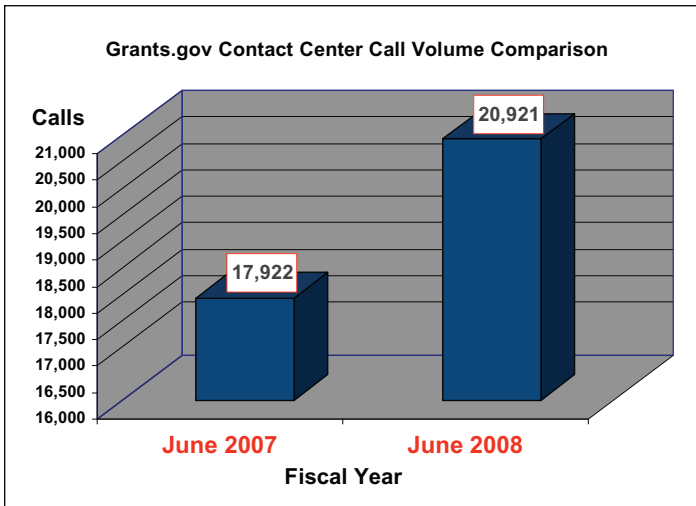
CONTACT CENTER INTEGRATED VOICE RECOGNITION (IVR) SCRIPT CHANGE

Effective July 28, 2008, the Grants.gov Contact Center Integrated Voice Recognition (IVR) Script or call-in option menu will be updated. We are constantly evaluating ways to improve the overall customer experience. Being placed on hold or transferred between multiple operators can be a frustrating experience, for this reason the call-in options are being updated to direct your calls in a more efficient manner as Grants.gov continues to grow.

The new IVR script and call-in menu options ensure that your call is sent directly to the proper customer care operator for immediate assistance. The new menu options are more concise and allow the user to choose the option that best suits their immediate need.

Current Call-In Menu Options

The current call-in menu options were effective in meeting the demands of a previously smaller call volume. The script and menu options are limited to three options, yet met the needs of the callers before the new significant increase in customer calls.

Until July 28, 2008 when a user calls into the Contact Center they will hear the Grants.gov customary greeting, followed by the individual financial assistance message (recording that lets the user know Grants.gov does not offer personal financial assistance), and three call-in menu options.

Currently, the first call-in option is for calls regarding the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Call-in option number two is for inquiries regarding Grants.gov registration and application submission status. The third call-in option is designed to handle general inquiries and questions about how to use the website and system.

New Call-In Menu Options

The call-in menu options have been sub-divided to offer more choices and offer higher accuracy during a search for information and eliminate the redundancy of listening to pre-recorded messages already heard. With the new script and call-in menu options the user will still be greeted by a customary Grants.gov greeting; however the first call-in option is now divided into two parts, individual financial assistance message and general questions.

Option two is devoted to NIH callers. NIH has the largest number of agency calls, therefore their calls will be directly routed to a Customer Service Representative who is trained to answer NIH calls.

Call-in menu option three is now devoted to "All Other Questions Including Registration" and submission inquiries. The new menu option three now allows callers to avoid listening to the financial assistance message; users calling for registration and submission type questions are generally seasoned users of the website and Contact Center, so they are familiar with the financial assistance message. The new option number three also provides more direct access to customer care operators than the other call-in menu options offered.

NEW FEATURES AND SITE ENHANCEMENTS ON GRANTS.GOV

Grants.gov is committed to offering enhancements to improve the applicant experience. The second system build for this year (Build 2008-02) includes enhancements requested from the applicant community. Build 2008-02 is scheduled to occur in late August and will include enhancements such as improved search capability and more consistent screen views and labeling.

After the system build, Grants.gov will feature a Google search box on the website. The new Google function will have search capabilities for all content such as user guides and FAQs. This is in addition to the search functionality in place today to "Find" grant opportunities.

Check the website for updates on the upcoming system build and sign-up for the grant email alerts.

Prior to the enhancements going live we will distribute a detailed communication via this ListServ displaying the enhancements.

NEW APPLICANT RESOURCE – "ALL ABOUT GRANTS"

"All About Grants" is a new applicant resource featuring content and information from all 26 federal grant-making agencies, affiliated grant associations and the applicant community. This section of the website is focused on keeping the applicant up to date with grant information relevant to the applicant's needs, by providing a "tip of the month", webinars, events, tips and resources from Grantors, articles and resources, and a listing of affiliated grant associations and organizations.

Every month a grant-making agency, grant association and even applicants submit a "Tip of the Month". The "Tip of the Month" section can be found at the top of the "All About Grants" webpage and features helpful, insightful information which will help an applicant find, apply and succeed with Grants.gov.

The "Events" section includes an event listing of federal grant-making agencies, affiliated grant associations and other related events.

The "All About Grants" page on Grants.gov also offers a section called "Tips & Resources From Grantors", where you can find information directly from grant-making agencies on specifically what they look for in a grant application package.

You can find articles and other publications related to grants in the "Articles & Resources" section. Here you can find articles like, "Research Behavior That Leads to Success in Obtaining Grant Funding".

As an additional resource, provided in this section of the website is a listing of affiliated grant associations and organizations, where you can find even more related information about grants.

We want to hear from you - tell us how to make the "All About Grants" section of the website better for you. We invite you to submit a success story, events or other resources you want to share with the grant community.

THE GRANTS.GOV APPLICATION PROCESS: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

You may have wondered how a grant opportunity becomes a Grants.gov application package and finally a grant award, what happens in between and who is responsible during each step of the process? There are multiple players involved in the Grants.gov application process with a single mission: to place grant funding with the deserving recipient(s). The Grants.gov application process involves three parties, at a minimum: the grant-making agency (Grantor), Grants.gov and the Applicant. Each role is distinct and vital to the application process.

The application process begins with the Grantor, who establishes a grant or funding opportunity, funding criteria and a unique identifying Funding Opportunity Number (FON) for each grant. The grant is an opportunity the Grantor develops and results in the creation of funding criteria (the amount, and guidelines for receiving a grant). The grant/funding opportunity is then assigned a unique identifying number (the FON) which can be used by the applicant to search for the opportunity. The Grantor then visits Grants.gov to create a synopsis (summary of funding and criteria) and an application package using application forms, which will later be published on Grants.gov.

Grants.gov acts as a liaison between the Grantor and the Applicant and creates a unified environment for applicants to find and apply for federal funding from all 26 federal agencies. Grants.gov hosts the application package that the Grantor agency creates, in a searchable online database.

Once the application package or synopsis is posted on Grants.gov the applicants can now find the grant opportunities created by the federal grant-making agencies. In order to submit the application package the applicant needs to complete the registration process (registration takes between 3-5 business days). The application package can be completed offline, however the applicant must be connected to the Internet to submit the application package.

Once the application package has passed Grants.gov screening it is then transmitted to the Grantor agency for review and award determination (Grants.gov does not review the content of the application package for award determination). The grantor agency then determines whether or not the application package merits an award and will notify the applicant with an award offer.

See "The Life of a Grants.gov Application Package" for a diagram of the process. The Life of a Grants.gov Application Package is a diagram that outlines the Grants.gov application package process step-by-step.

GRANT FRAUD

Grants.gov is the official government website which helps you find and apply for federal grant funding. Unfortunately there are many imposters and individuals posing as official federal grant providers. There is no cost for you to apply for a federal grant listed on Grants.gov.

If you have received a phone call from someone seeking your bank account or other personal information in order to process a government grant that you did not apply for, you can submit a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission. If you have information regarding a grant fraud specific to HHS, please contact the HHS Fraud Hotline at 1-800-447-8477.

Recently Grants.gov's name was used in a grant fraud scheme in which an individual received a counterfeit check for $4,950 dollars accompanied by a letter (on phony Grants.gov letterhead) stating that the check was sent to cover the taxes associated with their grant award. The letter indicated that the grant of $50,950 had been approved. The check, issued for $4,950 was supposedly to be used to pay "federal and state taxes," according to the letter. The letter also stated that once the government office confirmed receipt of the $4,950 tax payment, the grant for $46,000 would be issued within two business days. Read more about this incident.

Grants.gov does not issue grant awards nor do we contact individuals on the basis of issuing a grant award. Grants.gov acts as a liaison between federal grant-making agencies and applicants, ensuring a unified federal grant process. When you apply for a grant on Grants.gov, your information is transferred to a grant-making agency; the agency then will determine your grant award status and contact you if necessary.

Unfortunately grant fraud is a prevalent issue, but it can be prevented by staying informed. There are several tips from the Better Business Bureau regarding grant fraud which we have included on the FAQ section of our site: Grant Fraud.

As an additional resource, The National Procurement Fraud Task Force developed Grant Fraud. Grant Fraud provides tips to protect your organization and the source of your federal funds by helping to detect and prevent fraud.

COMMON ADOBE ERROR MESSAGES: UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY MEAN

Understandably, Grants.gov applicants become very concerned when they are confronted with an error message while completing an Adobe Reader application package. The error messages aid the applicant by helping them more carefully monitor the information they have entered into an application form. These messages are tools to help an applicant navigate through the completion of an application package.

Error messages within the Adobe Reader application package are designed to indicate when information has been entered improperly, a virus has been detected, attachments do not follow the proper naming convention, an application has been corrupted, if there is a problem with your internet connection and when the data stream has been interrupted ("broken pipe").

Each field within a Grants.gov application form is made to allow specific data types and formats. Failure to enter information properly will result in errors during submission, for example entering a dollar amount in a date field will cause an error message to appear indicating that information has been entered improperly.

As with any software, the Adobe Reader application package may become infected by a virus. The Grants.gov application packages are equipped with mechanisms that detect viruses. Once a virus is detected the applicant will receive a message stating that a virus has been detected, at which point the applicant will need to run a virus scan on the computer and resubmit the completed application package.

In many Grants.gov application forms, there are places to add attachments. The attachments must follow the proper naming convention; which means each attachment must be named differently, have fewer than 50 characters, and have no spaces or special characters (\, %, /, #) in the name. Following these naming conventions will prevent errors during submission.

An application submitted with an incompatible version of Adobe Reader will cause a submission error. The applicant will receive an error message if the application package was opened with software other than a compatible version of Adobe Reader. Any and all edits made to an Adobe Reader application package must be made with the compatible version of Adobe Reader. Grants.gov does not guarantee to support other versions of Adobe Reader released prior to version 8.1.1.

Each Grants.gov error message indicates the cause of the error and provides the opportunity to correct the issue so that the application package passes Grants.gov screening. For more information and help troubleshooting errors, see Adobe Reader Error Messages or view the FAQ: How will I know if my application is rejected by the Grants.gov system?

WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER SUBMITTING YOUR GRANT APPLICATION PACKAGE

Completing and submitting a Grants.gov grant application package can be a strenuous process. Once an applicant has submitted an application what should they expect?

After submitting a Grants.gov application package the applicant will receive a series of notifications explaining the status of the application package. The applicant will receive a confirmation screen as well as up to four emails from Grants.gov, including a Submission Receipt, Submission Validation (or Rejection with Errors), Agency Retrieval, Agency Specific Tracking Number Assignment (only if grantor agency assigns tracking number).

Immediately after the applicant submits the application package, a confirmation screen indicating that Grants.gov has successfully received your complete application package will appear. This confirmation screen contains important information such as the Grants.gov tracking number that the applicant should keep for their records. The tracking number listed on the confirmation screen is a unique identifier and is used to track the application package in the Grants.gov system.

Within two business days after the submission of the grant application package, a submission receipt email will be sent. The submission receipt serves two purposes: first it provides proof that the submission was received by Grants.gov and supplies an official date and time stamp of the submission. Secondly, it explains that the submission is now being screened by the Grants.gov system.

Within the two business days, a second email will arrive indicating that the application package has either passed validation or it was rejected with errors. If the application package passes validation the applicant will receive a submission validation email, which explains the application has been successfully validated by the Grants.gov system and now awaits grantor retrieval and review.

The third Grants.gov email serves as notification that the grantor has retrieved the application package and is ready to review the content for award determination. The length of time required for grantor application screening, processing and award determination varies and is independent of the Grants.gov screening process. Grants.gov provides technical screening of the application package to ensure that it meets the technical requirements for opening and viewing the application and to ensure that it is free of viruses. Grants.gov does not review the content of the application package to determine award status.

Each Grants.gov application package is assigned a Grants.gov tracking number. Some grantor agencies also assign the application package an agency specific tracking number to be used within their internal systems. If an agency chooses to assign an application package agency specific tracking number, you will receive an email from the agency. Both the Grants.gov and agency specific tracking number can be used in their respective systems to track the status of the application package. Read "What to Expect After Submitting" for more information on tracking the status of your application package.

SHARE YOUR SUCCESS STORY WITH GRANTS.GOV

We at Grants.gov are always interested to hear about the great things you have been able to do with your grant award. If you have received a grant award by applying through Grants.gov, we want to hear from you! Grants.gov would love to feature a story about you, your organization and the terrific things you were able to accomplish through your grant funding. A story about you, your program or event will be featured on our new

"All About Grants" page as well as in this newsletter. We hope that your story will motivate and inspire others and show the importance of continued federal support for similar programming.

We are requesting that you send information about your programs and events, past or present, along with photographs, testimonials and a narrative about the event or program. Submit your Success Story idea today!

UPCOMING EVENT SCHEDULE

Here is a listing of Grants.gov, Grantor and other related events:

To view Summer Newsletter:
http://grantsgov.tmp.com/static2007/assets/GrantSummerNewsletter08.pdf

Office of Congressman Ruben Hinojosa (TX-15)
July 16, 2008
Washington, D.C. Library of Congress

Grants.gov Stakeholder Webcast
July 16, 2008
1-2 p.m. ET

Congressman Moran
July 23, 2008
Falls Church, VA

Maryland Governor's Grant Conference
September 8, 2008
Adelphi, Maryland

AAGP is "Celebrating 10 Years of Advancing the Grant Profession"
American Association of Grant Professionals
10th Annual National Conference
October 22-25, 2008
Long Beach, CA
Questions: info@grantprofessionals.org
www.grantprofessionals.org

Read about past events attended by Grants.gov

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HAVE GRANTS.GOV PRESENT AT YOUR EVENT

Grants.gov is available to present to your organization on the "Find & Apply" process. Resources permitting, we may be able to present in person, if not we can always present using our online e-seminar tool. The sessions are scheduled for one hour with an open dialogue on the process of finding and applying for federal grants with Grants.gov.

During the session you will be able to get important questions answered by an official Grants.gov representative. If you are interested in receiving a "Find & Apply" presentation or would like to request brochures and program information, please fill out the Outreach Request Form and email the completed form to support@grants.gov and a Grants.gov representative will contact you.

STAKEHOLDER WEBCAST

The next Grants.gov Stakeholder Webcast will be held July 16, 2008 from 1 – 2 p.m. ET, to discuss the transition to Adobe and other issues affecting the grant community. Details for viewing the Webcast are available on the Stakeholder Communications page:
http://www.grants.gov/help/stakeholder_communications.jsp.

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