

B. Comments on Announcement Format

1. General

Comment: Two commenters indicated that announcement writers' formatting and writing styles, such as the use of headlines and more space between areas of text, could make announcements more user-friendly and effective. They recommended that we try to eliminate stylistic differences by further standardizing and improving the announcement format, perhaps through a government-wide form or template that also would ensure compliance with format and content requirements.

Response: No change. The OFFM policy letter is sufficient to ensure compliance with the broad format and content requirements of the standard announcement format. A form or template is not needed for that purpose. Individuals within the agencies necessarily must write the detailed content for inclusion in the standard format, to describe agency-specific and program-specific requirements and business rules. It is beyond the scope of this effort to try to regulate the writing styles and abilities of those individuals.

2. Overview Information

Comment: Seven commenters recommended that we increase standardization by requiring every Federal agency announcement to present overview information in the same sequential order. The commenters differed on what the basis should be for determining the standard order (e.g., parallelism with the full text of the announcement or with the Grants.gov FIND synopses, as discussed in comments and responses following this one). Some of the commenters also recommended that funding opportunity announcements that are issued in the **Federal Register** should be required to present overview information in the same order as announcements appearing in other places.

Response: Agree in part. These comments raise four related issues described in the following paragraphs. We significantly revised the overview segment of the format to incorporate changes discussed below and to provide a clearer explanation of the use of overviews, since we could infer from some comments that this section in the proposed format was confusing.

The first issue is whether Federal agencies should be required to include an overview in every announcement. As proposed in August, the announcement format stated that agencies must display prominently certain key information in a location preceding the full text of the announcement. In that sense, it required

every announcement to include overview information. The final format retains that requirement for presentation of certain key information before the full text.

The second issue is whether to mandate a standard way that each announcement must present the overview information. The proposed format gave agencies three options: to include the overview information in an Executive Summary, to display it on the cover and/or inside cover of the announcement, or to integrate it into the standard format of a **Federal Register** notice. Due to the widely varying nature of Federal programs that will use the standard announcement format, the final format retains the three options.

The third issue is whether to specify a standard set of information that each overview must contain. The proposed format had four overview elements labeled as "required"—the agency name, funding opportunity title, CFDA number, and key dates (such as application due dates). It listed three additional elements as optional—the program name, funding opportunity number, and CFDA title. It also gave examples of other information an agency might wish to include if it used an Executive Summary. We proposed the format with that approach after Federal agencies prepared some sample program announcements to test the viability of mandating a single set of overview elements for all announcements. The tests revealed that rigid use of a single prescription would make many program announcements harder to read and use, especially short announcements that were significantly lengthened by including a full set of overview information. Therefore, the final announcement format continues to specify some items of overview information that are required and suggest additional items that are optional.

The fourth issue is whether to specify a standard sequential order for the overview information. We revised the final announcement format to specify a standard order of presentation for required elements. We also added guidance advising agencies to present any optional elements in an order that parallels the organization of the full text of the announcement. This sequential order is the standard, whether the overview information is presented in an executive summary, on the cover or inside cover, or in the Supplementary Information section of a **Federal Register** notice. Grants.gov FIND will present synopsis information in an order paralleling this structure, to the extent that synopsis data elements are

identical or similar to elements in the announcement overview.

Comment: Two commenters suggested making the overview section of the announcement identical, both in content and in sequential order, to the Grants.gov FIND synopsis of the funding opportunity.

Response: Agree in part. The Grants.gov FIND synopsis and the announcement overview should not be identical in *content*. The content of each should match its intended purpose and their purposes are not the same. The Grants.gov FIND synopsis should present only the minimum information a person needs in order to decide whether to review the full announcement. A full announcement's overview section, in contrast, is for people who have decided to review the full announcement and may be preparing applications. It therefore should have certain information elements that are not needed at Grants.gov FIND and also should include more detailed information about elements shared with Grants.gov FIND (e.g., how much cost sharing is required). However, we did identify one new Grants.gov FIND data element—whether an announcement is for a new funding opportunity or modifies a previously announced opportunity—that is appropriate for the overview section of the full announcement. We therefore added it to the overview section.

While the content of the Grants.gov FIND and the announcement overview should not be identical, we agree that it would be helpful to make the *order* of presentation parallel in cases where they present identical or similar information. The order at Grants.gov FIND therefore will parallel the order in the overview.

Comment: One commenter suggested making the sequential order of the announcement's overview section identical to that of the full announcement text.

Response: Agree in principle. For elements of overview information that have corresponding sections in the full announcement text, we revised the format to make the order of overview presentation parallel that of the full text. This is not possible for other overview information, such as the agency name, that does not appear as a separate element in the full text.

Comment: Four commenters indicated that it would be helpful to add a "keywords" section relating to specific areas of funding, such as scientific and engineering research areas, to help people more quickly narrow their searches to announcements of interest.