

STREAMLINING FEDERAL GRANTS

Over the last few months, the federal government has radically altered the process for federal grant applications. The new system, Grants.gov, simplifies grant management and creates a centralized, on-line process to find and apply for over 900 grant programs from the 26 federal grant-making agencies - grants worth \$360 billion annually!

Grants.gov provides local governments with two primary capabilities: the ability to discover grant opportunities and a unified process to apply for grants. Everything else on the site is designed to support the use of these features.

WHAT IS IT?

Grants.gov is the common face for federal grant program information and applications. Key benefits include a single, secure source for finding federal grant opportunities and applying for them on-line. It promises to simplify the application process and reduce paperwork. All federal agencies are now required to post all competitive grant opportunities to the site. This year, there will be a rapid ramp-up of additional agencies and grant programs on the Apply feature. There will also be a significant focus on advancing the grantor and grant community system-to-system interface, allowing local governments to directly communicate with the Grants.gov system. Grants.gov will also begin to expand its uses to add progress reporting.

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS

A grant seeker visits the Grants.gov Web site to search for grant opportunities. Once a match is found, the organization downloads the grant application package, completes it off-line, and then submits it through the Grants.gov site. The application is time-stamped and the appropriate federal agency has immediate access to it.

HOW TO BEGIN

Local governments can begin searching for grant opportunities for which they would like to apply and begin completing the application immediately. A series of additional "Prepare to Apply" steps must be finished in advance of submitting a grant application through Grants.gov. These steps are described in detail on the site. Generally:

- Grant applicant organizations need to be registered with the Central Contractor Registry (CCR) before being able to submit a grant application through Grants.gov.
- When an organization registers with the CCR, it is required to designate an EBusiness Point of Contact (E-BIZ POC). The E-BIZ POC is the sole authority of the organization capable of designating, or revoking, an individual's ability to submit grant applications on behalf of his or her organization via Grants.gov. The CCR also houses organizational information that Grants.gov uses to verify applicant organization identity.

SECURITY

In order to safeguard the security of electronic information, Grants.gov utilizes EAuthentication, the federal program that ensures secure transactions. These are one-time requirements that facilitate the validity and security of the grant application for all. If you have questions about this new federal government service, go to www.grants.gov and click on the "Customer Support."

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