

CIRCULAR A-102 (REVISED 10/7/94, As Further Amended 8/29/97)

CIRCULAR NO. A-102
Revised

TO THE HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND ESTABLISHMENTS

SUBJECT: Grants and Cooperative Agreements with State and Local Governments

1. **Purpose.** This Circular establishes consistency and uniformity among Federal agencies in the management of grants and cooperative agreements with State, local, and federally-recognized Indian tribal governments. This revision supersedes Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular No. A-102, dated March 3, 1988.

2. **Authority.** This Circular is issued under the authority of the Budget and Accounting Act of 1921, as amended; the Budget and Accounting Procedures Act of 1950, as amended; Reorganization Plan No. 2 of 1970; Executive Order 11541 and the Chief Financial Officers Act, 31 U.S.C. 503. Also included in the Circular are standards to ensure consistent implementation of sections 202, 203, and 204 of the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act of 1968, the Office of Federal Procurement Policy Act Amendments of 1983, and sections 6301-08, title 31, United States Code.

3. **Background.** On March 12, 1987, the President directed all affected agencies to issue a grants management common rule to adopt government-wide terms and conditions for grants to State and local governments, and they did so. In 1988, OMB revised the Circular to provide guidance to Federal agencies on other matters not covered in the common rule.

4. **Required Action.** Consistent with their legal obligations, all Federal agencies administering programs that involve grants and cooperative agreements with State, local and Indian tribal governments (grantees) shall follow the policies in this Circular. If the enabling legislation for a specific grant program prescribes policies or requirements that differ from those in this Circular, the provisions of the enabling legislation shall govern.

5. **OMB Responsibilities.** OMB may grant deviations from the requirements of this Circular when permissible under existing law. However, in the interest of uniformity and consistency, deviations will be permitted only in exceptional circumstances.

6. **Information Contact.** Further information concerning this Circular may be obtained from:

Office of Federal Financial Management
Office of Management and Budget
Room 6025
New Executive Office Building

Washington, DC 20503
(202) 395-3993

7. **Termination Review Date.** The Circular will have a policy review three years from the date of issuance.
8. **Effective Date.** The Circular is effective on publication.

GRANTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

1. Pre-Award Policies.

- a. **Use of grants and cooperative agreements.** Sections 6301-08, title 31, United States Code govern the use of grants, contracts and cooperative agreements. A grant or cooperative agreement shall be used only when the principal purpose of a transaction is to accomplish a public purpose of support or stimulation authorized by Federal statute. Contracts shall be used when the principal purpose is acquisition of property or services for the direct benefit or use of the Federal Government. The statutory criterion for choosing between grants and cooperative agreements is that for the latter, "substantial involvement is expected between the executive agency and the State, local government, or other recipient when carrying out the activity contemplated in the agreement."

- b. **Advance Public Notice and Priority Setting.**

(1) Federal agencies shall provide the public with an advance notice in the **Federal Register**, or by other appropriate means, of intended funding priorities for discretionary assistance programs, unless funding priorities are established by Federal statute. These priorities shall be approved by a policy level official.

(2) Whenever time permits, agencies shall provide the public an opportunity to comment on intended funding priorities.

(3) All discretionary grant awards in excess of \$25,000 shall be reviewed for consistency with agency priorities by a policy level official.

- c. **Standard Forms for Applying for Grants and Cooperative Agreements.**

(1) Agencies shall use the following standard application forms unless they obtain Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approval under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980 (44 U.S.C. 35) and the 5 CFR Part 1320, "Controlling Paperwork Burdens on the Public":

SF-424 Facesheet

SF-424a Budget Information (Non-Construction)

SF-424b Standard Assurances (Non-Construction)

SF-424c Budget Information (Construction)

SF-424d Standard Assurances (Construction)

When different or additional information is needed to comply with legislative requirements or to meet specific program needs, agencies shall also obtain prior OMB approval.

(2) A preapplication shall be used for all construction, land acquisition and land development projects or programs when the need for Federal funding exceeds \$100,000, unless the Federal agency determines that a preapplication is not needed. A preapplication is used to:

- (a) Establish communication between the agency and the applicant,
- (b) Determine the applicant's eligibility,
- (c) Determine how well the project can compete with similar projects from others, and
- (d) Discourage any proposals that have little or no chance for Federal funding before applicants incur significant costs in preparing detailed applications.

(3) Agencies shall use the Budget Information (Construction) and Standard Assurances (Construction) when the major purpose of the project or program is construction, land acquisition or land development.

(4) Agencies may specify how and whether budgets shall be shown by functions or activities within the program or project.

(5) Agencies should generally include a request for a program narrative statement which is based on the following instructions:

- (a) Objectives and need for assistance. Pinpoint any relevant physical, economic, social, financial, institutional, or other problems requiring a solution. Demonstrate the need for the assistance and state the principal and subordinate objectives of the project. Supporting documentation or other testimonies from concerned interests other than the applicant may be used. Any relevant data based on planning studies should be included or footnoted.
- (b) Results or Benefits Expected. Identify costs and benefits to be derived. For example, show how the facility will be used. For land acquisition or development projects, explain how the project will benefit the public.
- (c) Approach. Outline a plan of action pertaining to the scope and detail how the proposed work will be accomplished for each assistance program.

Cite factors which might accelerate or decelerate the work and reasons for taking this approach as opposed to others. Describe any unusual features of the project, such as design or technological innovations, reductions in cost or time, or extraordinary social and community involvements. Provide for each assistance program quantitative projections of the accomplishments to be achieved, if possible. When accomplishments cannot be quantified, list the activities in chronological order to show the schedule of accomplishments and target expected completion dates. Identify the kinds of data to be collected and maintained, and discuss the criteria to be used to evaluate the results and success of the project. Explain the methodology that will be used to determine if the needs identified and discussed are being met and if the results and benefits identified are being achieved. List each organization, cooperator, consultant, or other key individuals who will work on the project along with a short description of the nature of their effort or contribution.

(d) Geographic location. Give a precise location of the project and area to be served by the proposed project. Maps or other graphic aids may be attached.

(e) If applicable, provide the following information: for research and demonstration assistance requests, present a biographical sketch of the program director with the following information: name, address, telephone number, background, and other qualifying experience for the project. Also, list the name, training and background for other key personnel engaged in the project. Describe the relationship between this project and other work planned, anticipated, or underway under Federal assistance. Explain the reason for all requests for supplemental assistance and justify the need for additional funding. Discuss accomplishments to date and list in chronological order a schedule of accomplishments, progress or milestones anticipated with the new funding request. If there have been significant changes in the project objectives, location, approach or time delays, explain and justify. For other requests for changes, or amendments, explain the reason for the change(s). If the scope or objectives have changed or an extension of time is necessary, explain the circumstances and justify. If the total budget has been exceeded or if the individual budget items have changes more than the prescribed limits, explain and justify the change and its effect on the project.

(6) Additional assurances shall not be added to those contained on the standard forms, unless specifically required by statute.

- d. **Debarment and Suspension.** Federal agencies shall not award assistance to applicants that are debarred or suspended, or otherwise excluded from or

ineligible for participation in Federal assistance programs under Executive Order 12549. Agencies shall establish procedures for the effective use of the List of Parties Excluded from Federal Procurement or Nonprocurement programs to assure that they do not award assistance to listed parties in violation of the Executive Order. Agencies shall also establish procedures to provide for effective use and/or dissemination of the list to assure that their grantees and subgrantees (including contractors) at any tier do not make awards in violation of the nonprocurement debarment and suspension common rule.

e. **Awards and Adjustments.**

(1) Ordinarily awards shall be made at least ten days prior to the beginning of the grant period.

(2) Agencies shall notify grantees immediately of any anticipated adjustments in the amount of an award. This notice shall be provided as early as possible in the funding period. Reductions in funding shall apply only to periods after notice is provided. Whenever an agency adjusts the amount of an award, it shall also make an appropriate adjustment to the amount of any required matching or cost sharing.

f. **Carryover Balances.** Agencies shall be prepared to identify to OMB the amounts of carryover balances (e.g., the amounts of estimated grantee unobligated balances available for carryover into subsequent grant periods). This presentation shall detail the fiscal and programmatic (level of effort) impact in the following period.

g. **Special Conditions or Restrictions.** Agencies may impose special conditions or restrictions on awards to "high risk" applicants/grantees in accordance with section __.12 of the grants management common rule. Agencies shall document use of the "Exception" provisions of section __.6 and "High-risk" provisions of section __.12 of the grants management common rule.

h. **Waiver of Single State Agency Requirements.**

(1) Requests to agencies from the Governors, or other duly constituted State authorities, for waiver of "single" State agency requirements in accordance with section 31 U.S.C. 6504, "Use of existing State or multi-member agency to administer grant programs," shall be given expeditious handling and, whenever possible, an affirmative response.

(2) When it is necessary to refuse a request for waiver of "single" State agency requirements under section 204 of the Intergovernmental Corporation Act, the Federal grantor agency shall advise OMB prior to informing the State that the request cannot be granted. The agency shall indicate to OMB the reasons for the denial of the request.

(3) Legislative proposals embracing grant-in-aid programs shall avoid inclusion

of proposals for "single" State agencies in the absence of compelling reasons to do otherwise. In addition, existing requirements in present grant-in-aid programs shall be reviewed and legislative proposals developed for the removal of these restrictive provisions.

- i. **Patent Rights.** Agencies shall use the standard patent rights clause specified in "Rights to Inventions made by Non-profit Organizations and Small Business Firms" (37 CFR Part 401), when providing support for research and development.
- j. **Metric System of Measurement.** The Metric Conversion Act of 1975, as amended, declares that the metric system is the preferred measurement system for U.S. trade and commerce. The Act requires each Federal agency to establish a date(s), in consultation with the Secretary of Commerce, when the metric system of measurement will be used in the agency's procurement, grants, and other business-related activities. Metric implementation may take longer where the use of the system is initially impractical or likely to cause significant inefficiencies in the accomplishment of federally-funded activities. Heads of departments and agencies shall establish a process for a policy level and program level review of proposed exceptions to metric usage in grants programs. Executive Order 12770 ("Metric Usage in Federal Government Programs") elaborates on implementation of the Act.

2. Post-award Policies.

- a. **Cash Management.** Agency methods and procedures for transferring funds shall minimize the time elapsing between the transfer to recipients of grants and cooperative agreements and the recipient's need for the funds.
 - (1) Such transfers shall be made consistent with program purposes, applicable law and Treasury regulations contained in 31 CFR Part 205, Federal Funds Transfer Procedures.
 - (2) Where letters-of-credit are used to provide funds, they shall be in the same amount as the award.
- b. **Grantee Financial Management Systems.** In assessing the adequacy of an applicant's financial management system, the awarding agency shall rely on readily available sources of information, such as audit reports, to the maximum extent possible. If additional information is necessary to assure prudent management of agency funds, it shall be obtained from the applicant or from an on-site review.
- c. **Financial Status Reports.**
 - (1) Federal agencies shall require grantees to use the SF-269, Financial Status Report-Long Form, or SF-269a, Financial Status Report-Short Form, to report the status of funds for all non-construction projects or programs. Federal agencies

need not require the Financial Status Report when the SF-270, Request for Advance or Reimbursement, or SF-272, Report of Federal Cash Transactions, is determined to provide adequate information.

(2) Federal agencies shall not require grantees to report on the status of funds by object class category of expenditure (e.g., personnel, travel, equipment).

(3) If reporting on the status of funds by programs, functions or activities within the project or program is required by statute or regulation, Federal agencies shall instruct grantees to use block 12, Remarks, on the SF-269, or a supplementary form approved by the OMB under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980.

(4) Federal agencies shall prescribe whether the reporting shall be on a cash or an accrual basis. If the Federal agency requires accrual information and the grantees's accounting records are not normally kept on an accrual basis, the grantee shall not be required to convert its accounting system but shall develop such accrual information through an analysis of the documentation on hand.

d. **Contracting With Small and Minority Firms, Women's Business Enterprises and Labor Surplus Area Firms.** It is national policy to award a fair share of contracts to small and minority business firms. Grantees shall take similar appropriate affirmative action to support of women's enterprises and are encouraged to procure goods and services from labor surplus areas.

e. **Program Income.**

(1) Agencies shall encourage grantees to generate program income to help defray program costs. However, Federal agencies shall not permit grantees to use grant-acquired assets to compete unfairly with the private sector.

(2) Federal agencies shall instruct grantees to deduct program income from total program costs as specified in the grants management common rule at paragraph __.25 (g)(1), unless agency regulations or the terms of the grant award state otherwise. Authorization for recipients to follow the other alternatives in paragraph __.25 (g) (2) and (3) shall be granted sparingly.

f. **Site Visits and Technical Assistance.** Agencies shall conduct site visits only as warranted by program or project needs. Technical assistance site visits shall be provided only (1) in response to requests from grantees, (2) based on demonstrated program need, or (3) when recipients are designated "high risk" under section __.12 of the grants management common rule.

g. **Infrastructure Investment.** Agencies shall encourage grantees to consider the provisions of the common rule at Section __. 31 and Executive Order 12803 ("Infrastructure Privatization"). This includes reviewing and modifying procedures affecting the management and disposition of federally-financed infrastructure owned by State and local governments, with their requests to sell or

lease infrastructure assets, consistent with the criteria in Section 4 of the Order. Related guidance contained in Executive Order 12893 ("Principles for Federal Infrastructure Investments") requiring economic analysis and the development of investment options, including public-private partnership, shall also be applied. On March 7, 1994, OMB issued guidance on Executive Order 12893 in OMB Bulletin No. 94-16.

- h. **Resource Conservation and Recovery Act.** Agencies shall implement the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976 (RCRA) (42 U.S.C. 6962). Any State agency or agency of a political subdivision of a State which is using appropriated Federal funds must comply with Section 6002 of RCRA. Section 6002 requires that preference be given in procurement programs to the purchase of specific products containing recycled materials identified in guidelines developed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Current guidelines are contained in 40 CFR Parts 247-253. State and local recipients of grants, loans, cooperative agreements or other instruments funded by appropriated Federal funds shall give preference in procurement programs to the purchase of recycled products pursuant to the EPA guidelines.
- i. **Procurement of Goods and Services.** Agencies should be aware of and comply with the requirement enacted in Section 623 of the Treasury, Postal Service and General Government Appropriations Act, 1993, and reenacted in Section 621 of the fiscal year 1994 Appropriations Act. This Section requires grantees to specify in any announcement of the awarding of contracts with an aggregate value of \$500,000 or more, the amount of Federal funds that will be used to finance the acquisitions.
- j. **Conditional exemptions.**

(1) OMB authorizes conditional exemption from OMB administrative requirements and cost principles circulars for certain Federal programs with statutorily-authorized consolidated planning and consolidated administrative funding, that are identified by a Federal agency and approved by the head of the Executive department or establishment. A Federal agency shall consult with OMB during its consideration of whether to grant such an exemption.

(2) To promote efficiency in State and local program administration, when Federal non-entitlement programs with common purposes have specific statutorily-authorized consolidated planning and consolidated administrative funding and where most of the State agency's resources come from non-Federal sources, Federal agencies may exempt these covered State-administered, non-entitlement grant programs from certain OMB grants management requirements. The exemptions would be from all but the allocability of costs provisions of OMB Circulars A-87 (Attachment A, subsection C.3), "Cost Principles for State, Local, and Indian Tribal Governments," A-21 (Section C, subpart 4), "Cost Principles for Educational Institutions," and A-122 (Attachment A, subsection A.4), "Cost Principles for Non-Profit Organizations," and from all of the administrative

requirements provisions of OMB Circular A-110, "Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations," and the agencies' grants management common rule.

(3) When a Federal agency provides this flexibility, as a prerequisite to a State's exercising this option, a State must adopt its own written fiscal and administrative requirements for expending and accounting for all funds, which are consistent with the provisions of OMB Circular A-87, and extend such policies to all subrecipients. These fiscal and administrative requirements must be sufficiently specific to ensure that: funds are used in compliance with all applicable Federal statutory and regulatory provisions, costs are reasonable and necessary for operating these programs, and funds are not be used for general expenses required to carry out other responsibilities of a State or its subrecipients.

3. **After-the-grant Policies.**

a. **Closeout.** Federal agencies shall notify grantees in writing before the end of the grant period of final reports that shall be due, the dates by which they must be received, and where they must be submitted. Copies of any required forms and instructions for their completion shall be included with this notification. The Federal actions that must precede closeout are:

(1) Receipt of all required reports,

(2) Disposition or recovery of federally-owned assets (as distinct from property acquired under the grant), and

(3) Adjustment of the award amount and the amount of Federal cash paid the recipient.

b. **Annual Reconciliation of Continuing Assistance Awards.** Federal agencies shall reconcile continuing awards at least annually and evaluate program performance and financial reports.

Items to be reviewed include:

(1) A comparison of the recipient's work plan to its progress reports and project outputs,

(2) the Financial Status Report (SF-269),

(3) Request(s) for payment,

(4) Compliance with any matching, level of effort or maintenance of effort requirement, and

(5) A review of federally-owned property (as distinct from property acquired under the grant).