USAID Policy Guidance on Posting Grant Opportunities and Application Packages on Grants.gov

A Mandatory Reference for ADS Chapter 303

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October 25, 2006**

As of December 19, 2005, all grant and cooperative agreement Request for Application (RFA), and Annual Program Statement (APS) announcements, modifications to the announcements, and the corresponding application packages must be posted to Grants.gov to allow for electronic submission of applications. The exceptions to this are:

1.   Programs that publish funding opportunities only in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA).

2.   Announcements of funding opportunities for awards less than $25,000 for which 100 percent of eligible applicants live outside the United States.

3.   Single (sole) source announcement of funding opportunities issued by an agency, which are specifically directed to a known recipient.

Grants.gov has mandated that all Federal personnel use e-Authentication digital credentials for user login and registration. Agency guidance regarding this process follows.

A digital credential requested through Operational Research Consultants, Inc. (ORC) is an interim e-Authentication solution only for Grants.gov. When USAID determines its final solution for digital credentials, users may be required to cease using the ORC credentials and obtain credentials from another service provider.

Each USAID staff member who uses or will use Grants.gov should immediately request credentials through ORC. The hyperlink to ORC is http://www.orc.com. Use the e-Authentication hyperlink in the dark blue "Apply Now!" box on the right-hand side of the web-site. Once users provide and submit their business and personal information, Level One credentials will automatically be provided. Level One credentials is all that is needed for use with Grants.gov.

Grants.gov users that cover more than one mission location and have multiple logins and passwords, MUST obtain an E-Authentication credential for each login name.

At this time, USAID is NOT recommending or mandating the use of any specific technology or the use of any specific digital credential provider to satisfy the requirements of the rest of the e-Government Initiatives or the Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) requirements of Homeland Security Presidential Directive 12 (HSPD-12). If you have requirements for the selection or use of any digital credential for any purpose, you must send the requirements to the Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) at isso@usaid.gov.

Below are specific steps for creating and posting an Application Package on Grants.gov

1. Application packages in Grants.gov must consist of Instructions and Forms. The instructions will be the Request for Application (RFA) or the Annual Program Statement (APS).   If a draft RFA is being posted to Grants.gov without an application package, it must be clearly marked as a draft (see the numbering system below for specific guidance). If the RFA is not marked as a draft and does not have an application package, the Agency will be reported to OMB as non-compliant.

2. The cover page must contain the following essential information for applicants:

    *   The Agency Name – USAID-X (Insert "Washington" or "Mission Name" here)

    *   Grant (Funding) Opportunity Number - The Grant (Funding) Opportunity Number is the same as the RFA or APS number. The guidance below must be followed for RFA, Draft RFA and APS numbering, specifically for differentiating the type of document and for tracking and reporting of USAID solicitations in Grants.gov.

        e.g. USAID-XXXXXXX-XX-XXX - XXX
                         1   2   3   4

        1 = USAID-Washington-office, division, and/or branch code for the USAID/W issuing entity; or USAID-Mission name-country code for solicitations issued overseas (no specific fixed limit to the number of digits).

        2 = the last two digits of the fiscal year (i.e., 07 for FY 07).

        3 = the sequential number for each solicitation record created for that issuing office (i.e., 001, 002).

        4 = RFA, Draft RFA or APS as appropriate.

        Examples: USAID-Washington-DCHA-07-1234-RFA;
                                  USAID-Armenia-111 -07-1234-APS
                                  USAID-Bolivia-511-07-1234-Draft RFA

        NOTE: Use dashes (-) only. DO NOT use slashes (/).

    *   Grant Title - (e.g. AIDS Research in the U.S.)

NOTE: Agreement Officers and Program Officers must ensure that geospatial-related grant announcements that are posted to Grants.gov contain appropriate geospatial keywords such as GIS, Mapping, Remote Sensing, and Geography, to facilitate its discovery by GOS stakeholders. For more information on this, please refer to: **http://www.geo-one-stop.gov/metadata/index.html**

- Issuance Date - e.g. Jan. 01, 2006

- Closing Date and Time - e.g. March 30, 2006, 5:00 p.m. EST, Washington D.C. or July 10, 2006, 3:00 p.m. Bangkok time

  Electronic Language - Include language stating that, "The federal grant process is now web-enabled, allowing for applications to be received on-line." Also include a disclaimer stating that "USAID bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes associated with electronic submissions." This language may also include a statement that hard copy applications are still accepted or required, at the discretion of the Agreement Officer.

  Additionally, include a statement that, "To be eligible for award, the applicant must provide all required information in its application, including the requirements found in any attachments to the Grants.gov opportunity."

3. Application packages must be named in order for them to be posted on Grants.gov. The naming convention for all packages must be as follows: USAID-xxxxx-07-1234-RFA (insert country name-country code or Washington-Office acronym, followed by the last two digits of the fiscal year, followed by a four digit sequential numerical ID, followed by "APS", "RFA." or "Draft RFA"). It is important that the numbering system in paragraph 2 above is followed as it is required by Grants.gov for tracking and reporting compliance to OMB.

4. As part of the instructions to applicants, include any information pertinent to electronic submission of the application. This should include any format considerations, software requirements for attachments (Word, Excel, PDF, etc.), and instructions on how the applicant should attach the technical and cost portions of its application.

5. At a minimum, the application packages posted on Grants.gov should include Instructions (can be RFA or APS document), and applicable forms (SF-424 and the required Representations and Certifications). Once instructions have been prepared in a Word Document, a new application package can be created in Grants.gov by choosing the application package titled **"USAID General RFA Package."** This is the set of forms that USAID requests applicants to complete for grant opportunities, which include the SF-424, SF-424a, SF-424b, SF-424c, SF-

424d and the Attachments form. The Survey on Ensuring Equal Opportunity for Applicants is also included in the forms package. Although the RFA package must include this form, completion and return of this form by the applicant is **optional**. If all of these forms are not required for a particular grant opportunity, the instructions to the applicant need to be clear on which forms are required. No other forms from the Forms Repository menu are authorized for use.

6.   All required forms, including Representations and Certifications required by ADS 303 and USAID assistance policy, must be included as attachments, along with the RFA or APS content.

7.   Note that electronic applications will be considered received by USAID on the date and time when the application has been submitted to Grants.gov for validation. Grants.gov will certify and electronically stamp applications upon receipt.

8.   Not everyone in USAID will have access to all available information in the system. Roles will be assigned based on the individual's work assignments. For RFAs, Draft RFAs and APSs the Negotiator and Agreement Officer will have the Roles of Manage Synopses, Manage Packages, View Applications and Agency Grant Retriever; for APSs, the Program Officer for that APS, will have the Roles of Manage Synopses, Manage Packages, View Applications and Agency Grant Retriever. For assignment of these roles in Grants.gov, send an e-mail to the "Grants (USAID)" mailbox through the supervisory Agreement Officer in the Mission or through the OAA Team Leader for AID/W personnel.

The Roles in Grants.gov are:

Manage Synopses – allows a user to publish and manage grant synopses.

Manage Packages – allows a user to publish and manage application packages.

View Applications – allows a user to view the applications submitted to the agency.

Agency Grant Retriever – allows a user to retrieve applications that were submitted to the agency.

All grant opportunities (excluding the exemptions noted above) must be posted on Grants.gov with an accompanying Application Package; however, applicants need not be required to submit applications electronically. Hard copy submissions are acceptable for these grant opportunities at the discretion of the Agreement Officer. Sole source and unsolicited proposals will be accepted in hard copy.