

OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET**Office of Federal Financial Management Policy Directive on Financial Assistance Program Announcements**

AGENCY: Office of Management and Budget.

ACTION: Notice of issuance of final policy directive.

SUMMARY: The Office of Federal Financial Management (OFFM) is issuing a policy directive to establish a standard format for Federal agency announcements of funding opportunities under programs that award discretionary grants or cooperative agreements. The purpose of the standard format is to have information organized in a consistent way in announcements for the hundreds of Federal programs that make financial assistance awards. A government-wide format will help potential applicants more easily and quickly find the information they need about Federal opportunities. The Federal awarding agencies jointly developed this format as part of their grant streamlining efforts to implement the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 1999.

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SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**I. Background**

In a **Federal Register** notice [67 FR 52548] published on August 12, 2002, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) proposed a standard format for announcements of funding opportunities under Federal programs that make discretionary awards of grants or cooperative agreements. The OMB notice also proposed an OFFM policy letter to establish the announcement format as the government-wide standard for Federal agency use. We received comments from 22 organizations: two State governments; one local government; five universities; one association of academic institutions; a group of universities that participate with Federal agencies in a demonstration program on research administration; a non-profit organization; two organizations representing non-profit entities; an association of auditors; and eight Federal agencies. We considered all

comments in developing the final announcement format and OFFM policy letter.

We will continue to consider these comments separately from this notice because some raise questions that are beyond the scope of the announcement format and associated policy letter. Most of those comments concern electronic business practices to be used in conjunction with announcements, and these will be considered as the Grants.gov (formerly called E-Grants) Program Management Office develops the Government-wide portal for electronic grants transactions. We also received comments related to another **Federal Register** notice published on the same day [67 FR 52554], which proposed data elements for electronically posting synopses of announcements at Grants.gov FIND (formerly called FedBizOpps). Those comments are mentioned here to the extent that changes to the announcement format could affect the Grants.gov FIND proposal. Comments that are specific to the Grants.gov FIND data elements are addressed in the **Federal Register** notice establishing the final data elements, which immediately follows this notice.

Comments on this notice strongly supported the overall proposal to create a government-wide standard format. The following paragraphs summarize the major comments and our responses. The comments are grouped by the portion of the OFFM policy letter or announcement format to which they apply. In addition to the changes to the policy letter and format that are described in the following paragraphs, we made other changes to increase readability or to maintain consistency with other streamlining initiatives that are taking place in parallel with this effort.

II. Comments and Responses**A. Comments on the Office of Federal Financial Management (OFFM) Policy Letter**

Comment: Three commenters recommended that we require use of the standard announcement format in agency programs that either: (1) announce their funding opportunities in the **Federal Register**; or (2) do not have announcements separate from their *Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance* (CFDA) listings. The commenters suggested that exempting those programs from the requirement to use the standard format could discourage agencies from publishing funding opportunities more broadly.

Response: No change. The proposed policy letter did not exempt programs that announce opportunities in the **Federal Register** from the requirement to use the standard format. It applies the requirement equally to all discretionary assistance programs that issue funding opportunity announcements separate from their CFDA listings, including programs that publish announcements in the **Federal Register**.

In contrast, the proposed policy letter distinguishes agency programs that do not issue separate announcements and rely on their CFDA listings to disseminate information to prospective applicants. We understand that the specific recipient communities for these programs are accustomed to doing business in this way. The policy letter therefore continues to exempt those programs from the requirement to use the standard announcement format. Those programs will continue to be subject to the CFDA's standard formatting requirements.

Comment: One commenter suggested that all funding opportunities be available on the Internet and hyperlinked to Grants.gov FIND.

Response: Agree. We modified the OFFM policy letter to require agencies to post on the Internet funding opportunity announcements that are open to domestic applicants. An agency either will upload its announcement to Grants.gov FIND or provide an Internet address that Grants.gov FIND may use to link from the synopsis to the full announcement.

Comment: One commenter indicated that the mechanism we use to require agencies to adopt the standard announcement format will affect whether the agencies adopt it uniformly and in a timely manner. The commenter urged us to require agencies to implement the new requirement at the same time, preferably through amendments to OMB Circulars A-102 and A-110.

Response: No change. Agencies will be required to adopt the common format by means of the OFFM policy letter. We expect all agencies to issue announcements using the standard format no later than 12 months after the effective date of the policy letter, which gives any agency that must amend a regulation to implement the new requirement sufficient time to do so. Amendments to OMB circulars are not prerequisites for implementing the requirement to use the standard announcement format and would only delay implementation.