

---

**Part 2        Pre-Award**

**Section 03    Information for Potential Applicants Competing for Grants**

**A. Principles**

1. **Purpose.** This Grants Policy Directive (GPD) establishes Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) policy for developing and issuing information about funding opportunities under HHS discretionary grant programs. It implements the requirements of two Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Office of Federal Financial Management (OFFM) Policy Letters—one on use of a standard announcement format (dated June 23, 2003) and one on the use of Grants.gov FIND (dated October 8, 2003). These policy letters can be found on the OMB website at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/grants\\_docs.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/grants_docs.html). This GPD also provides HHS policy concerning application submission deadlines.
2. **Scope.** The policies in this GPD apply to all HHS programs that award discretionary grants and cooperative agreements. This GPD does not apply to mandatory grant programs or to applications for single-source awards and unsolicited applications, which are subject to GPD 2.04F. For purposes of this GPD and GPD 2.04F, applications submitted to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) or other Operating Divisions (OPDIVs) for review and assignment by the Center for Scientific Review, NIH, are considered “solicited.”

**B. Policy**

1. It is HHS policy to promote the widest possible dissemination of information to potential applicants concerning the availability of funding opportunities.
2. Competing applications may be solicited only on the basis of a synopsis, which must be posted at Grants.gov FIND, and a funding opportunity announcement formatted and issued in accordance with this GPD. Competing applications, which include those classified as “limited competition” (whether the universe of potential applicants is known, e.g., States, or unknown), may not be solicited on any other basis.

- a. Grants.gov FIND is a government-wide site for posting summary information about funding opportunities. The funding opportunity synopsis at Grants.gov FIND must include a link to (or upload of) the funding opportunity announcement. The synopsis must include the standard data elements required by the OFFM Policy Letter on use of Grants.gov FIND (dated October 8, 2003) ([http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/grants\\_docs.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/grants_docs.html)).
- b. The term “funding opportunity announcement” refers to all financial assistance solicitations regardless of type or where issued. The types of funding opportunity announcements recognized for use in HHS include Requests for Applications, program announcements, standing announcements, and application guidance. Funding opportunity announcements may be issued by posting on an OPDIV’s or program’s website, uploading into Grants.gov FIND, publishing in the *NIH Guide for Grants and Contracts*, publishing in the *Federal Register*, or mailing to all eligible applicants in a universe of known applicants.
- c. Regardless of the means of issuance, all funding opportunity announcements must be posted on the Internet.
- d. OPDIVs may use other media (e.g., newspapers and magazines), as appropriate, to supplement—but not substitute for—issuance as required by this GPD.
- e. Depending on the program, e.g., a new program, or the eligible applicants, e.g., ones that may not routinely use the Internet to locate funding opportunities, OPDIVs may publish a notice in the *Federal Register* providing summary information about the funding opportunity. This notice is in addition to the synopsis in Grants.gov FIND.

This type of notice, if used, must include the following information about the funding opportunity: (1) the *Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance* (CFDA) number; (2) funding opportunity description; (3) funding instrument type, i.e., grant or cooperative agreement; (4) direct electronic link to the funding opportunity announcement; (5) eligibility; (6) whether there is a cost-sharing or matching requirement (see GPD 3.02); (7) responsiveness criteria, if any; (8) evaluation criteria; (9) due date for applications and other pertinent dates, if applicable, such as a due date for submission of letters of intent (LOIs); and (10) telephone number(s) and an address for a

potential applicant to obtain a hard-copy version of the funding opportunity announcement.

- f. When multiple media sources are used to disseminate information about funding opportunities, OPDIVs should attempt to ensure that potential variations in the information provided and the timing of information release do not create an unfair advantage to the users of one medium rather than another.
3. Project Officers (POs) are primarily responsible for developing funding opportunity announcements; however the GMO must work with the PO to ensure that the funding opportunity announcement complies with the requirements of this GPD. The OPDIV Chief Grants Management Officer (CGMO) is required to approve each OPDIV funding opportunity announcement before issuance.
4. The process for program office development of draft funding opportunity announcements and coordination with the cognizant Grants Management Officer (GMO) should begin early enough in the fiscal year during which awards will be made (or the prior fiscal year) to allow the OPDIV to maximize the time available for the applicant to prepare its application and for the OPDIV to carry out its objective and business reviews and make timely awards.
5. OPDIVs are encouraged to provide applicants at least 60 days from the date of issuance of a funding opportunity announcement to prepare and submit applications; however, no less than 30 days shall be provided, except in the case of a limited competition for urgent awards if a full 30 days would adversely affect the project or program and viable applications can be prepared in less time.
6. Funding opportunity announcements should be as clear and comprehensive as possible to limit the need for potential applicants to consult with OPDIV staff. If OPDIV staff members do provide telephonic or other informal consultation, they must provide consistent interpretations and treat all requesters equitably.
7. Except for funding opportunity announcements for which a limitation of competition has been approved, the process of developing and issuing a funding opportunity announcement should not restrict competition. Potential applicants should not be given selective advance notification of planned or pending funding opportunities and OPDIVs should not tailor announcements to

selected projects or outcomes, e.g., by using unduly restrictive evaluation criteria.

8. Consistent with the requirements of this GPD, OPDIVs also are encouraged to streamline and simplify the program announcement process to better serve applicants. An example of such a practice is the *HRSA Preview* (<http://www.hrsa.gov/grants/preview/default.htm>).

### **C. Content Requirements for Funding Opportunity Announcements**

1. A funding opportunity announcement is an OPDIV's formal means of conveying to the public detailed information about the competition for available grant funding. These announcements must not only provide sufficient information to enable potential applicants to judge whether to submit an application, but they also must be able to withstand scrutiny concerning the fairness and equity of the competition. OPDIVs must follow the standard announcement template and content requirements specified in the OFFM Policy Letter on use of a standard announcement format (dated June 23, 2003). For HHS, each "Required" section must be included in each announcement and address the considerations specified in the announcement template. In addition, all section headings must be included regardless of whether the content is "Required" or "Optional." If no content is provided under an "Optional," section, OPDIVs should indicate "Not Applicable" under the heading.
2. In developing and reviewing funding opportunity announcements, particular attention should be paid to the following:
  - a. Use of the correct CFDA number for the program/project to be funded. Funding opportunity announcements (and synopses) may not be issued without a valid CFDA number.
  - b. If the announcement is expected to result in the award of a cooperative agreement(s), that possibility must be mentioned as well as the type of anticipated substantial Federal involvement. This language should be tailored to the specific type(s) of activities that may be funded under that announcement.

- c. A clear statement of eligibility, including whether faith-based and community-based organizations and Indian tribes are eligible to apply. Any limitation of eligibility that is not required by statute must be supported by an approved justification signed at a level no lower than the CGMO.
- d. Whether or not the applicant will be required to match or share in project costs if an award is made, any application requirements related to matching or cost sharing, and the manner in which proposed matching or cost sharing will be evaluated (e.g., scored evaluation criterion or preference factor).
- e. Any responsiveness criterion that can be objectively judged for its presence or absence (e.g., page limitation) that will cause an OPDIV to return the application without review.
- f. If the application (and related submission requirements) are not included as part of the funding opportunity announcement, how to obtain an application kit, by including a url that takes the reader directly to the funding opportunity announcement **and** by providing a mailing address.
- g. The requirement to include the Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number in the application.
- h. The required number of copies of the application (for hard-copy submissions), where to submit applications, the medium for submitting applications, and any special requirements for electronic submission, e.g., registration in the Central Contractor Registry. Unless a deviation approved as specified in GPD 1.03, OPDIVs may not require submission of more than the original and two copies of an application.
- i. The deadline for submitting applications (see paragraph 2.03.D. below).

- j. A statement indicating the applicability of Executive Order 12372 and 45 CFR part 100, and additional guidance pertinent to the intergovernmental review process, as appropriate.
  - k. Whether pre-award costs are allowable and the conditions of allowability.
  - l. Evaluation criteria that will be applied to the review of applications, including whether points will be assigned, and any factors that will be applied in selecting applications for award. If evaluation criteria vary in importance, the funding opportunity announcement must specify the relative percentages, weights, or other means that will be used to distinguish among them (e.g., point values).
  - m. Contacts for further information. The GMO serves as the focal point for business-management-related questions from potential applicants.
5. In any review of individual announcements or OPDIV operations, the adequacy of OPDIV announcements will be judged by the degree to which they comply with the requirements of the OFFM Policy Letter, this GPD, and the OPDIV's implementation of this GPD.

#### **D. Deadlines for Submission of Competing Applications**

1. To be considered timely, applications must be sent on or before the published deadline date. The OPDIV CGMO may authorize other ways of determining timeliness, but these requirements must be identified in the funding opportunity announcement.
2. Competing applications not meeting the deadline specified in the funding opportunity announcement are considered late and may not be considered. OPDIVs are responsible for notifying applicants submitting late applications and either returning the application or advising the applicant of its disposition.
3. The CGMO may authorize a general extension of a published application deadline that affects all applicants or only those applicants in a defined geographical area when justified by circumstances such as acts of God (e.g., floods or hurricanes), widespread disruptions of mail service, or disruptions of electronic

(e.g., application receipt services) or other services, such as a prolonged blackout, that affect the public at large. As appropriate, the CGMO will determine the affected geographical area(s).

**E. Coordination with the OPDIV Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization Specialist (SADBUS).**

The GMO must advise the OPDIV SADBUS about competing funding opportunities to allow the SADBUS to notify small, minority, and women-owned business concerns of competing funding opportunities for which they are eligible.

**F. Salary Information**

If non-Federal reviewers will be used to evaluate applications, applicants should be advised they have the option to omit, from the application copies that will be made available to non-Federal reviewers, the specific salary rates or amounts for individuals identified in the application budget; however, summary salary information is required. OPDIVs should provide any additional guidance deemed necessary in relation to this requirement.