

Using Grants.Gov: Helpful Hints

On April 7, 2010 the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced the availability of \$30 million in funding for approximately 4,000 Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV) for non-elderly disabled households. A complete copy of HUD's Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA), titled *Rental Assistance for Non-Elderly Persons with Disabilities*, is available online at http://portal.hud.gov/portal/page/portal/HUD/program_offices/administration/grants/fundsavail.

PHAs currently administering a Section 8 HCV program are the only eligible applicants for this funding. Interested PHAs are required to submit applications through the online www.grants.gov system.

Five Step Process to Register in Grants.gov

Before submitting an application, applicants must complete the following 5 steps to register in the Grants.gov system.

STEP 1: OBTAIN A DUNS NUMBER

All applicants must first obtain a Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number from the federal government. If the PHA does not know its DUNS number or needs to register for one, visit Dun & Bradstreet at <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform> to learn more about how to apply. The Dun and Bradstreet instructions are clear and easy to follow. After completing the online registration process, the PHA will receive its DUNS number electronically the same day.

STEP 2: REGISTER WITH CCR

Next, all applicants must be registered with the federal Central Contractor Registration (CCR) system. Even if the PHA has already registered with CCR and has received a number, the organization needs to renew their CCR registration once a year. Note that applicants will not be able to move on to Step 3 until this step is completed. This step may take up to 5 business days.

If the PHA is not registered with CCR, apply online by going to www.ccr.gov. CCR has developed a handbook (available online at www.bpn.gov/ccr/doc/UserAccount.pdf) to help with the application process.

When the PHA registers with the CCR, it must designate an E-Business Point of Contact (E-Biz POC). This person will identify a special password called an "M-PIN." This M-PIN gives the E-Biz POC authority to designate which staff member(s) from the PHA are allowed to submit applications electronically through Grants.gov. Staff members from the PHA designated to submit applications are called Authorized Organization Representatives (AORs).

If your organization already has an Employment Identification Number (EIN) or Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN) from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), then you should allow 1-3 business days to complete the entire CCR registration.

If your organization does not have an EIN or TIN, then allow at least two weeks for obtaining the information from the IRS when requesting the EIN or TIN via phone or Internet. The additional number of days needed is a result of security information that needs to be mailed to the organization.

If after having registered in CCR, the PHA experiences any registration problems, help is available from the Federal Service Desk at www.fsd.gov.

STEP 3: USERNAME & PASSWORD

Next, all the AORs who will officially submit applications on behalf of the PHA must complete a profile with Grants.gov to create a username and password. To create a username and password, AORs must complete their "profile" Grants.gov. AORs will need to know the DUNS number of the organization for which they will be submitting applications to complete the profile process.

After the PHA registers with the CCR, AORs must wait 1 business day before they can complete a profile and create usernames and passwords in Grants.gov.

After the AOR has completed their profile they will be prompted to create a username and password that will allow the user to login and check their approval status immediately.

STEP 4: AOR AUTHORIZATION

Next, the E-Business Point of Contact (E-Biz POC) has to approve each AORs to submit applications on behalf of the organization. When an AOR registers with Grants.gov to submit applications on behalf of an organization, that organization's E-Biz POC will receive an email notification. The email address for the E-Biz POC that the AOR submitted in the AOR profile will be the address used when sending the automatic notification from Grants.gov to the E-Biz POC with the AOR copied on the correspondence.

The E-Biz POC must then login to Grants.gov (using the organization's DUNS number for the username and the "M-PIN" password obtained in Step 2) and approve the AOR, thereby giving him or her permission to submit applications.

When an E-Biz POC approves an AOR, Grants.gov will send the AOR a confirmation email.

STEP 5: TRACK AOR STATUS

AORs can also login to track their AOR status using their username and password (obtained in Step 3) to check if they have been approved by the E-Biz POC.

Once the approval is completed the AOR can immediately submit an application.

Helpful Hints for Submitting an Application

- **Read Instructions Carefully and Thoroughly.** In past years, some applicants for HUD programs have had a difficult time submitting applications electronically. As a result, HUD has developed comprehensive guidance and instructions for the process. Make sure to read all the instructions in the NOFA and published on December 29, 2008 in the Federal Register Notice: *HUD's Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA); Policy Requirements and General Section to HUD's FY2009 NOFAs for Discretionary Programs* (available online at <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2008/E8-30600.htm>) about submitting electronic applications. Many issues can be avoided by reviewing the instructions carefully.
- **Download the Application Packet.** Once you have completed the 5 steps for registering on grants.gov detailed above, make sure to download the NOFA application packet from grants.gov that includes all the required forms. You should save the packet to your computer. You will now be able to work on the forms, save them, edit them, and review them before submitting the final copies electronically.
- **Adobe Acrobat Version.** Grants.gov requires that you use specific versions of Adobe Acrobat Reader, versions 8.1.1 through 9.2. Grants.gov provides a test package that applicants can download (available online at www07.grants.gov/applicants/AdobeVersioningTestOnly.jsp) to verify that your operating system is compatible with the grants.gov requirements. Before submitting the application, download this test package, and check with your IT Department to ensure that your computer supports and utilizes this required versions of Adobe Acrobat.
- **Sign Up for the List Serve for this Funding Announcement.** Grants.gov has a list serve for each funding opportunity that provides information and updates about the NOFA and related materials. If HUD makes any modifications or technical corrections to the NOFA, the list serve will send an alert with this information.
- **Zip Files.** To submit the application you will be required to zip all related files (all required forms and any attachments) into one. Before submitting the application, check with your IT Department to ensure that your computer has the capacity to zip files. Test this early by zipping some files and emailing them to a colleague.
- **File Names.** Grants.gov has particular specifications as to how applicants should name the files that are zipped together as part of the application. Make sure to read the instructions in the NOFA and in the December 29, 2008 Federal Register Notice carefully to ensure that you name your files correctly.
- **Submitting the Application.** Applications must be received by Grants.gov by 11:59:59 p.m. EST on, July 7, 2010. 'Received' means that the application has been successfully uploaded to the Grants.gov server and the applicant has received confirmation of successful submission to Grants.gov. Applicants should be aware that hitting the 'sign and submit' button to transmit the application does not mean the application has been successfully uploaded to Grants.gov. Only when the upload is complete is the application date and time stamped by the Grants.gov system.

Helpful Websites

- Grants.Gov website: www.grants.gov
- Dun & Bradstreet website: <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>
- Central Contractor Registration website: www.ccr.gov
- Central Contractor Registration handbook: www.bpn.gov/ccr/doc/UserAccount.pdf
- Federal Service Desk website: www.fsd.gov
- December 29, 2008 Federal Register *Notice of HUD's Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA); Policy Requirements and General Section to HUD's FY2009 NOFAs for Discretionary Programs*: <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2008/E8-30600.htm>
- Grants.Gov Adobe Acrobat Test Package:
www07.grants.gov/applicants/AdobeVersioningTestOnly.jsp