

**SEPTEMBER 2004 STAKEHOLDER MEETING MINUTES**  
**September 29, 2004**

Next Meeting

Date: Wednesday, October 27, 2004

Time: 2:00-4:00 pm

Place: HHH Building

All meeting materials and presentations are available at Grants.gov by visiting <http://www.grants.gov/meetingmaterials092904>.

**Opening Remarks and Presentation:**

Ms. Rebecca Spitzgo, Grants.gov Program Manager, began the meeting at 2pm with the following agenda:

- Grants.gov Update
- DUNS Number Update
- SF 424 – Version 2 Update
- Grants.gov Agency Participation Goals
- Stakeholder Questions & Answers

After welcoming the audience, Ms. Spitzgo presented the Grants.gov posters, which are updated monthly and reflect the most current statistics and activity. They are visual charts tracking progress as Grants.gov reaches its one year anniversary next month. The first chart, “Building the Links to Success” tracks and highlights the total number of online grant applications submitted. The total number of online grant applications received to date is 1089. Grants.gov has reached and surpassed the milestone of 1,000 electronically submitted grant applications. A press release regarding this accomplishment is available on the site at <http://www.grants.gov/assets/Grantsgov1000PR.pdf>. An update will also be provided to the Executive Board at the upcoming meeting.

The second poster, “Building the Road to Success,” features a roadmap highlighting the agencies that have posted application packages to Grants.gov towards next month’s anniversary goal of having all 26 agencies posting application packages. For September, one new agency, the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA), has come onboard bringing the total number of agencies that are posting application packages on Grants.gov to 17 of 26. The total number of agencies onboard is 18 if the Japan – US Friendship Commission (JUSFC) is included. In the future, wording may be changed from 26 grant-making agencies to 33 or 34 agencies, which would include other such Commissions and smaller agencies. Nine more agencies are needed to post in order to reach our October target. Four to five agencies are currently on schedule to post by the end of October. Please refer to the “Status of Agency Participation on Apply” handout for these updates.

The third poster, "Building an Environment for Success," depicts the monthly progress report of agency participation. For September, nine new application packages were published, for a total of 184 application packages published to date. Grants.gov continues to work towards meeting the October anniversary goal of 250 published applications. September has been a slow month for Grants.gov with the fiscal year closing at the end of the month. However, activity for 2005 has begun to ramp-up.

Another highlight for the month in Grants.gov news includes next month's one year anniversary which will showcase the program's accomplishments and recognitions. The meeting will be a celebratory event, with an award ceremony and an informal reception.

Ms. Spitzgo then provided the Grants.gov update. The individual functionality SF-424 face sheet is now existent. NEA and the National Endowments of the Humanities (NEH) took on the task of developing the face sheet and have delivered it to Grants.gov. The data is currently being checked. The purpose of this task is to make the forms easy to use and to streamline the process by making terminology consistent with other forms.

Ms. Spitzgo then introduced Steve Drescher from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA), a part of the Department of Commerce (DOC), for an update. DOC was the recipient of the first Grants.gov electronic application when the site was first launched. Now, NOAA is launching a new back-end system for grants management across the entire agency. Grants.gov is being used as a part of their training. The website was recently launched by NOAA and provides a direct link to Grants.gov. Instructions to apply have been used from the Grants.gov website. NOAA's September 2004 newsletter highlights the Grants.gov relationship. NOAA also conducted a Webinar Orientation about grants online regarding the grant development process. The webinar includes a Grants.gov overview, the Grants.gov applicant registration process, and then a grants online system demonstration. The presentation can be downloaded via [http://www.ofa.noaa.gov/~grantsonline/gol\\_presentations.html](http://www.ofa.noaa.gov/~grantsonline/gol_presentations.html).

Ms. Spitzgo then continued with the Grants.gov Update. The new Grants.gov Deputy Program Manager has been hired and is expected to arrive on October 4. John Etcheverry was formerly Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of Portersville College in California. He has mostly state government experience in addition to some Federal experience, and is familiar with the grant world. This is a great opportunity to get the grant community's perspective on Grants.gov.

Regarding the R&R data set, changes are being finalized and it is expected to launch, deploy and obtain Office of Management and Budget (OMB) clearance within the next two weeks. The mandatory data set instructions and forms are wrapping up and will be presented to the Executive Board next week. Minor changes are being made to the face sheet. It will be published on the Federal Register to solicit any comments and feedback. Once comments and feedback have been taken into consideration, the mandatory data set will be expected to launch in February 2005.

Ms. Spitzgo then discussed the results from Wave Two of the Grants.gov Satisfaction Survey. The results and complete details of the research can be accessed on the site at <http://www.grants.gov/MarketResearch>. Wave Two results are very similar to that of Wave One. The good news is that we are still hearing from the grant community that Grants.gov is preferred over a paper-based grant application process. However, there is still room for improvement. In the spring, after the fourth Wave has been completed, a briefing will be provided to the Stakeholders.

Grants.gov was selected for the Government Computer News (GCN) Agency Award. Grants.gov was notified two weeks ago about the selection. There were 116 nominations and Grants.gov was one of 10 selected. The publication of the article about the award will be available on October 15. In the meantime, more details can be found at GCN's website ([www.gcn.com](http://www.gcn.com)).

Ms. Spitzgo's final September update item was her recent interview with IBM's Business of Government Hour which is scheduled to air on October 16 from 9:00-10:00 AM on WJFK FM 106.7. This interview was a follow-up from former Grants.gov Program Manager Charlie Havekost's interview one and a half years ago. The interview is available on the site at <http://www.grants.gov/RadioShow>. An email will be sent out shortly with a link directly to the interview.

Ms. Spitzgo then introduced Charlie Martin, Director of Business Development and Brian Williams, Government Customer Manager, both from Dun & Bradstreet (D&B).

### **DUNS Number Update**

Mr. Charlie Martin began the presentation by highlighting features and D&B DUNS Number benefits, a few being:

- Identifies unique organizational function and geographic location
- Retained for the life of an entity
- Identifies corporate family tree relationships
- Eliminates duplicate files
- Integrates information between internal databases

Mr. Martin also noted the Fair Credit Reporting Act as the reason that D&B cannot assign DUNS number to individuals. However, individuals acting in an entrepreneurial capacity and doing business with the government under their own name are considered sole proprietors and therefore, eligible for DUNS numbers. This applies to independent contractors and grant applicants who will perform a service under an established business relationship with the Federal government.

He then discussed call volumes and noted that in the second quarter (Q2) of February 2004, Grants.gov experienced a high call volume of 71,523 calls from contractors and grantees. During this period, hold time was 6.35 minutes. Since then, call volume has

significantly declined to 48,398 calls answered in the fourth quarter (Q4). Hold time has also decreased to .52 minutes.

On the Grants.gov “Get Started” site page, D&B facilitated a standardized web form. This resolved several problems including complications experienced from international applicants whose process was originally strenuous. The ability to request a DUNS number is now available on-line where previously, only a 1-800 number was provided. Some of the features of the form are:

- Required fields are in red
- Question/Help pop-ups for common Q&A
- Physical and mailing (optional) address
- Open text “notes” field for additional comments, questions, concerns, language complications, etc.

The form also features data entry checks and validation for web form submissions. Each incorrect field is highlighted for the user. Once information is correctly inputted, there is a verification page to ensure that all information entered is correct. On the form page, the country dropdown automatically routes the DUNS number request to the appropriate D&B global office thus reinforcing D&B’s global DUNS number policy to assign DUNS numbers free of charge and as fast as systematically possible. At the end of submission, a confirmation page is shown verifying a successful DUNS number request. Contact information, via phone or email, is also provided on this same page. The process is database driven instead of email driven in order to track how long the process is taking. Currently, the process takes about 24-48 hours.

Q: What is the purpose of the Plus 4?

A: The Plus 4 can distinguish between separate bank accounts, for example, that have the same roll-up. However, D&B does not assign Plus 4’s, just unique DUNS numbers which have parent DUNS numbers that they roll-up to.

Q: If an agency moves locations, do they retain the same DUNS number?

A: Yes, the DUNS number stays with the agency indefinitely and is never reassigned.

Q: Is there an effort to consolidate/track how institutions are requesting DUNS numbers?

A: The effort to consolidate involves filtering through any bad data and eliminating it if possible. Also, family trees are never changed and are consolidated if possible.

Q: Does call volume coincide with books closings, i.e. the Federal fiscal year?

A: The increased call volume in Q2 can be attributed to a large FEMA program closing. Otherwise, call volume does not coincide with the Federal fiscal year. However, in anticipation of large grant activity, it would be helpful to contact D&B in order to align their staff for these impending announcements.

Q: Can foreign universities obtain a DUNS number?

A: Yes. The web form is the best option.

Q: At one point it was faster to call the 1-800 number to request a DUNS number. Is this still true?

A: With the web form in place, it is now faster to obtain a DUNS number online. However, the call option is still there.

Ms. Spitzgo then introduced Mary Rexford, Management Consultant with the Grants.gov Program Management Office.

### **SF 424 – Version 2 Update**

Ms. Mary Rexford provided an update on the SF 424 Version 2 core data set. Version 1 was deployed with the Grants.gov “Apply” feature in October 2003. Grants.gov committed to have the schema remain static for at least one year so that agencies could update their back-end systems to Grants.gov. Version 2 is not a major redesign but a number of cumulative changes. These changes will include standardizing data, incorporating lessons learned from the past year and revising existing or incorporating new data elements. This task involves reviewing comments on the data currently collected on the discretionary SF 424 face sheet and the Application for Federal Assistance form version 1 and determining what changes, if any, are needed. Public comments have been received from Version 1 and are on hold pending further analysis.

The current status on the revision is that strawman SF 424 documents have been developed and distributed to the working group. The working group has met and begun the process of reviewing the strawman. Twelve agencies are participating in this working group including the National Science Foundation (NSF), Small Business Administration (SBA), and the Department of Justice (DOJ) to name a few. There is also representation from PL 106/107 work groups.

Related activities that are ongoing include PL 106/107 work groups streamlining their efforts with the Certification & Assurances and Budget forms. The resulting impact is that these attachments are not included in this effort. Also the actions to standardize common data elements across market segments such as the R&R and mandatory data sets, NEA, NEH and the individual SF 424 face sheet are under way.

Data standardization involved updating the global schema and the standardization of data elements across SF 424’s include:

- Field labels
- Field descriptions
- Field size
- Validation rules
- Help tips

By the end of October, the working group plans to complete identification of the SF 424, Version 2 core data set. This will include the SF 424 face sheet, instructions and

additional forms as identified. Then Version 2 SF 424 will be distributed to the 26 grant-making agencies during a two week period for review. By November 17, agency review is expected to be completed and on December 3, the SF 424, Version 2 core data set will be presented to the Grants Executive Board.

A deployment schedule is provided, however, this is Grants.gov's best guess. There are several issues that still need to be addressed, such as the effect these changes will have and how the versions will be changed within applications. Once the Executive Board reviews the SF 424, Version 2 core data set, it will be presented to OMB for clearance. In turn, OMB will publish the SF 424 Version 2 for public comment sometime in December or January. Grants.gov hopes to obtain clearance from OMB by July 2005. Grants.gov anticipates deploying the Discretionary Data Set and Schema, Version 2 by Spring 2006. A second working group may be formed for schema management and its possible trickle down effect, although the schema could change very little. There will be no emergency clearance this time around.

Ms. Spitzgo then discussed Grants.gov's Agency Participation Goals.

### **Grants.gov Agency Participation Goals**

Ms. Spitzgo began by providing some of Grants.gov's accomplishments to date. On the "Find" site, the Grants.gov site experiences 1.2 million to 1.4 million hits a week, varying with postings. Over 600,000 grant notification emails are sent each week. Grants.gov anticipates 100% participation by all 26 grant-making agencies by its one year anniversary in October 2004. On the "Apply" side, 17 agencies have posted 184 applications packages and 1089 electronic grant applications have been received. Over 1,400 members within the grant community are registered users for the site.

Grants.gov now wants to focus on increasing "Apply" usage by establishing agency goals. The new goal is 15,000 electronic application submissions by June 2005. This number was originally the goal for the Grants.gov one year anniversary next month. Ramp-up schedules will be revised by November 2004 and Grants.gov expects 50% of the agency ramp-up schedules to be complete by October 2005 with a minimum of 25% participation from all agencies and 100% participation from 13 of the 26 agencies. Ramp-up is anticipated to be completed by October 2006.

Ms. Spitzgo then highlighted a chart which defines agency goals for June 2005. This chart lists the 26 agencies and their specific goals for application packages posted and electronic applications submissions. These goals were determined based on the percentage of dollars awarded to the agencies. Some agency goals were increased based on prior experience with electronic grants. The total number of electronic applications received depicted in the chart is 17, 425, higher than the 15,000 goal for June 2005 in order to provide a cushion. Also note that all electronic grant application submissions received since October 2003 will count towards the June 2005 agency goal.

In order to help reach these goals, in addition to deploying the individual functionality in August 2004, Grants.gov will:

- Deploy the R&R forms (October 2004)
- Deploy the applicant system-to-system interface (March 2005)
- Continue outreach and follow-up with the grant-making agencies (Ongoing)
- Continue outreach to the grant community (Ongoing)
- Actively recognize and encourage agency participation (Ongoing)
- Provide “Apply” training to the agencies and grant community (Ongoing)
- Share lessons learned amongst agencies such as the monthly Stakeholder Meetings (Ongoing)

Some suggested strategies for the agencies to help them reach their goal are:

- Target grant competitions that receive a large volume of applications
- Target grant competitions that require electronic submission of applications
- Target specific user communities and make available as many grant competitions as possible for electronic submission
- Notify, educate and encourage the eligible applicants to apply electronically
- Provide training sessions to targeted user communities such as the training demonstration available on the site at <http://www.grants.gov/CompleteApplication#demo>
- Target grant competitions where individuals can apply

Also, at this time, there are a number of outstanding technical issues that are being addressed to facilitate electronic application submissions. They are:

- Issue: Completion of required data fields
  - Corrective Action: Provide improved help message to facilitate the completion of form and the ability to submit
  - Target completion date: October 2004
- Issue: Demonstration/training site
  - Corrective Action: Provide ability for users to submit a test application and provide a training site
  - Target completion date: October 2004
- Issue: Reuse of data
  - Corrective Action: Provide the ability to import data into new grant applications
  - Target completion date: April 2005

Driving agency usage and achieving the 15,000 applications submission goal by June 2005 will send the message that Grants.gov is here to stay. Also, agencies will gain substantial experience that can further aid in streamlining and confirming that Grants.gov meets the needs of the grant community. In time, Grants.gov will become THE site the grant community will utilize to “Find” and “Apply” for Federal grant opportunities. This

will also serve to validate that a government-wide approach does work and the return on investment will be realized.

Q: Did OMB approve of the Agency Goals outlined for June 2005?

A: Yes

Q: Did the Grants Executive Board approve of these goals?

A: The Grants Executive Board was given these goals and no objections or comments were stated at that time.

Q: What effect will the PureEdge upgrade have?

A: The PureEdge upgrade will enhance functionality by allowing users to import/export data. It will also enhance accessibility. The current version being used is 6.1. Version 7 will be available in Q1 2005.

Q: What is the status on the Line of Business (LOB) initiatives?

A: The business case is on the site and has been submitted to OMB. The proposals are out for consideration and are evolving. 2005 will be more of a planning year.