AUGUST 2006 STAKEHOLDER MEETING MINUTES
August 30, 2006

Next Meeting
Date: Wednesday, October 25, 2006
Time: 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Place: HHS – Hubert H. Humphrey Building

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

Opening Remarks and Presentation:
Mr. John Etcheverry, Grants.gov Deputy Program Manager, began the meeting at
1:30 p.m. with the following agenda:

- Grants.gov Update
- E-Auth Milestone Report
- OMB PL 106-107 Update
- Grants.gov Usability Focus Group
- Questions & Answers

Mr. Etcheverry kicked off the meeting by thanking everyone for coming and reviewing
the agenda.

Grants.gov Update
Mr. Etcheverry provided the Grants.gov update and began by informing attendees that it
had been a very busy summer. Referring to the chart in the presentation, he explained
that between this year and last, a similar trend had been recorded. Mr. Etcheverry
mentioned that the season got longer this year, and although there was a big spike in
December, Grants.gov kept a very steady pace. The program is now crossing the 80,000
threshold, with 44,000 packages posted to Grants.gov. Grants.gov is at about the same
number for the registered users as well. These numbers are a good testament that the
program is effective and is working towards its original goals. Some usage highlights
included the below:

- Almost 50,000 registered Authorized Organizational Representatives
- Over 79,000 applications have been received with close to 96,000 to date
- Currently there are 2,800 total packages posted by agencies for FY06 with over
  2,700 synopses posted
- 21 agencies are now above 75%, whereas on April 24, 2006, only 12 were above
  75%

Mr. Etcheverry explained that a lot of agencies were able to hit the 75% goal in the later part of the year. With 270-280 more closings this year, Grants.gov may finish up around 90,000 in one year. Since the goal for applications was set at 45,000, the PMO is extremely happy with these numbers.

As for the FY2007 ramp-up, Mr. Etcheverry announced that Grants.gov will be soliciting agencies soon to find out what will be placed on Find and Apply. The PMO will be asking agencies to verify 2007 expectations because it is useful for our office, the help desk, etc. Knowing the issues that you may come across will also help us communicate better with OMB.

Mr. Etcheverry then introduced Mr. Russ Wyland, a Program Advisor for Grants.gov who has been heading up the E-Authentication effort.

E-Auth Milestone Report
Mr. Wyland began by explaining how Grants.gov had been strongly encouraged by OMB to have E-Auth up and running by August 30, 2006. With this deployment of E-Auth, Grants.gov just looked at it from the agency user standpoint. In the future, Grants.gov will be doing a similar E-Auth deployment for applicants. The user testing went well and Grants.gov was very grateful for the twenty or more people who volunteered from the government. He thanked the agency testers from Department of Commerce, Department of Education, Department of Energy, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Justice, Department of State, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, National Archives and Records Administration, National Endowment for the Humanities, National Science Foundation, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Social Security Administration, and United State Agency for International Development.

For this E-Auth initiative, there were very few bumps and it was an overall smooth process. We received a lot of helpful feedback and advice on this effort. The available CSP providers include USDA eAuthentication, Employee Express and ORC, Inc. Tonight, at 5pm, we will work to unveil E-Authentication. What does that mean to you? Just that there will be some maintenance on the site from 5:00 to 6:30 PM this evening. The following functionalities may be affected: Search, Agency Login, E-Biz POC Login, Technical Library and System-to-System XML posting through email. We anticipate completing testing and having E-Authentication running by 6:30pm tonight. We have sent out a considerable amount of outreach materials to encourage users to get their credentials, but if you haven't received this information, you can refer to the user guides that are located in the "For Agencies" section of the site under "Agency Help." When creating the user guide, we kept it as easy to understand as possible since we know that this is a new process to most users. Please feel free to contact your Program Advisor if you have any questions and our Help Desk is also equipped to handle questions about this as well.

To close, Mr. Wyland said that with sadness and joy, he was going to be leaving Grants.gov on Friday and heading back to NEH the following week. The next steps of E-Authentication will be to deploy it to the applicant side that that effort will be led by Mr. Vince Sprouls, Grants.gov Program Advisor.

Mr. Etcheverry thanked him for the update and then expressed what a great job Mr. Wyland had done with managing the E-Auth effort. He explained that when Mr. Wyland first started, they decided to give the task to the "new guy" and he just picked it right up. He managed to get the Grants.gov PMO, the systems integrator, OMB, the different CSPs, GSA, the Inter-op lab and the E-Auth PMO all on the same page and really helped to manage the communication between everyone.

Mr. Etcheverry then introduced Mr. Tyson Whitney from the Office of Management and Budget to discuss Public Law 106-107.

OMB PL 106-107 Update
Mr. Whitney opened by explaining that he was on detail with OMB from USDA and would like to give everyone an update on what has been done in regards to PL 106-107 and where it was going. During Mr. Whitney's overview, he went over what PL 106-107 was, explaining that it was from the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 1999 (FFAMIA). PL 106-107 stands for Grant Streamlining Initiative and includes 26 Federal agencies. The vision of PL 106-107 is to provide:

- One place for all grants administration policies
    - Title 2 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) – *Grants and Agreement*
- One Catalog with all assistance programs listed
    - Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) registration required
- One announcement format of assistance opportunities
    - Standard format, regardless of where posted
    - Announcement synopses available electronically

The goals include improving effectiveness and performance, simplifying application and reporting and improving delivery of service. It is organized as follows:

- Office of Management and Budget (OMB) – Oversight
- Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) – Managing Partner
- Grants Policy Committee (GPC), Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Council committee
- PL 106-107 Program Management Office (PMO)
- Workgroups – Pre-award, Mandatory, Post-award, Audit Oversight and Training/Certification
- Various Subgroups – activities, initiatives, etc.

The PL 106-107 Role in Grant Streamlining Initiatives are as follows:

- PL 106-107

- Provide coordination/oversight of interagency initiatives through GPC
- Coordinate the agency's annual report to Congress
- Implement work group products

- Grants Management Line of Business (GMLOB)
    - Provide direction and coordination on the GMLOB
    - Serves as one of the nine government LOBs
    - Envisions a common, end to end solution to support grantor and grantees
    - Applies consortia-based approach based on shared business interests

- Grants.gov: E-Government initiative
    - Improved access to services via the Internet
    - Provides single unified storefront for finding and applying for grants

Mr. Whitney then went over the Grants Initiative structure, which is also shown in the Stakeholder presentation. The products include:

- Standard Form (SF)-424 Forms Family
- Annual P. L. 106-107 Reports to Congress: Federal and Agency Specific Reports
- Legislative Proposal on Lobbying Certifications
- OMB Guidance for 2 CFR
- Standard Funding Opportunity Announcement
- Grants.gov Find Data Elements
- OMB Debarment and Suspension Guidance for 2 CFR
- OMB Cost Principles Alignment
- DUNS Number Requirement
- Increase of OMB Circular A-133, *Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non-Profit Organizations,* threshold to $500,000
- Revision to 2006 A-133 Compliance Supplement

The future products include:

- One Standard Form for:
    - Invention Summary Report
    - Federal Financial Report
    - Real Property Report
    - Personal Property Report
    - Performance/Progress Report
    - Research Progress Report
- CCR registration policy
- Standard award terms/conditions to be proposed 2006
- Standard award notice to be proposed 2006
- Proposal for handling certifications and assurances
- Standards for Grant Specialist/Grants Management Officer training and certification – agency survey underway

- Agency relocations of suspension/debarment regulations 2 CFR – underway and to be complete by end of 2006

Mr. Whitney then went over the ongoing activities of PL 106-107, which include:

- FY 2006 Annual Report to Congress due *November, 2006*
- Terms and Conditions, Award Notice, National Policy Requirements
- Unified Performance, Real Property, and Personal Property reports near completion
- Government-wide grants management career development plan
- Revision of SF 424A (Budget Format)
- Surveys out to constituents/awaiting feedback

The assessment of PL 106-107 implementation in the GAO Report (06-566) found that grantees' views should be obtained as approaches are developed and that the reauthorization of the act beyond its sunset date. Mr. Whitney then went over the future activities of PL 106-107, which include:

- Implementation of Government-wide forms
- FY 2007 Annual Report to Congress due *November, 2007*
- Increased communication and outreach with grantee community:
    - GPC Stakeholder Meetings:
        - First of several meetings scheduled for Fall 2006
    - National Grants Partnership:
        - Presentation 9/10/06
- Continue improved communication and collaboration with Grants.gov and GMLoB

Mr. Whitney then stated that the OMB looked forward to obtaining the highest amount of communication, stressing that open and direct lines would help all parties work well together. The PL 106-107 effort ends on the sunset date, which is November 2007. Mr. Whitney then asked if there were any questions.

Q: This has been an interesting summer in Congress with the two bills. What do you have to report about that?
A: Basically, there is a hold on the bill.

Q: Will you be at the Federal Demonstration meeting coming up?
A: An OMB representative will be there. I will not personally be there as the nature of the request was more of a technical issue. You can also contact the office.

Mr. Whitney thanked everyone for their time and closed by giving a few reference sources that might help the attendees out with any further questions.

Mr. Etcheverry thanked Mr. Whitney for coming and then introduced Dr. Phil Irish, Grants.gov Program Advisor, to discuss User-Focused Efforts that Grants.gov has been working on.

Grants.gov Usability Focus Group
Dr. Irish opened by giving a little of his background, explaining that he has been on detail with Grants.gov and is an employee of the National Defense University. He teaches several different classes there, covering topics such as enterprise architecture, continuity of operations, e-Government and human/computer interaction. During his two months with Grants.gov, he wanted to focus on the user experience by raising the hood and really looking at the mechanics of the whole process. The usability focus group he conducted looked at what users were saying on how to improve the site. He first looked at the user guide about a month ago and asked agencies to send their own user guides. He received several back that showed a great variety and had different structures. Dr. Irish then worked with the Grants.gov Help Desk and got access to what types of calls they were receiving. He found a lot of similarities between what agencies were supplying and the questions that were being asked. What he created was a short version that is called "A Grants.gov Primer for New Grantors." He informed attendees that at some point, the PMO might ask users to look at it to test usability. The laboratory usability analysis that was performed included representative users and video/audio taping. He told the audience that they were able to record all data, comments, where a user's mouse was sitting, etc. It is a great tool to incorporate continual tweaking of the Grants.gov site. Dr. Phil then went over the participant data, which was in a chart in the presentation.

Dr. Phil then asked how many people in the audience had heard of www.usability.gov? Not very many people raised their hands and Dr. Phil explained that the site allows people to do analysis and is a good tool to know about. Dr. Phil went on to explain that during the second data call he performed, he received help from several agencies, including USAID, DoJ, NOAA (DoC), HUD, SSA, NEA, NSF and ACF (HHS). He thanked them for their efforts. He thanked Grants.gov for his time with them and said that he was grateful for the experience. Dr. Phil also said that he was really impressed with the Grants.gov team and was now a big fan. He then gave attendees an idea of what a detailee's experience was:

- Small but hard working team of Federal PMO staffers working with contractors;
- Work involved is more complicated than just putting up a website;
- Constant battle of consensus, clear communications and value added of an enterprise approach to government;
- The real reason behind Grants.gov's multiple eGovernment awards is simply because it is a good idea.

A few questions were directed at Dr. Phil regarding his studies, as follows:

Q: Were your usability efforts in response to the recent GAO report?

A: We actually had the discussion about where Dr. Phil would apply himself before the GAO report got out. Since the inception of Grants.gov, we have been trying to get user feedback in order to improve the site.

Q: The user feedback you mentioned – did it cost anything?
A: As a Health and Human Services Program, the cost for Grants.gov to use the lab was free.

Mr. Etcheverry thanked Dr. Phil for his presentation and for his work with Grants.gov. He went on to explain that when Dr. Phil started, they wanted to put him on a project. While the PMO is aware that the Grants.gov site is not perfect, they would like to get to a framework within which the program can accurately measure and then make changes as necessary. Mr. Etcheverry then stated that the PMO was proud to announce that Grants.gov was a Center for Digital Government "Digital Government Achievement Award" winner this year. While it's not about awards, it is nice to get some recognition and we are looking forward to the future of the program.

With several changes in staff recently, Mr. Etcheverry stated that the Grants.gov office will soon be welcoming new faces aboard. Ms. Mary Gonzales recently moved back to Colorado, while Ms. Laura Quirk and Ms. Katie Root will be leaving the PMO soon. We wish Ms. Quirk all the best, who started here as a temp and was then a full-time employee. She received a promotion with HRSA and we know she will do well there. Ms. Root is also moving on, and I must say as one of our longest standing employees, we will miss her commitment to the program. She has truly helped to keep the Outreach and Help Desk efforts in full swing during her time here and we wish her well in her new ventures with her career and law school. We are happy to announce that Mr. Mannie Pair from DOD has joined us on detail through Thanksgiving. He is filling in as a Program Advisor and is currently working on some of the forms projects. Ms. Jen Flach from NIH is also with us a few days a week through October. She plans to help transition E-Auth as well as System-to-System enhancements. She also will be helping us with building the framework for change management. At this point, we are not a start-up anymore, and we have a positive focus for the future of the program.

Questions & Answers

Mr. Etcheverry asked if any of the attendees had any questions. Questions included the following:

Q: With any recent changes to forms, is there any place that has a log of those changes?
A: The technical library. If you have specific questions on this, I would suggest contacting your Program Advisor.

Q: We're big users of the XML download capability. Do you plan to continue having this available?
A: Yes, we will continue as this is pretty actively used.

Mr. Etcheverry then thanked everyone for joining Grants.gov for the meeting.

The meeting concluded at 3:00 p.m.