

FEBRUARY 2005 STAKEHOLDER MEETING MINUTES
February 23, 2005

Next Meeting

Date: Wednesday, April 27, 2005

Time: 1:30 pm- 3:30 pm

Place: HHS – Hubert H. Humphrey Building

All meeting materials and presentations are available at Grants.gov by visiting <http://www.grants.gov/meetingmaterials022305>.

Opening Remarks and Presentation:

Ms. Becky Spitzgo, Grants.gov Program Manager, began the meeting at 2:00 pm with the following agenda:

- Grants.gov Update
- Recompete of the Excluded Parties List
- Social Security Administration's Adoption of Grants.gov
- Mandatory SF 424 Forms Release and Market Segment SF 424 Status
- Applicant System-to-System Interface
- Stakeholder Meeting Schedule Update and Questions & Answers

After welcoming the audience, Ms. Spitzgo then provided the Grants.gov Update.

Grants.gov Update

“Find” activity continues to grow. Currently, there are approximately 2,100 active funding opportunities are posted on Grants.gov. The website has also been consistently receiving an average of 1.7 million hits weekly. Last month, 860,000 grant opportunity notifications were distributed via email each week and we are almost averaging 900,000 per week for this month. Grants.gov encourages everyone to help get the word out to their grant recipients, as now is the time of the year with agencies ramping up and posting new grant opportunities. As for “Apply” activity, the US Department of Transportation (DOT) has posted their first application package to Grants.gov. To date, 2,116 Authorized Organization Representatives (AOR) have been registered on the site, with over 250 just from the month of January. 434 grant application packages have been posted, over 175 from January. This total does not include the grant application packages to be posted by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which will be submitted sometime in March. 1,637 electronic grant applications have been submitted thus far with over 140 from the month of January. These statistics will continue to climb as several agencies and programs are requiring electronic submission.

As a way to recognize agencies that have come onboard with Grants.gov and achieved FY2005 goals, the Grants.gov “Goal” Star program was initiated this month. The “Goal” Star program is meant to recognize those agencies that have reached their Grants.gov FY2005 goals set by the Passback Language communicated by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) (25% of their grant packages posted on Grants.gov) and

have achieved 100% migration to Grants.gov. Please note that 100% migration does not require electronic receipt of grant applications. The PMO will keep track of agency progress on a regular basis and recognize agency achievements at the bi-monthly stakeholder meetings. Status of each agency will be tracked on the *Status of Agency Participation on Apply* handout that is provided along with the presentation. Agencies that have already achieved their milestones will be noted on the handout. Progress from all 26 Federal grant-making agencies as well as nine commissions who are incorporating Grants.gov within their systems, for a total of 35, will be tracked. For this month's kick-off, the US Department of Commerce (DOC) and US Social Security Administration (SSA) have completed their FY2005 Apply goals. SSA has also completed its 100% migration to Grants.gov. When an agency has completed each milestone they will be awarded with a "Goal" Star award to share with members from their home agency.

As Grants.gov continues to bring agencies onboard and assist those who already have, we felt that it was important to reiterate the role of the Grants.gov Agency Advisor/Point of Contact (POC). The Agency Advisors can assist with ramp-up schedules, posting notices on Find, posting application packages, forms development, retrieving applications, answering questions about Grants.gov and communicating any lessons learned. This list is only a portion of the support the Agency Contacts can provide. We ask that all agencies use their Agency POC for any questions related to Grants.gov as the Help Desk/Contact Center is meant for the applicants. Please note that Terry Nicolosi is no longer a detailee and has officially joined Grants.gov as a full-time employee. Contact information for each of the Grants.gov Agency Advisors is as follows:

- Ebony Brice (202) 205-1270 – CNCS, DOEd, DHS, NASA
- Peter Brunner (202) 205-6303 – DOC, DOE, DOL, DOS, VA, EPA, IMLS, NEA, NEH, SBA, SSA
- Mary Gonzales (202) 205-1152 – DOI, DOT, Treasury, NARA, NSF, USAID
- Keenon James (202) 205-1168 – DOD, DOJ, HHS, USDA
- Terry Nicolosi (202) 205-5890 – HUD

To continue with Grants.gov Updates, in order for Grants.gov to provide adequate support, we kindly ask avoiding several closing dates on grant applications packages. Already, over 50 programs are expected to close on June 30, 2005 and another 30 to close September 30, 2005. Please avoid these dates as well as the beginning and end of the month so that systems will be able to support all activity.

This month, Grants.gov received recognition from several organizations. Grants.gov was selected by American Productivity & Quality Center (APQC) for a Best Practice Benchmarking Study. APQC is an independent organization that identifies best practices, discovers effective methods of improvement and disseminates findings. Grants.gov, in conjunction with four other organizations, conducted a knowledge transfer session during a virtual visit and staff from Grants.gov will travel to Houston, TX for information sharing conference as a conclusion to the study Grants.gov was selected as a finalist for the 2005 Federal Leadership Council Showcase of Excellence Award (FOSE) which recognizes Federal government information technology (I/T) projects for fine

implementations of citizen-centric electronic government. This was actually the first award Grants.gov won in 2004. Grants.gov was also selected as a finalist for another award, the details of which cannot be released yet. However, be on the lookout for a press release in mid-March regarding Grants.gov and this award.

After Ms. Spitzgo provided the Grants.gov update, she then introduced Ms. Julie Basile from OMB to discuss the Recompete of the Exclude Parties List.

Recompete of the Excluded Parties List

Note: Please refer to the handout titled *EPLS Re-competition Effort is Underway*.

The Integrated Acquisition Environment (IAE) e-government initiative is the executive agent overseeing the management and funds used for the Excluded Parties List System (EPLS) system. EPLS is maintained by GSA. IAE is a component within the Chief Acquisition Office of the General Services Administration (GSA). The (EPLS) is part of the Business Partner Network (BPN) as it contains information about our business partners and must be shared amongst the agencies. EPLS' contract expires September 30, 2005 with GSA. There are several aspects of the re-competition that are underway and need to be done before the Request for Proposal (RFP) can be issued.

1. The process has to be "modeled" to ensure the workflow is captured accurately.
2. The acquisition strategy has to be developed.
3. We need a Source Selection Authority volunteer (preferably a contracting officer from an agency on the Grants.gov membership or ISDC membership). With the recompete, there will be new enhancements, such as incorporating a generic DUNS number across categories within the CCR. We are also trying to reach out to the loan community.

Right now we have the Online Representation and Certification Application (ORCA). We would like to add grant assurances to ORCA. We need a champion to lead an effort that will seek agreement on the core assurances that we can put into the Online Representations, Certifications and Assurances (ORCA) system. The Points of Contact (POC) for the effort are Julie Basile (202.395.4821; jbasile@omb.eop.gov) and Linda Adams (703.872.3247; Linda.Adams@gsa.gov).

Q. What is the process of gathering forms?

A. Priscilla Owens from GSA is collecting the forms and the POC on the EPLS contract (703.872.8620; Priscilla.Owens@gsa.gov).

Q. Has OMB considered including more identifying information?

A. OMB is currently working with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to be able to use the Tax Identification Number (TIN) as a validation point through the Central Contractor Registry (CCR).

Q. Is ORCA tied to the CCR?

A. Yes, it is part of the CCR.

Q. Does the XML interface include ORCA?

A. It should, as it is public information and part of the CCR.

Q. Has GSA explored the capability of allowing system queries to match against the EPLS System?

A. There are other parts of CCR being built to expand the search capability. This is all part of the IAE.

Social Security Administration's Adoption of Grants.gov

Ms. Spitzgo then introduced Mr. Gary Stammer, Grants Management Officer from SSA who discussed SSA's adoption of Grants.gov.

SSA was able to buy-in to Grants.gov because it supports Public Law (PL) 106/107 and supports SSA's mission to improve customer service externally its grant recipients and internally to its Program officials and grants officers. Integrating with the Grants.gov's system meant instant access for all, greatly reducing document redundancy, and paper document wait-time was eliminated. Also, processing times were improved significantly and proved to be cost effective. SSA investigated COTS and GOTS systems, but they were not cost justified due to the size and needs of SSA grants administrators. With Grants.gov and Digital Scanners, SSA was able to develop an electronic library. SSA is able to easily place PDF files into the SSA e-library creating a system that is now totally paperless. Files can also be extracted from the e-library when necessary. SSA is able to administer the e-library thru storage and naming conventions, but with controlled access. Any and all grants information – including data and status – can then be shared across headquarters. Signatures have also been digitized so that awards can be electronically signed via email and then stored in the e-library. So far, 200 electronic grant applications have been received through Grants.gov.

Grantees are happy to see that there is finally Federal government-wide consistency and that the application submission process has been simplified. Also, grantors appreciate that the redundancy has been reduced and that there are now processing efficiencies.

Moving forward with Grants.gov, however, SSA feels that there are enhancements to the registration process that are warranted. SSA suggests making the CCR registration process easier and resolving the DUNS number issues. Also, Mr. Stammer highlighted the need to include the E-Biz Point of Contact (POC) and the MPIN values. Instead of stating the registration process is a three step process, highlight and guide the user through four registration steps: Registering with the CCR, Acquiring credentials for the AOR, AOR Registration and getting E-Biz POC approval. Somehow, Grants.gov should show the applicant which step within the registration process has not been completed. A registration workshop might also be useful because the process is not always clear to the applicant. During the application completion process, it would be useful to improve the Help pop-up on the Standard Form 424 (SF 424). Within Section B of the application, have the Help pop-up only ask for Federal dollars when applying for one grant or more to

breakup the Federal dollars and cost share from the Federal dollars. It would also be helpful to offer a revised budget application package not requiring the SF 424.

SSA's grants administration manual (GAM), which is a rendition of Grants.gov's user guide but includes SSA policy, is available online at <http://www.ssa.gov/oag/grants/ssagam-nov2004.pdf>. Also, Gary Stammer can be reached at Gary.Stammer@ssa.gov, 410-965-9501.

Q: How did SSA make electronically awarding the grants possible? How do they deal with the electronic signature?

A: SSA got buy-in from all levels to issue a signed notice award to grant recipients. The notice includes pertinent information, including the award amount., and is scanned and sent to the recipient as an email attachment.

Mandatory SF 424 Forms Release and Market Segment SF 424 Status

Ms. Spitzgo then introduced Mary Rexford, Management Consultant from Grants.gov's Program Management Office (PMO) and Tyson Whitney from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) to provide an update on the Mandatory SF 424 Forms Release and Market Segment SF 424 status.

Ms. Rexford began discussing the creation of an SF 424 form version for Mandatory Grants: The SF 424 M. The SF 424 M and continuation page, as applicable, serves as the cover page for submissions, whether submitted electronically to Grants.gov, an agency system, or in hard copy. Within the continuation page, additional as well as required information can be captured. The cover page allows agencies to use Grants.gov Apply for mandatory grant programs by using a standard cover page and other available forms. Beyond the cover page, agencies may use any forms that are available on Grants.gov Apply or require narrative attachments. Available forms may include government-wide, cross-agency, or agency or program-specific forms programmed by Grants.gov. These agency or program specific forms will be made available in the future. Agencies are encouraged to use the SF 424 M as soon as possible if there are mandatory grant programs. The SF 424 M supports the cross agency initiatives of PL 106/107 and Grants.gov, which is one of 24 electronic government initiatives under the President's Management Agenda.

What is a mandatory grant? A mandatory grant is a program in which the Federal official is required to make an award if the eligible entity meets the prerequisites specified by statute or in implementing program regulations. The amount of funding is driven either by a formula that was derived by congressional appropriations or was set as a block funding grant to the states. Generally, there is no competition for funds among eligible entities.

When to use Grants.gov for your agency's mandatory program? Agencies with mandatory grant programs that require submission of documentation in the form of

- A plan and/or application, whether one-time, bi or triennial, annual or on some other basis;
- An estimate of require funding; or
- Changes to a previously approved or accepted application or plan documents, e.g. an update of a plan.

What is a submission? A submission may consist of one or more components including:

- Cover page
- Budget and discussion of budget
- Quantitative information, e.g. populations served or geographical areas served
- Project-related data
- Narrative discussion of the program or specified elements for the coming period and, if applicable, the program carried out in the prior period
- Certifications and assurances

To submit applications via Grants.gov, the agency must be able to create a complete application package using the following forms available on Grants.gov:

- Cover page (SF 424 M) – Required
- Project narrative – Optional
- Budget forms (SF 424 A, SF 424 C) – Optional
- Budget narrative – Optional
- Other attachments – Optional
- Assurances (SF 424 B, SF 424 D) – Optional

You can begin to use the SF 424 M cover page if the mandatory program currently uses the traditional SF 424 or if you are able to adopt the new SF 424 M cover page. To begin using Grants.gov for mandatory programs, agencies should create their application packages on Grants.gov Apply like they currently do for discretionary grants and enter the package identification information, such as the opportunity name/title, CFDA and open/closing dates for the opportunity. Please note that unlike discretionary grants, there is no requirement for posting a Find opportunity notice for mandatory grants. Agencies should also notify their mandatory grant recipients that Grants.gov is the electronic means for them to transmit submissions. Following these criteria allows people to adapt quickly because all mandatory grants must come through Grants.gov. Once an agency/program begins using Grants.gov Apply, they should use Grants.gov for all components of the submission. For example, a program requiring multiple components cannot use Apply for the cover page only and require that the remainder be submitted through an agency system.

Grants.gov Agency Points of Contact can begin to participate by issuing direction to offices within their agency responsible for award and administration of mandatory grant programs. They can also evaluate requirements for covered submission to determine what forms the agency/program needs to supplement the SF 424 M cover page. Agencies are encouraged to work with the PL 106/107 Mandatory Grants workgroup, or any

successor interagency form, to determine whether their needs can be met by developing a cross-agency form(s). Agencies should also provide instructions for applicants/recipients to use in completing their submissions by including instructions for completing items on the SF 424 M that allow or require agency/program specific information.

The SF 424 M form is scheduled to be deployed on February 28th and will be available on Grants.gov. A form family is a list of forms or other forms agencies may need to prepare an application package. The SF 424 M PDF form version, instructions, analysis and schema documents will be available on the Grants.gov website soon. They are currently available on the US Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) website for public comment at: <http://www.hhs.gov/oirm/infocollect/pending/list.html>. An announcement email will be sent on Monday to broadcast the SF 424 M form deployment. Grants.gov Program Advisors are available now to assist you!

Using the SF 424 M will count towards 2005 agency goals per OMB's passback language regarding 25% of all agency application packages posted on Grants.gov. Everything will count and agencies are encouraged to post at least two mandatory grant packages on Grants.gov. This will allow for familiarity for users and will help prepare for FY2006. Using the SF 424 M can also be used as input for the PL 106/107 Annual Report for 2005. The SF 424 M XML schema data will also be available for agencies to review.

Agencies will soon receive a "kick-off" email from their respective Grants.gov Program Advisors suggesting a meeting to:

- Strategize on how to get your agency "up and running"
 - Brief you agency
 - Train your potential users
- Identify candidate programs to pilot this year
 - Think simple and identify "Easy Win" submissions
- Inform your applicant community and get them registered and ready to go

Tyson Whitney then continued the next portion of the presentation about the Market Segment SF 424 status. The SF 424 versions were developed to support the needs of specific applicant communities across agencies. Some example versions include the Discretionary Version 1 (SF 424 D), soon to be Version 2; the Research and Related (SF 424 R&R); the Mandatory (SF 424 M); the Short Organizational (SF 424 S) and the Individual (SF 424 I). The SF 424 S and the SF 424 I are future forms that were originally designed by the Arts and Humanities, but are now intended for more general use. (On page 28 of the presentation is the SF 424 Deployment Timeline).

All SF 424's are government-wide forms that have an OMB clearance process through Grants.gov. The forms are owned by Grants.gov and identified with a 4040-XXX control number. The Grants.gov site on the OMB website is: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/library/OMBPPWKP.html#EGOV>. The forms can be queried from this website to find the status of the form's clearance. Grants.gov is working with the Federal Register to have a Grants.gov section.

Other government-wide forms are the SF 424 Supplemental forms such as the Key Contacts form, which requests information for up to four additional contacts and the Project Abstract Form. These forms can be used with any 424 versions depending on intent. Grants.gov continues to work with PL 106/107 work groups to develop additional government-wide forms and recognizes that there are other potential market segments. Grants.gov is targeting duplicative agency forms to help further the goals of government-wide consolidation and streamline processes.

Q. What is the public comment process?

A. The SF 424 M will be in the Federal Register Monday for a 60 day comment period. New forms will go through the emergency clearance followed by the regular process for comment so that the forms can be used.

Q. Will Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) be a potential market segment or could this market segment use the R&R forms?

A. Grants.gov had not thought of the SBIR programs to be potential users of the R&R but Grants.gov will research into this further. Grants.gov is not sure that the R&R forms would incorporate all SBA requirements for the SBIR program.

Applicant System-to-System (S2S) Interface

Ms. Spitzgo then introduced Peter Brunner from the Grants.gov PMO to discuss the Applicant S2S Interface. The Applicant S2S Interface allows Applicant Organizations to submit electronic applications via an XML file rather than submitting the applications manually with the PureEdge application packages. It eliminates the need to re-enter data into the Applicant Organization's back-office grant system and supports better integration with the Applicant Organization's grants management systems. Most users ready to work with Grants.gov on the development of the Applicant S2S interface are the Universities, who will most likely use the interface to submit applications that use the R&R forms set.

Applicant Organizations with back-office grant systems that want to eliminate the burden of re-entering grant application data will use the Applicant S2S interface. Third party vendors providing grant management systems to organizations will also use the interface.

The Federal Demonstration Project encouraged Grants.gov to develop and pilot the Applicant S2S Interface. From that, an Applicant S2S workshop was conducted March 2004 to:

- Solicit requirements input from the grant community
- Determine the feasibility of the S2S interface
- Discuss the readiness of the grant community

From the workshop, it was determined that the Applicant S2S Interface was doable and there was high interest in the applicant organization community. These applicant

organization back-end systems are highly adaptable, but the federal agencies could help the development and ease of use of the Applicant S2S Interface by:

- Targeting schemas with the highest expected usage (R&R)
- Agency willingness to limit collection of agency-specific data
- Establishing data set/forms change management processes to schedule changes predictably

The Applicant S2S specification document has been developed as well as the applicant reference implementation. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) confirmed the preliminary concept that was developed out of the March 2004 meeting, and testing of the web services by the MIT COEUS group was completed December 2004, completing the initial phase. The pilot project expanded January 2005 to include University of Minnesota, University of Texas (Austin), University of Texas (Southwest Medical Center), MIT, ERA Software and Cayuse Software who are third party vendors. It is also being monitored by State single POCs from Texas and Maryland who are not yet participating. On the Grants.gov side, Inflow Suite development was completed February 21 with a pilot workshop on February 24 to include the aforementioned members. A general user workshop will be conducted March 31-April 1 with the project roll out to begin in April.

The project approach is technologically agnostic and open specifications driven, using World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) standards such as Web Services, Web Services Definition Language (WSDL), SOAP with attachments, XML, etc. Responsibility will be delegated to the applicant system for verifying Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) authority to submit an application. SSL and Mutual Certificate based authentication are being used for security. A “push” submission method is being used and the proliferation of many XML schemas is being controlled to implement effective change management processes. Reference implementation is also being provided.

Products completed include:

- Applicant Reference Implementation and Installation guide
 - Developed by MIT, reviewed and released to interested parties
- Applicant Web Services Integration
- Applicant Web Services Security
- Applicant Services Integration Test Plan
- Web Services Definition Language (WSDL)
- Opportunity Schema (which is new)

The Applicant Reference Implementation provides a fully functional prototype of the Grants.gov applicant S2S web services interface, providing:

- A “jump-start” for applicant engineers
- Web services client for interacting with Grants.gov server

- Implementation of all available web services
- Supports SSL and mutual authentication
- WSDL binding
- Validation of grant application XML
- Simulation of Grants.gov web services server

Each opportunity is defined by an “opportunity schemas”, which defines the required and optional form schemas to create a package. Form schemas are included by reference in the opportunity schema, which is the basis for construction of a grant application XML file. All schemas, including opportunity schemas, are published and are available for download from the Grants.gov site. Form schemas will be stored in the organization’s environment. Grants.gov’s site will continue to make opportunity instructions and PureEdge application packages available.

The Applicant S2S Interface outsources some activities currently performed by Grants.gov, such as the validation of the AOR, the implementation of edits now done in PureEdge forms and the submission of XML files. To leverage the investment, applicant organizations need stable, streamlined, consolidated data sets/forms from agencies. New data sets/forms require a systems change for the applicant organization to continue to use the Applicant S2S Interface.

Q. What is a schema?

A. It is the format that lays out form records, defines the form and is automated.

Q. What is the vision that the outsourced model will be for organizations to outsource the responsibility of designating AORs? A. It is what security the system’s organization/university has in place. These kinds of issues will also be addressed during the applicant workshop in March.

Q. What if the system goes down? Is there policy in place?

A. The second Applicant S2S workshop that is being conducted in March/April will explore these kinds of policy issues.

Stakeholder Meeting Schedule Update and Questions & Answers

Ms. Spitzgo then concluded the meeting with the Stakeholder Meeting Schedule Update and Questions and Answers. The Stakeholder Meeting is moving to a bi-monthly schedule. The meeting time is being changed also from 1:30-3:30 pm (EST). Bi-monthly meetings will be complemented with electronic program updates posted to the Grants.gov website. Program updates will include Grants.gov statistics, highlights and relevant information. The Grants.gov website has been updated to reflect the new meeting and Program update schedules at <http://www.grants.gov/Stakeholder>. Stakeholder meetings and Program update communications will continue to be scheduled and delivered the last Wednesday of each month. The bi-monthly schedule is as follows:

- Bi-monthly Stakeholder Meeting
 - April 27, 2005
 - June 29, 2005
 - August 31, 2005
 - October 27, 2005
 - December 14, 2005

- Bi-monthly Stakeholder Program Updates
 - March 30, 2005
 - May 25, 2005
 - July 27, 2005
 - September 28, 2005

The meeting concluded at 4:00 pm EST.