APRIL 2006 STAKEHOLDER MEETING MINUTES
April 26, 2006

Next Meeting
Date: Wednesday, June 28, 2006
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:
Mr. John Etcheverry, Grants.gov Deputy Program Manager, began the meeting at
1:30 p.m. with the following agenda:

- Indiana Grants Perspective
- OMB Goals for Federal Grant-making Agencies
- An Agency Outreach Perspective
- Grants.gov Update
- System-to-System Update
- June 2006 Mandatory/R&R Form Upgrade
- Questions & Answers

Mr. Etcheverry first introduced Ms. Jen Hoffman, Director of Policy Grants Management
Division for Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH).

Indiana Grants Perspective
Ms. Hoffman opened by presenting several Indiana statistics, covering a population of
6,271,973, a young adult segment covering 27.8% of that population. In 2005, Indiana
received the overall state ranking of 19 from the United Health Foundation. Their CDC
per capita grant ranking was 50 out of 50, or $9.61 versus the U.S. average of $14.93.
The per capita spending on Public Health was $34.00 whereas the U.S. average was
$117.00. ISDH funding includes 55 Federal grants, 1 private foundation grant, a $300
million total budget and $81 million in state funds. Approximately 73% of the ISDH
budget is Federal grant driven and there are 650 ISDH community grants and contracts
that pass through the state totaling $100 million.

The ISDH Policy and Grant Management Division was established in July 2005 in order
to provide a single point of contact for the agency. The goals of the division include
ensuring the highest quality application, improving the grant tracking and data collection
processes, increasing networking efforts, improving Federal agency relations, improving
local agency funding attainment capacity and increasing funding by 20%. Ms. Hoffman

is very enthusiastic about how Grants.gov has helped ISDH to meet some of those goals. Solutions like being able to type in the CFDA number and not having to attach anything have proved to be simple ways to streamline the grants process.

Ms. Hoffman next went over some Grants.gov data pertaining to ISDH. ISDH registered all Executive Staff as Grant.gov Authorized Organization Representatives (AORs) in July 2005, including two Commissioners, four Assistant Commissioners and one Grant Director. Their first grant submission was in August of 2005 for the Center for Disease Control (CDC) ALOHA grant. They have had nine electronic submissions over a nine-month period and have adopted an agency electronic policy. They also created a training series including a thirty-minute PowerPoint and corresponding screen guide manual that walks users through one screen at a time.

The benefits that ISDH has experienced include receiving email notification as the grant moves through every step of the submission process. This allows for verification and provides a helpful tracking mechanism. Ms. Hoffman explained that she grew up in the Microsoft generation, growing very comfortable using the computer and various applications. Because the aging workforce does not always know how to use Excel, Outlook or other basic Microsoft functions, Ms. Hoffman has tried to ensure that ISDH takes people through the grant process in an easy-to-use manner. If presented to users in a logical way, they can easily learn the thinking behind the software and become accustomed to navigating themselves. With wonderful customer service and technical support, users feel that they have somewhere to turn with their questions instead of putting all responsibility on one person's shoulders. It allows for multiple users to view single applications and simplifies collation of the application.

Some difficult areas included navigation, assurances and inconsistent certifications. For instance, Ms. Hoffman explained, at first ISDH didn't really understand what assurances were. They would fill out that the date was "on file" until they realized that they actually needed a date. You should file assurances with each grant. Grants.gov has been helpful in forcing ISDH to look at the policies that are in use to ensure that we are operating in the correct manner. Ms. Hoffman concluded her presentation by giving out her contact information and thanking everyone for their time. Mr. Etcheverry then presented a Grants.gov portfolio to Ms. Hoffman as a token of Grants.gov's appreciation for all of her hard work.

Ms. Stacie Boyd, Government-to-Government Portfolio Manager from the Office of Management and Budget, was then introduced by Mr. Etcheverry.

OMB Goals for Federal Grant-making Agencies
Ms. Boyd opened her presentation by thanking Ms. Hoffman for a great job in exposing the grantee experience to the attending agency partners. Ms. Boyd then began her presentation by presenting her first slide, a roadmap to e-Government transformation, starting from the creation, to the adoption and then to the transformation.

The OMB FY06 goals include having Federal agencies required to make at least 75% of discretionary grant opportunities available for electronic submission through Grants.gov. This utilization goal increases to 100% in FY07. The goal is to increase citizen access to Federal grant opportunity application packages through a single site as well as provide the grantee the option to submit applications electronically. As Grants Management is one of the 24 e-Government initiatives, agencies will be measured on the e-Government grants management scorecard regarding whether or not they hit the 75% goal. If agencies are not able to achieve this, it will result in a downgrade in their progress score.

The FY05 results showed that 20 out of 26 agencies met the 25% goal in FY05. Although 6 agencies were not able to meet the goal, the government as a whole exceeded the 25% goal by making 44% of all discretionary grant opportunities available for electronic submission through Grants.gov.

Ms. Boyd then presented a slide showing the current status of discretionary opportunities. She explained that the numbers reflected the current date, so agencies should be sure to stay on top of things as a lot of grant opportunities are coming up. She explained that the purpose of the OMB meetings with agencies was not to discuss numbers or the difficulties in transitioning from the paper process, but instead to focus on what issues are preventing agencies from being able to fully utilize Grants.gov. While 75% seems like a tough goal, several agencies are meeting this aim, so OMB wants to find out what issues there may be for those agencies that are not there yet. Ms. Boyd closed by assuring attendees that her duty was to enable any grantee to be able to find and apply for a grant on Grants.gov, and providing her contact information (Stacie_M._Boyd@omb.eop.gov or 202.395.0346). When no one in the audience had any questions, Ms. Boyd said she looked forward to everyone meeting the 75% goal.

Mr. Etcheverry then asked everyone to look in their packets and review the rundown that was included, letting Grants.gov know if any discrepancies were found. He also noted that since the goal goes to 100% in FY07, it would be a good idea for agencies to start thinking now about what comes in October and November so they are fully prepared.

Mr. Etcheverry then introduced Mr. Brett Bobley from the National Endowment for the Humanities by congratulating Mr. Bobley on his recent CIO Council Leadership Award.

An Agency Outreach Perspective
Mr. Bobley started by explaining that NEH would like to learn what other agencies are doing for Outreach. He then reviewed the NEH tips to make the experience easier for applicants and encouraged the audience to speak up if they had questions or suggestions.

Before launching into the helpful NEH tips, Mr. Bobley explained that NEH has been very aggressive about using Grants.gov. He explained that when they first made Grants.gov an option, 90% of people still used the in-house e-Government system. The next year, FY06, they decided to make it mandatory and did so in January by completely turning off the in-house e-Government system. Although they received some resistance, with people saying their users would scream or that they were not computer savvy, they

proceeded with their mandate to ensure that everyone was using Grants.gov. Over Mr. Bobley's last ten years working with electronic grants, he emphasized the realization that agencies are in charge of helping to push people along. He stated that Ms. Hoffman did a great job explaining the need to train applicants AND staff. He spent most of last year training and has found that when people don't have to file and manually key in information, they realize the benefits of using Grants.gov. By providing Outreach materials to both the program staff and the general public, it has made the process much easier for NEH.

Tips and Tricks for Outreach
1. Include on your agency's website easy-to-use guidelines that are short and sweet. By clearly explaining on your website how to apply, who can apply, what they can apply for, etc., and then providing a button that takes users to the download page with the right program on Grants.gov, agencies can alleviate trying to explain how to navigate these steps. Mr. Bobley laughed, saying that NEH is proud of their "Big Button" because it helps simplify the overall process.
2. Prepare a PowerPoint presentation specific to your agency and designed for Outreach needs. By having this ready for your staff to present at events, you hammer home the message of registering early and other issues that may come up. When looking at what issues are most common, registration issues are definitely high. NEH has actually developed a separate PowerPoint presentation that focuses on registering alone. While the NEH usually directs questions to the Grants.gov HelpDesk, Mr. Bobley explained how important it is that agency staff should understand the basics of Grants.gov.
3. Provide sample language to your staff to use in emails. This will ensure that your agency has a cohesive message for all to send out so everyone is on the same page and consistent language is used. NEH also sends out an email that goes to past applicants explaining that they must be Grants.gov ready if they want to apply.
4. Create a Waiver Request Form so if someone absolutely wants to apply on paper, they must fill it out and be granted a waiver. When sending out the waiver, ask why they can't use Grants.gov and what they are going to do to ensure they can use Grants.gov in the future.

Mr. Bobley went on to explain that when dealing with concerns about shifting from the paper process to the online process, you must be friendly, but firm. By doing this, you make users start to use Grants.gov and they eventually thank you, since ultimately the online process is easier. It is also very difficult when agencies have a mixture of online and paper applications accepted, so it behooves everyone to work towards shifting completely.

Mr. Bobley then asked if anyone had any other tips to add and one response was that agencies can go to phone logs and contact anyone who had a problem last year in order to follow up and see if they need help. A representative from USAID followed, saying that when their staff is traveling overseas for different mission locations, they have separate training days for them to help get registered, get their DUNS number, etc. Mr. Bobley

concluded his session by asking if there were any further questions and informing the audience that they could visit http://www.neh.gov/whoweare/cio/grants.gov/ for helpful documents.

Grants.gov Update
Mr. Etcheverry thanked Mr. Bobley for his ideas and explained that when users call in with questions, the Grants.gov team takes a somewhat generic approach. By having agencies up to speed, it provides a much more tailored approach and furthers the synergy that exists. He asked that, if anyone had any other innovative or creative ideas for Outreach, to please let them know so they can present at future Stakeholder Meetings. He also asked agencies for their agency ramp-up plans and to fill out the survey for the Stakeholder Meeting and turn it in at the registration desk at the end of the meeting, if possible.

Mr. Etcheverry then provided the Grants.gov update. He reviewed the submissions received, explaining the chart provided in the slide. With 10, 247 submissions in March 2006, usage trends are steadily increasing when compared with FY05 numbers (627 in March 2005). To date, the number of application packages on Grants.gov totals 35,115, based on numbers from March 2006. Mr. Etcheverry mentioned that they send these numbers out monthly to keep everyone on the same page. Some usage highlights included 40,000 submissions since October 1, 2005. The number of registered users exceeds 45,000. Mr. Etcheverry also discussed the recent Citrix results, explaining that Grants.gov has provided a temporary fix to the issue that Macs do not work with the PureEdge viewer, and stated that Grants.gov is also working on a more long-term solution to this with IBM to include Mac support. Grants.gov has committed to providing this cross-platform solution by November 2006.

For the overall program update, Mr. Etcheverry described the system issues and architecture, letting everyone know that these items are a work in progress. Grants.gov has had several new servers installed so they are now equipped to handle at least 4,000 entries a day. Grants.gov has been working with the system integrator to solve any functionality issues, including the stuck submissions issue. Most of the issues with stuck submissions were fixed during a patch on April 9. Since then, no complaints have come in regarding the issue. There are a few more small fixes that are still being worked on in order to completely alleviate the problem. Mr. Etcheverry asked everyone to give Grants.gov a ballpark estimate of how many submissions they expected to receive. By doing this, it helps to manage the HelpDesk by staffing appropriately during peak times. All responses would be greatly appreciated. The website redesign is expected to be completed in mid-July. For the creation of the new design, much input was received from the User Group. So far, the new design has been approved and we plan on providing support along the way to ensure that the implementation is a smooth process. Grants.gov is also recompeting the systems integrator contract. Mr. Etcheverry then introduced Mr. Russ Wyland, a Program Advisor for Grants.gov that focuses mainly on system-to-system.

System-to-System Update
Mr. Wyland gave a quick system-to-system (S2S) update, telling the group that currently there are 29 agencies in production or advanced testing with the S2S interface and there are also 5 additional in planning. While agencies have led the way with S2S growth, the real area of expansion has been with the applicant S2S interface. There are currently 12 applicant systems in production, another 8 testing and at least five (probably many more) using the Reference Implementation materials. Mr. Wyland announced that the AXIS server migration was completed on March 1. His predecessor, Pete Brunner, originally announced the changes in October 2005 and there were three messages since. Mr. Wyland thanked the agencies for being diligent about making the necessary changes to their systems. The Grants.gov will be initiating new listservs that will cover the Applicant S2S Group, the Agency S2S Group, the Stakeholder Group and the User Group to ensure that all communications are going to the right parties. The two S2S listservs will be interactive, and the PMO envisions their use for issues that might be of concern to several agencies. For example, to discuss Microsoft's recent decision not to support MIME or DIME encoding in the new version of .NET, an environment that many agencies use.

Mr. Etcheverry thanked Mr. Wyland for the update and noted that, going back to the stuck submission issue, he hasn't received any emails in the last nine days whereas, before, he was gathering complaint emails every morning. If this happens and you need guidance, please ask Mr. Wyland and he can assist you. Mr. Etcheverry then introduced Ms. Mary Rexford to go over upcoming form upgrades.

June 2006 Mandatory/R&R Form Upgrade
Ms. Rexford briefly went over the upcoming June 2006 form upgrades, explaining the transition period leading into it and other pertinent information. She informed the group that, in order to keep the process streamlined, Grants.gov is putting two separate forms through the process at the same time. From April 1 to May 31, the transition period will be occurring. On April 1, the upgraded forms and technical information are available on ATWeb. The Legacy forms are also available on ATWeb. On May 31, the templates created with the current forms will be deleted. On June 1, production deployment will occur, meaning the upgraded SF-424M and R&R families will proceed to production. Agencies may create templates and/or publish packages using the new forms - current form versions will not be available for publishing. Packages published prior to June 1 will continue to process as normal until the close date and applicable grace periods have expired. Ms. Rexford advised the group to only make the following modifications to published packages:
- Application Instructions
- Opportunity Title
- Open Date
- Close Date (date should be after the original close date)
- Grace Period
- Agency Contact

She also pointed out how critical it is to not add or remove forms for that package. She instructed the group to identify published opportunities with a close date of no later than

September 30, 2006. Because these packages use current SF-424 M/R&R forms, agencies must close out and republish using upgraded forms. Ms. Rexford then clarified a question from the audience, explaining that if publishing something today through May 31, you can publish using the old forms and they can stay that way forever if the package won't close until after September 30, 2006.

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

Q: So the transition to Global Library Version 2 only affects the mandatory and R&R forms, correct?
A: Yes, that is correct.

Q: Last fall, there was a suggestion about S2S to expand to process all Grants.gov functionality, including the posting of grant opportunities and grant application packages. When is that expected to be deployed?
A: With budget cuts and reduced system integrator resources, it will take a while to accomplish this, but it is not off of our radar. This is the only part of the system currently not automated.

Q: Can you please give out the website address on where to find the NEH Outreach materials?
A: Yes, it is http://www.neh.gov/whoweare/cio/grants.gov/.

Q: With the redesign, do you plan on giving agencies a fair amount of time so we are able to update our materials as necessary?
A: Yes, as the redesign is in progress, we will be sending out update emails and allow enough time for agencies to transition along with the changes. Also, Grants.gov is making an effort to preserve existing links and redirect other links to allow for existing agency materials to still be usable if they connect URLs to Grants.gov.

Q: When will we receive the 30-day forecasting report?
A: That is just coming together now and we will be in touch.

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

The meeting concluded at 3:00 p.m.