

Planning and Local Technical Assistance Application Instructions

Applications may be submitted electronically in accordance with the procedures provided at Grants.gov, or in paper format through the procedures provided in this FFO. The content of the application is the same for paper submissions as it is for electronic submissions. EDA will not accept transmissions of applications sent by facsimile or e-mail.

EDA strongly encourages electronic submissions of applications through Grants.gov. In order to submit an application through Grants.gov, applicants must first register for a Grants.gov user id and password. Note that this registration process can take between three to five business days or as long as four weeks if all steps are not completed correctly. To avoid delays, EDA strongly recommends that applicants start early and not wait before logging on, registering, reviewing the application instructions, and applying. Information about the Grants.gov registration process for organizations can be found at http://www.grants.gov/applicants/get_registered.jsp. Please note that organizations already registered with Grants.gov do not need to re-register; however, all registered organizations must keep their Central Contractor Registration (CCR) database registration up-to-date and must designate the person submitting the application on behalf of the organization as an Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR). Please see below for more information on the AOR requirement.

Applicants need to be aware that once an application is submitted, it undergoes a validation process through Grants.gov in which the application may be accepted or rejected by the system. The validation process may take 24 to 48 hours to complete. Applications that contain errors will be rejected by Grants.gov and will not be forwarded to EDA for review. The applicant must correct the error before Grants.gov will accept and validate the application.

Applicants must register as organizations, not as individuals, and must register at least one AOR. AORs registered at Grants.gov are the only officials with the authority to submit applications at Grants.gov. If the application is submitted to Grants.gov by anyone other than your organization's AOR, it will be rejected by Grants.gov and cannot be considered by EDA.

The following instructions provide step-by-step instructions for accessing, completing, and submitting an application via Grants.gov:

Ensure that you have installed a compatible version of Adobe Acrobat Reader on your computer, as incompatible versions of Adobe Acrobat Reader may cause errors. See <http://www.grants.gov/applicants/AdobeVersioningTestOnly.jsp>.

1. Navigate to www.grants.gov.
2. Select "Apply for Grants" from the left-hand menu at Grants.gov.
3. Select the link "Download a Grant Application" package.
4. Enter "EDAPLANNING2012" as the Funding Opportunity Number and click on "Download Package."
5. Click on the "download" link under "Instructions and Applications" and a new window should pop up. In the new window, click on "Download Application Instructions" to review the instructions posted on Grants.gov and "Download Application Package" when you are ready to begin the application.

As noted above, once an application is submitted through Grants.gov, it undergoes a validation process that may take 24 to 48 hours to complete. Additionally, once an application is submitted, Grants.gov may notify the applicant that the application contains an error. In this case, the applicant must correct the error before the system will accept and validate the application and it can be received by EDA. EDA will consider the date and time stamp on the validation generated by Grants.gov as the official submission time.

Field limitations and special characters. Please be advised that Grants.gov provides the following notice with respect to form field limitations and special characters:

What kind of information can be entered into form fields within my application?

Grants.gov application packages offer fields to enter a set amount of data. When the limit is reached for a certain field, you will no longer be able to enter data into that field. For every form, there are different limitations to the data that you are allowed to enter (this varies between agency and form). Refer to the agency instructions available for download with the application package for more detail.

Do not use special characters (example: &,-,*,%/,#) within the application form fields including periods (.), blank spaces and accent marks; an underscore may be used. Please note that if these guidelines are not followed, your application may be rejected.

In EDA's experience, use of apostrophes (') in file names and fillable fields of required forms has resulted in issues. Accordingly, please periodically check the status of your application to make sure it has been validated, and use file naming conventions that do not negatively affect your application submission.

If a response exceeds the field limit requirements of any form, including Form ED-900, the applicant is advised to include the response as an attachment to the application. The applicant should move 'Attachments' to the 'Optional Documents for Submission' box in the application package, and clearly indicate in the form field that the information is included as an electronic file.

Verify submission was successful. Applicants should save and print written proof of an electronic submission made at Grants.gov. Applicants can expect to receive multiple emails regarding the status of their submission. Since email communication can be unreliable, applicants must proactively check on the status of their application if they do not receive email notifications within a day of submission. The first email should confirm receipt of the application, and the second should indicate that the application has either been successfully validated by the system before transmission to EDA or has been rejected due to errors. Please note that it can take up to two business days after Grants.gov receives an application for applicants to receive email notification of an error. An applicant will receive a third email once EDA has retrieved an application from Grants.gov.

Applicants should refrain from submitting multiple copies of the same application package. Applicants should save and print both the submitted application confirmation screen provided on Grants.gov, and the confirmation email sent by Grants.gov when the application has been successfully received and validated in the system. If an applicant receives an email from Grants.gov indicating that the application was received and subsequently validated, but does not receive an email from Grants.gov indicating that EDA has retrieved the application package within 72 hours of that email, the applicant

may contact the appropriate person listed in section IX. of this FFO to inquire if EDA is in receipt of the submission.

It is the applicant's responsibility to verify that its submission was received and validated successfully at Grants.gov. To see the date and time your application was received, log on to Grants.gov and click on the "Track My Application" link from the left-hand menu. For a successful submission, the application must be received and validated by Grants.gov, and an agency tracking number assigned. If your application has a status of "Received" it is awaiting validation by Grants.gov. Once validation is complete, the status will change to "Validated" or "Rejected with Errors." If the status is "Rejected with Errors," your application has not been received successfully. Some of the reasons Grants.gov may reject an application can be found at http://www.grants.gov/applicants/submit_application_faqs.jsp. For more detailed information on why an application may be rejected, please see http://www.grants.gov/help/trouble_tips.jsp.

If you experience a Grants.gov "systems issue" (technical problems or glitches with the Grants.gov website) that you believe threatens your ability to complete a submission, please (a) print any error message received and (b) call the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726 for immediate assistance. Ensure that you obtain a case number regarding your communications with Grants.gov. Please note: problems with an applicant organization's computer system or equipment are not considered "systems issues." Similarly, an applicant's failure to (a) complete the registration, (b) ensure that a registered AOR submits the application, or (c) notice receipt of an email message from Grants.gov, are not considered systems issues. A Grants.gov "systems issue" is an issue occurring in connection with the operations of Grants.gov itself, such as the temporary loss of service by Grants.gov due to an unexpected volume of traffic or failure of information technology systems, both of which are highly unlikely.

Applicants should access the following link for assistance in navigating Grants.gov and for a list of useful resources: <http://www.grants.gov/help/help.jsp>. Also, the following link lists frequently asked questions (FAQs): www.grants.gov/applicants/submit_application_faqs.jsp. If you do not find an answer to your question under the "Applicant FAQs" try consulting the "Applicant User Guide" or contacting Grants.gov via email at support@grants.gov or telephone at 1-800-518-4726. The Grants.gov Contact Center is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.