



DECEMBER 2005 STAKEHOLDER MEETING MINUTES
December 14, 2005

Next Meeting

Date: Wednesday, February 22, 2005

Time: 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 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:

Ms. Rebecca Spitzgo, Grants.gov Program Director, began the meeting at 1:30 pm with the following agenda:

- Grants.gov Monthly Status/Update
- New Contact Center Operations
- Citrix Server Deployment
- Grants.gov Architecture
- Wrap Up/Questions and Answers

Grants.gov Monthly Status/Update

Ms. Spitzgo provided the Grants.gov Update. With over 10,200 electronic submissions in less than three months, Grants.gov usage shows to be steadily increasing. There were 3,750 submissions in one week and 1,250 submissions in a single day. To date, the number of authorized registered users now exceeds 23,500. While there are several thousand currently registering per month, it is expected that soon one thousand per week will be registering.

Grants.gov Find enables Federal agencies to post grant opportunities and potential applicants to conduct grant opportunity searches from one centralized source. Some key Grants.gov stats through November 2005 include:

- 1.5+ million hits per week received
- 1.1+ million customized email notifications delivered in a typical week

Grants.gov Apply allows agencies to post application packages via a streamlined system and standardized forms. Using Apply, applicants can download packages, complete them offline and electronically submit them through Grants.gov. To-date:

- 450+ application packages have been posted by grant-making agencies

- 10,200+ electronic applications have been submitted by the grant community

From 2004 to 2005, the growth in the number of applications received from grantees was striking. The most significant volume was reached in November, with 2,300 applications received.

One agency was recognized for becoming a Grants.gov “Goal” Star and meeting their goal of electronic applications received. It is:

- U.S. Department of Justice

Ms. Spitzgo continued the update by discussing several exciting new Grants.gov updates. The Find and Apply Merge will be put into effect on December 19th, which will fully merge the two Federal web sites: www.fedgrants.gov and www.grants.gov. The enhancement will present a single look and feel for Find and Apply, increasing integration and standardizing terminology between the two functions. Also, the SF 424 Version 2 deployment occurred on December 1st. Grants.gov is also working on a list serve so each agency will be able to use it. New detailees were also welcomed, included Russell Wyland from NEH, Judy Regelman from NEH, Laura Wesley from NEH and James Rogers from DOC.

Ms. Spitzgo also covered that thirty different organizations have been reached out to since October, including the National Indian Education Association Conference, the Society of Research Administrator International, National Association of County and City Health Officials, Quadel 29th Annual Housing Choice Voucher Conference and many others.

In order to have a successful year in 2006, Grants.gov has outlined some goals. They include:

- Posting 100% of funding opportunities on Find
- Posting 75% of find opportunities on Apply
- 45,000 electronic submissions
- Improving customer satisfaction
- Freshening up the Grants.gov website to make it less content heavy and providing a better overall experience
- Handling the volume

Q: Do you have standard presentations that the agencies can use?

A: Yes. We do try to customize per event and can put an updated presentation on our website.

Ms. Spitzgo then introduced Ms. Katie Root, Grants.gov Outreach and Liaison Lead to provide information on the new contact center operations.

New Contact Center Operations

Ms. Root began her explanation of the transition to Datatrac by reviewing the Grants.gov history of operations. From July 2003 – December 2003, Edcomm handled the contact center operations. Edcomm was brought on in order to fill the gap for the Grants.gov Pilot and Operations before the October launch. From January 2004 – November 14, 2005, PFS Web, a subcontractor of the outreach contractor, provided support for both grantors and grantees. The need to move to Datatrac as the new contact center came for several reasons: Grants.gov needed to create new solicitation for both outreach and the contact center, there were contractual reasons; and with tremendous growth, Grants.gov needs had grown to the point where the contract needed to be split. These reasons provided an opportune time for change. As of November 15, 2005, Datatrac began operations. The IBM Contact Center Manager provided guidance and research throughout November, enabling a seamless transition with the email and phone system. Previous recorded phone calls show what type of service existed before so newly provided service would only improve. The operations with the Grants.gov Program Management Office still remain the same. Datatrac handled the first NIH closing on December 1, 2005.

The way that Datatrac functions within Grants.gov is as follows. In Tier 1 of the phase, the Grants.gov Contact Center operator handles the initial contact and attempts to resolve the call. If the call is not handled, the operator files a research request, escalating the issue at hand. Then, in Tier 2 of the process, the Datatrac research analyst handles any escalated issues and does further research on the issue. If unable to resolve, the issue is escalated to the Grants.gov PMO. Lastly, during Tier 3, the research analyst works with the PMO to resolve the issue. Typical escalations include policy questions, system bugs, training or meeting requests, etc.

Ms. Root then introduced Mr. Robert Spector, Project Manager of Program Support Center (PSC/HHS) to discuss ONE-DHHS and Grants.gov.

ONE-DHHS and Grants.gov

Mr. Spector opened with an introduction to the Program Support Center (PSC), stating that as the shared services provider for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), PSC provides a full range of support services to HHS and other Federal agencies, allowing them to focus on their core mission. PSC strives to be as competitive as possible and is the provider of choice for quality and value in shared services across the Federal Government. Mr. Spector explained the core values of the PSC, including customer focus, commitment to their people, cost-effective and high quality service delivery, communication, transparency and technological optimization.

As an overview to the ONE-DHHS Contact Center, Mr. Spector touched on several key points. There is a Sep05 – Dec05 base period of performance for Tier 1 support for the HHS program with optional 12-month renewal periods. It was implemented through the GSA “USAServices” task order contract for Contract Center Service Bureaus. The Datatrac Information Services was awarded the contract in Aug05. The contact center support for eGov Travel and eOPF programs operational Oct 05. Grants.gov support was

added in Nov 05. Telephone and email response is available 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. The PSC sets a very demanding performance standard for all programs and has been pleased with Datatrac's performance to date.

Some key capabilities of ONE-DHHS include the following:

- Interactive voice response (IVR) to manage calls
- Incident management (i.e. a trouble-ticket system) to manage problems
- Knowledge management capability to assist in managing inquiries
- Intelligent call routing
- Full performance reporting capabilities
- Secure, with a copious amount of data analyzed every day
- Scalable to support ongoing HHS programs with Datatrac now brought in

And some benefits of ONE-DHHS that Mr. Spector outlined include:

- Improving customer satisfaction by providing a single integrated channel to all PSC inquiries and requests (phone and email)
- Providing the ability to quickly scale-up to support new programs and peak usage, scale-down to manage decline
- Providing better customer and service intelligence – with more satisfied customers, better products and services emerge
- Providing a systematic approach to preserving program knowledge and developing competencies (travel management, HR recordkeeping, grants management)
- Enabling HHS executives to manage their customer relationships not their telephone

These benefits flow through to Grants.gov because they will be able to take advantage of ONE-DHHS economies of scale, they will have two additional layers of contract support through HHS/PSC and GSA/USAServices and they will have added-value services.

Mr. Spector also went over some ONE-DHHS performance to date statistics, including:

- Service level – 97% of calls answered within 30 seconds
- Service availability – 100%
- Average speed of an answer – 8 seconds
- Abandoned calls rate - <1%
- Email response rate – 100% within 48 hours
- Customer Satisfaction Survey Results – TBD

Mr. Spector closed, giving out his contact information at rspector@psc.gov, and introducing Mr. Michael Salter from Datatrac to discuss the new Grants.gov Helpdesk.

Grants.gov Helpdesk

Mr. Salter opened giving some background information on Datatrac Information Services, Inc., including that it is a privately held corporation that has received a great deal of industry recognition. The Datatrac Information Services core competencies

include the contact center solutions, secure ID card solutions, operations support solutions and information technology solutions. The Grants.gov Customer Support Helpdesk was live on November 15th, 2005. Some operational statistics that Mr. Salter covered through December 9, 2005 were:

- Calls received – 8,520
- Calls handled – 7,032
- Abandonment rate – 17.46%
- Average talk time – 11.81
- Average speed of answer – 6.79
- Emails received – 2,925

Mr. Salter went over the Grants.gov Helpdesk staff as well, which includes the site manager, two supervisors and 16 Contact Center Operators (CCOs). A two-week training program for Grants.gov was put in place to enable Datatrac to arm their staff with all of the information needed.

The Quality Assurance (QA) process for the Grants.gov Helpdesk ensures that questions and concerns that arise are handled in the most efficient way possible. The process includes an onsite Quality Assurance Analyst, who monitors phone calls and emails. Then, there is a 4 Tier Quality Assurance Program that rates using outstanding, excellent, coaching opportunity or adverse impact. Also, to manage the Grants.gov work flow, there is a three tier program, starting with the Contact Center Operator, then moving to the Content Research Analyst (CRA) and ending up with the Project Manager who works with the CRA and the Grants.gov PMO to troubleshoot technical and program issues.

Q: Please explain ONE-DHHS vs. Datatrac?

A: Datatrac is handling the call center function for ONE-DHHS.

Mr. Salter concluded his presentation and introduced Mr. Keenon James, Grants.gov Program Advisor to discuss the Citrix server enhancement coming to Grants.gov in December.

Citrix Server Enhancement

Mr. James began with an introduction to this exciting change for Grants.gov. By partnering with NIH, Grants.gov will now be able to provide free access to Citrix servers for Non-Windows users (Mac users) who are looking for an alternative to using PC emulation software with the PureEdge forms. This service will be available for use on December 20, 2005. The Citrix server connection will allow Non-Windows users to remotely launch a Windows session on their own machines by using the free Citrix client application. While connected to their server, Non-Windows users can complete their grant application using Grants.gov PureEdge forms. So, overall, users will be able to submit their grant application no matter what they are using. Some things to keep in mind about the functionality of the Citrix server that Mr. James reviewed were:

- Non-Windows users may continue to use their current web browser to navigate through the site, search for opportunities and download applications on Grants.gov.

- PureEdge viewer software is stored on the Citrix server. Users are not required to download the PureEdge viewer onto their own computer. Once a user has accessed the Citrix server, they will be able to view and complete the downloaded package while connected. Users must ensure to save to their own desktop.
- Users are required to complete the required Grants.gov registration process to complete their submission via the Citrix server.

Mr. James also discussed what pre-deployment steps would be taken for the Citrix server enhancement. Grants.gov will announce the deployment of the Citrix server option on the Grants.gov website on December 15th, giving users a brief overview of the Citrix server process as well as links to download the Citrix client application. The need for users to complete the registration process prior to submission will also be highlighted in this announcement. Grants.gov will then email AORS with a formal announcement to include all of the necessary links for the Citrix server enhancement on December 20, 2005. Agency training is scheduled for mid January. For those who need more information on the Citrix server option, please contact the Grants.gov PMO for assistance.

Mr. James then introduced Mr. John Etcheverry, Grants.gov Assistant Program Director, and Mr. Mike Atassi, Program Manager Northrop Grumman to review the current and future architecture briefing for Grants.gov.

Current and Future Architecture Briefing

Mr. Etcheverry opened by discussing what has happened since May 2005. In that time, the following have occurred:

- Added Secured Socket Layer (SSL) acceleration through the load balancer
- Upgraded bandwidth throughout from 2 Mbps to 8 Mbps
- Added Fiber Optic Storage Area Network (SAN) device with a total of 3.0 TB storage capability
- Segmented the application software to allocate hardware resources based on demand

Then Mr. Etcheverry and Mr. Atassi explained the Apply Cluster vs. the Search Cluster. While applicants submit to the Apply Cluster, the Search Cluster is searching against a database that is actually the product database.

Mr. Etcheverry and Mr. Atassi then went on to discuss several future architecture considerations. They would like to have a complete and comprehensive solution to support 10,000 submissions a day. This will be very robust for all operations. They also plan to provide an integrated and dynamic environment to support development, staging, training, agency testing, and acceptance testing environments. By utilizing best-of-breed servers, CPU (dual core), application servers and database servers, this will leverage service. They also plan to push industry best practices of high system availability and redundancy and provide a dynamic allocation of resources based on system loads and utilization.

Mr. Etcheverry and Mr. Atassi concluded their discussion with a brief outline of the future architecture proposed timeline with the following:

- January 2006 – Load test system in simulated production environment (i.e. load balancer and SAN)
- Late January 2006 – Provide hardware sizing recommendations based on load test
- Late January 2006 – Initiate procurement
- March/April 2006 – Production deployment

Closing Remarks

Ms. Spitzgo announced that she would be leaving Grants.gov for a 5-month SES rotation for which she had been selected. In her absence, Mr. John Etcheverry will serve as Acting Program Director for Grants.gov.

Mr. James closed the meeting with a “T’was the night before submission...on Grants.gov” poem and wished everyone a happy and safe holiday season.

The meeting concluded at 3:00 p.m.