

## AUGUST 2004 STAKEHOLDER MEETING MINUTES

### August 25, 2004

#### Next Meeting

Date: Wednesday, September 29, 2004

Time: 2:00 pm- 3:30 pm

Place: HHH Building

All meeting materials and presentations are available at Grants.gov by visiting <http://www.grants.gov/meetingmaterials082504>.

#### **Opening Remarks and Presentation:**

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

- Grants.gov Update
- PL 106/107 Reforms and Update
- Grants.gov Fall Outreach/Marketing Campaign
- Stakeholder Questions & Answers

After welcoming the audience, Ms. Spitzgo presented the Grants.gov posters which are updated monthly, reflecting the most current statistics. They are visual charts tracking progress as Grants.gov reaches its one year anniversary in October. 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 981. The smaller number of electronic applications received this month can be attributed to the summer lull with fewer programs posting opportunities than normal.

The second poster, "Building the Road to Success", features a roadmap highlighting the agencies that have posted application packages to Grants.gov towards the October 2004 goal of having all 26 agencies posting application packages. For August, two new agencies have come onboard with a grand total of 16 of 26 Federal agencies onboard with Grants.gov thus far. The two new agencies that are posting applications are National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

In agency news, National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) is currently testing forms. National Science Foundation (NSF) and National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) are both working to develop their forms. Grants.gov is working with other agencies and departments, who have not yet posted application packages, to develop their forms.

The third poster, "Building an Environment for Success" depicts the monthly progress report regarding agency participation. For August, nine new application packages have been published with a grand total of 174 published to date. Grants.gov anticipates reaching its goal for 250 published application packages by the October anniversary.

Ms. Spitzgo then provided the Grants.gov update. Current statistics include 1.2 million “Find” hits weekly with 600,000 notification emails distributed this week. These numbers continue to grow. In order to enhance these numbers, Grants.gov encourages everyone to subscribe to the email notification functionality.

There has been an increased effort by agencies to reach out to their applicants. Several agencies are revisiting the Grants.gov website and extracting the information on the site to communicate to the grant community. For example, the Department of Energy is outreaching to the states to have each of them registered. By doing so, this helps to prepare the applicants to apply. The National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) within the Department of Commerce (DOC) has been working on its back-end systems and developing grants online training. Grants.gov has been included as a piece of the online training at NOAA. NOAA’s system may be adopted by all of DOC as the Department’s grants management system.

NEH has developed a site accessible via [www.neh.gov](http://www.neh.gov), which has been launched this month to help applicants apply for grants. Brett Bobley from NEH was present to walk the audience through the new functionality.

On the NEH website, a Grants.gov button has been created that links to a special outreach page created specifically by NEH. Its purpose is to make the grant application process as simple as possible by delineating the required number of steps from 9 to 3, although the process itself has not changed. The registration checklist has also been modified from the Grants.gov version to include a glossary and useful links section. The resource list also includes program specific instructions for using Grants.gov as well as how to convert documents into PDF format. NEH’s outreach efforts have been directed towards this page. By pushing applicants to the web, processes are improved and costs are significantly reduced. For additional information, Brett Bobley can be contacted at [Bbobby@neh.gov](mailto:Bbobby@neh.gov) or 202/606-8401.

Q: Why do forms have to be submitted as PDF files?

A: Reviewers use web-based applications to view submitted applications. By requiring all submissions to be in PDF format, this ensures that all members can view the applications versus having to view them in multiple formats.

Q: Have any opportunities within NEH closed yet?

A: NEH just posted opportunities last week with deadlines being October 1<sup>st</sup> and November 1<sup>st</sup>.

Q: Does NEH require proposal compliance?

A: No.

Q: How many programs are within NEH?

A: There are approximately 25-30 programs, with 60% requiring e-applications via NEH. However, NEH is working to transition from paper applications and in-house e-

applications to Grants.gov. Within these programs, roughly 20% have program specific requirements while the remainders have fairly generic instructions that are identical but tailored to each program.

Q: Is the online panel review new to NEH?

A: No, the panel review is conducted electronically but will soon transition to Grants.gov which ensures the process is electronic.

Ms. Spitzgo then provided an update on the Grants.gov Deputy Program Manager (PM) position. Kim Deutsch's last day as Acting Deputy PM was August 13 and she has returned to NSF. Interviews are currently being conducted and Ms. Spitzgo expects to make a final decision by the end of this week or the following week. 36 responses have been received and approximately one third of the total applicants have been interviewed. An announcement will be made at the September stakeholder meeting to introduce the new Deputy PM.

The individual functionality is now ready for use. It was deployed the second week of August. However, Grants.gov is still waiting for the first program to post an application package. To recap, individuals are not required to submit their Social Security number anywhere within the process. However, agencies can still require this number. Therefore a unique identifier was created that shows up on the SF 424 and is pre-populated for the applicant in order to reduce user error. Individuals are not required to register with the CCR nor are they required to have a DUNS number. At this time, a complete instruction set specific to individuals is not yet available, but will be soon.

New functionalities for Grants.gov are currently in testing and are expected to rollout in mid-September. This includes agency level application retrieval, changing the terminology from retention period to grace period and verification of email addresses. Work on Standard Form (SF) 424, Version 2 has begun. Mary Rexford, a Management Consultant with the Grants.gov Program Management Office, is pulling together the work plan and developing a work group for the SF 424, Version 2. The deadline for this plan to be defined and the work group to be formed is October 31<sup>st</sup>. The current form, with comments from the Federal Register, schema, and data set will all be under review. An update will be provided next month.

With regard to the R&R and mandatory data set, Grants.gov is working with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for a government-wide clearance process. The mandatory data sets must be defined by August 31<sup>st</sup>. The SF number and unique Grants.gov OMB clearance number will be used. Grants.gov will prepare the information collection package and include each agencies' burden hours via an 83-C. The Federal Register notice will also be published under a Grants.gov section within HHS or as a separate entity. Eventually, Grants.gov will be the official owner of the government-wide grant forms.

Q: What is Grants.gov doing for the supporting statement?

A: Grants.gov will provide the supporting statement and agencies will only have to provide their burden hours.

Q: Will Grants.gov eventually take ownership of all forms?

A: No. Grants.gov will only take ownership of the government-wide grants forms at this point in time.

Q: What if the agency currently has clearance with OMB?

A: If the agency currently has clearance with OMB, then they are covered.

Q: Is Grants.gov looking at all versions of the forms?

A. Grants.gov is only reviewing the cover sheet but will review other parts of the form if necessary.

Q: Has e-signature functionality been developed yet?

A. No. Grants.gov plans to address this issue in the future.

After Ms. Spitzgo provided the Grants.gov update, she then introduced Ms. Andrea Brandon, Director of the Division of Grants Policy within HHS.

### **PL 106/107 Reforms and Update**

Ms. Andrea Brandon provided an update on Public Law (PL) 106/107. Within the past year, there have been several changes. To begin, Ms. Brandon clarified that PL 106/107 is also known as the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 1999. It is a collaborative effort between the 26 agencies to streamline processes for grant opportunities. Its goals are four-fold:

- To improve effectiveness and performance;
- To simplify application and reporting process (with Grants.gov's help);
- To improve delivery of service; and
- To facilitate greater coordination between the service providers/federal agencies

PL 106/107 has made several structural changes since February 2004. Initially, there was an oversight committee, but that committee is no longer meeting. Also, the various workgroups, which include pre-award, mandatory, post-award, and audit oversight, had been directly reporting to OMB with no executive oversight. However, sign-off from agency management was necessary before it was submitted to OMB.

Now, PL 106/107 is structurally organized like that of a pyramid with HHS facilitating and maintaining PL 106/107 and delivering finished products to OMB. OMB then publishes these products in the Federal Register for public comment. PL 106/107 also has a standing executive board that reviews and approves products before they are handed over to OMB. Previously, the Grants Management Committee (GMC) held this

reviewing responsibility, but it did not meet regularly. The Grants Executive Board (i.e., originally the Grants.gov Executive Board) now takes on this responsibility.

The PL 106/107 Planning and Oversight Committee (PPOC), who reports to the Grants Executive Board, also replaced the Government-wide Policy Oversight Team (GPOT). The PPOC consists of chairs from the various workgroups and meets monthly on every 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday at the White House Conference Center to vet products received from the workgroups either to the Executive Board, if ready, or back to the workgroups for revision.

Since inception, the workgroups have remained consistent despite the organizational changes that have occurred. Reporting to the workgroups are various subgroups composed of volunteers from the Federal agencies. They begin the work on various detailed projects and hand-off the work to their specific workgroup.

Some of the products that have come out of PL 106/107 include:

- 2004 PL 106/107 Report for May 2003 to May 2004 to Congress which is an annual report and final clearance is due to Congress by August 31<sup>st</sup>.
- Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations aims to pull information all in one place for easier access by the public. Circular A-110 has also been relocated and guidance is being moved to Title 2.
- Standard Funding Opportunity Announcement has received positive feedback thus far. All agencies have been required to use this standard since October 2003.
- OMB Debarment and Suspension Guidance for Title 2 of the CFR
- DUNS Number
- Increase in A-133 threshold to \$500,000 from \$300,000
- Standard Reports
  - Unified invention and unified federal financial have not yet been finalized and are at OMB for clearance
  - Unified real property, unified personal property and unified performance/progress have all been finalized and are out for comment in the Federal Register.
- Revision to the 2004 OMB Circular A-133 Compliance Supplement is ahead of schedule and has been completed

Current status of PL 106/107 accomplishments is that the final Federal Register Notice of Revision to the cost principles Circular A-21, A-87, and A-122 have all been completed to provide clarification to the grant community and have consistent terminology. A logo has been developed for PL 106/107 and the website is expected to launch September 10, 2004. A domain has not yet been determined; but, a notice will be distributed to the listserv once the site is functional.

On-going activities include:

- Standardization of administrative terms and conditions

- Development of national policy on terms and conditions
- Development of award notice
- Development of mandatory grants application

### **Grants.gov Fall Outreach/Marketing Campaign**

Ms. Katie Root, Outreach Coordinator for Grants.gov, presented the Program's fall outreach/marketing campaign. The campaign objectives are:

- To drive traffic from the grant community to the Grants.gov site
- To increase grant applications received from the grant community
- To continue to build site awareness among collaborative partners and grantors
- To broaden visibility and media coverage
- To test and learn from initial direct mail/advertising efforts to further target future marketing efforts

In order to achieve these objectives, Grants.gov plans to use several strategies which include:

- Marketing directly to the grant community
- Increasing frequency of Grants.gov messages among grant community target audiences
- Reinforcing, updating and expanding messages with collaborative partners and grantors
- Conducting trial media purchases to establish cost effective and response driven advertising baselines
- Tracking response by media and target audience subgroups

The first wave will be directed to the grant community (state and local governments, higher education groups and individuals, and research institutions/groups/organizations) and will encompass print ads, magazine ads, online ads, and a postcard series. Other direct tactics include the "3 New Reasons" campaign which is updated information on Grants.gov and will be sent to 1000 recipients (i.e., grantor staff, the 70+ collaboration partners, and other interested organizations/individuals) to spark more interest in promoting the Grants.gov site to their respective constituents/members, and a web cast to increase understanding and awareness of Grants.gov. Subsequent outreach efforts will then be targeted towards the grant community (tribal organizations, faith-based organizations, not-for- and for-profit organizations, and public housing authorities), collaboration partners, grantors, and the media.

The creative concepts involved with this campaign are:

- Find. Apply. Succeed – Focuses on Grants.gov brand image and elements through postcard series and print advertising
- Grants at work – Specifically highlights the work of Federal grant programs and will be implemented in Spring 2005

- “3 New Reasons” – Promotional direct mail package

The Grants.gov website continues to make enhancements, such as the development of a guided simulation module or training demonstration which was launched August 27<sup>th</sup>. It can be accessed via <http://www.grants.gov/CompleteApplication#gsim>. The training demonstration serves to aid the applicant in the application process via an animated demonstration.

Grants.gov also incorporated the recommendations from the satisfaction surveys and comments to improve the site. For example, language within the site, specifically the “Get Started” steps, continues to be edited to improve communication to the Grants.gov stakeholders. Grants.gov is also working with system developers to craft the language for the new Grants.gov individual functionality. Developers are also working on an application program that can be downloaded before having to go through the actual application process.

Grants.gov will continue to use the monthly stakeholder meetings as an indirect tactic to get the word out, and also to present agency best practices and bring representatives within the grant community as the voice of the applicants. Grants.gov also plans to publish a press release as soon as the 1000 applications mark has been reached and with any other key program accomplishments.

The site will also feature an email opt-in in mid-September for program updates, e.g., the quarterly “Succeed” newsletter which continues to keep Grants.gov stakeholders informed of Program developments. Finally, in November 2004, quantitative data will be re-fielded to assess the effectiveness of 2004’s marketing efforts and to feed refinements for 2005.

### **Stakeholder Questions & Answers**

Q: Is there a customer service port/user group?

A: The Deputy PM will work to develop and chair this group.

Q: Once applications are received, how are they stored?

A: Applications are stored indefinitely in the Oracle database. Developers are currently working on an archive function.

Q: Why was Grants.gov listed only once on the funding charts provided by the CIO Council?

A: Grants.gov was listed under HHS for 2005 only. Karen Evans from OMB sent out a memo regarding Grants.gov now becoming a fee-for-service and Grants.gov is no longer treated as an e-gov initiative.

Q: Does the Grants.gov site offer a technical Q&A?

A: The site does not currently offer a technical Q&A and one is not planned. Please forward any technical questions to [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov) and the customer service team will direct the question to the appropriate Grants.gov staff for a response.

Q: How can Grants.gov have a mandatory apply function to find?

A: There is no find piece for mandatory grants because this can be misleading. Mandatory grants are not publicly available or published.

Q: What is the update on MIT and System to System (S2S) testing?

A: Grants.gov continues to work with MIT and great progress has been made. S2S testing has not been customized for MIT and will remain generic so that other systems will also be able to connect to Grants.gov via S2S. An update will be provided at the Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP) meeting next month.