

General Information about Grants at the U.S. Department of Education

What is a discretionary grant?

A *discretionary grant* is an award made by the Department for which the Department has discretion, or choice, in which applicants get funded. Virtually all of the Department's discretionary grants are made based on a *competitive review process*. The Department reviews applications based on the legislative and regulatory requirements, and on the application requirements and criteria established for a discretionary grant program. This review process gives the Department discretion to determine which applications best address the program requirements and are, therefore, most worthy of receiving funding. Successful applicants become the Department's **grantees**.

What is Grants.gov?

Grants.gov is a central location on the Internet that allows prospective grant applicants to find and apply for funding opportunities across the federal government. Applicants can search for information on different topics and review synopses of grant opportunities from 26 federal departments and agencies. The public can access Grants.gov at www.grants.gov.

How do I apply for a Grant

Applying for a Department of Education grant is not a complicated process, but it does require that you provide specific information in specific formats, which allows the Department to consider your grant application fairly and completely.

What is an application package?

A discretionary grant application package contains all of the information and forms that you will need to apply for a grant from the Department. Application packages typically include the application notice published in the *Federal Register*, applicable program regulations and legislation, and application instructions and forms. These forms include the standard form *Application for Federal Assistance* (SF 424) along with the *Supplemental Information Required for Department of Education* (Department of Education Supplement to the SF 424), as well as the *certifications* and *assurances* needed to apply for a grant. Read the "Dear Colleague" letter from OELA Director which gives an overview of the program and discusses any important objectives in effect for the competition.

How do I get an application package?

The National Professional Development (NPD) Program discretionary grant application package is available online through Grants.gov. The Department's electronic application system may be accessed at www.grants.gov. Instructions and training demonstrations for each system are located on the system's Website.

Address to request the NPD application package: Yvonne Mathieu, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., Room 5C138, Washington, DC 20202-6510. Telephone: (202) 401-1461 or by e-mail: Yvonne.Mathieu@ed.gov. Please include "84.195N Application Request" in the subject heading of your e-mail. If you use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD), call the Federal Relay Service (FRS), toll free, at 1-800-877-8339. Individuals with disabilities can obtain a copy of the application package in an alternative format (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, or computer diskette) by contacting Ana Garcia, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., Room 5C147, Washington, DC 20202-6510. Telephone : (202) 401-1440, or by e-mail: Ana.Garcia@ed.gov.

Whom do I contact if I have questions concerning the application?

The Department's application packages contain detailed instructions on how to complete an application. However, if something is unclear to you after reading the instructions, you can contact : Ana Garcia, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., Room 5C147, Washington, DC 20202-6510. Telephone :(202) 401-1440, or by e-mail: Ana.Garcia@ed.gov ; or Diana Schneider, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., Room 5C139, Washington, DC 20202-6510. Telephone: (202) 401-1456, or by e-mail: Diana.Schneider@ed.gov ; or Sharon Coleman, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., Room 5C136, Washington, DC 20202-6510. Telephone :(202) 401-1452, or by e-mail: Sharon.Coleman@ed.gov . If you use TDD, call FRS, toll free, at 1-800-877-8339.

What are certifications and assurances?

Certain federal requirements are imposed on applicants and on grantees as conditions of receiving grant funds. Application packages contain forms that an applicant must sign, promising to abide by the federal laws, regulations, and executive orders that apply to grantees. Certifications relate to requirements of eligibility to apply for and receive federal financial assistance. Assurances relate to complying with various grant requirements, such as nondiscrimination laws.

What do I need to know about protection of human subjects in research when preparing my application?

If you plan to conduct research activities involving human subjects at any time during the proposed project period, you must tell the Department your intentions at the time of application. You must indicate on your application if the research activities are exempt from the regulations protecting human subjects. If research activities are not exempt, you must provide specific information about the research activities. If your application is selected for funding, the Department will ask you to obtain an assurance of compliance with human subject requirements, if you did not have one at the time of application, and to send the Department certification that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) named in the assurance has reviewed and approved the covered research activities. Keep in mind, however, that you are not required to have an assurance or an IRB in place when you apply to the Department for a grant. For additional information about the protection of human subjects in research, check the Department's Protection of Human Subjects in Research Web site at www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocfo/humansub.html.

What happens if I miss the application deadline?

To be considered under a grant competition, you must meet the application deadline. The Department will not accept applications submitted after the deadline date and time specified in the application notice. If the application is late, the applicant will receive notification through the Grants.gov that the application cannot be accepted.

What if I find an error or realize I have omitted something in my application after the deadline?

In order to ensure fairness to all applicants, the Department does not allow an applicant to submit additional or revised materials after the deadline.

What happens if my application is not eligible?

If an application does not meet the eligibility criteria for the program it addresses, the Department notifies the person who signed the application that the application is not eligible and will not be considered. The notification from the Department explains the reason that the application is not being reviewed in the competition.

What criteria do reviewers use to score my application?

Reviewers score each application against the selection criteria stated in the application package. In reviewing applications, reviewers are not permitted to use other criteria or consider any information that is not in the application.

Does a high score guarantee funding?

There is no particular score that guarantees that an application will be funded. Even if an application ranks high it may not be funded. The Department may be unable to fund all high-scoring applications because of the large number of high-quality applications submitted and the set level of funds that Congress appropriates for a program. Some applications may not be funded because of an applicant's poor performance in the past on other federal projects.

Is an application always funded for the entire amount requested?

No. In some cases, the program staff determines that certain proposed activities in the application are unnecessary or unallowable, and deletes them and their associated costs from the award. In others, the program staff that performs the cost analysis determines that the amounts requested for some items are excessive and reduces the budget for them. Funding levels might be restricted based on the amount of funds appropriated for the current fiscal year and the number of applications to be funded.

How do I get my grant funds?

Grantees get their grant funds by setting up accounts and making payment requests through **G5**, which is accessed via the Internet at www.G5.gov. Organizations that do not have Internet access can request funds by telephone to the Department's G5 Payee Hotline at 1-888-336-8930 (TTY— 1-866-697-2696), to have requests for payments entered into G5 for them. Grantees withdraw funds for each separate grant award by PR/Award number. Once a request for payment has been made and is validated, funds are deposited into the grantee's designated bank account. The frequency of payment requests and the amount of withdrawals must be limited to the amounts actually needed to meet the *obligations* made under the grant and be timed in accordance with the project's immediate cash needs to carry out the activities of the grant.

Grantee Responsibilities and Accountability

Congress and federal agencies are placing an ever-increasing emphasis on accountability for the use of public funds. As a Department of Education grant recipient, you will share in the responsibility for being accountable to

Congress and the public for proper stewardship of taxpayers' dollars and for achieving the greatest public benefit possible with those dollars. Accountability for a grant project is measured in part on performance in achieving the educational goals of the project. Examples of success include improving student achievement, teacher effectiveness, the employment of individuals with disabilities, or the understanding of what works in educational practice. Grantees are also responsible for managing the personnel, and the financial and other administrative aspects of the project, consistent with the requirements of the laws and regulations that govern federally funded projects.

What responsibilities do I have under a discretionary grant?

When undertaking a project funded by the Department of Education, your major responsibilities are to:

- Perform the work detailed in the approved application (and any approved revisions to the application);
- Exercise proper stewardship of federal funds, including cash management and documentation of expenditures;
- Comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements, conditions of the grant award, and certifications;
- Draw down funds only when needed to make payments for obligations made under the grant;
- Measure and demonstrate progress toward achieving project goals;
- Report all required information to the Department; and
- Maintain records documenting the grant's activities and expenditures.

What kinds of records do I need to keep?

You must keep records regarding the use of grant funds, compliance with program requirements, and the data the project used to demonstrate the effectiveness of the project in meeting the grant's objectives. Keep your copy of the approved application. The financial records must show the amount and source of all funds spent on the grant. The records must document how all federal were used. You must also keep records that document other types of information you provided the Department in your annual or final reports, such as records of program participants and the source data used to report on performance measures. If you purchase equipment with grant funds, you must maintain inventory records until the equipment is no longer needed to meet the project objectives, and then you should request disposition instructions from the Department. Keep copies of all correspondence with the Department regarding the project. You may need these

records to demonstrate to program monitors or auditors that all expenditures and activities you conducted with the grant were allowable and accurately reported.