

defining what constitutes a late application. Future updates to the format will reflect any changes we make as a result of that suggestion.

3. Full Text of Announcement

i. General Comments

Comment: Four commenters recommended increased use of data elements and table-driven formats, rather than text, to make it easier to locate data needed for electronic systems. The commenters noted that this approach would allow for system-to-system exchanges, set the standards for maintaining them, and help ensure consistent data for funding opportunities. They suggested that pre-loading data (e.g., agency, program, CFDA number, deadline dates, and addresses) can streamline application preparation, simplify life cycle management, reduce data entry, and lessen the possibility of data entry error. As a specific example, one commenter suggested that the table of application components shown as an illustration in Section IV.3 be required (or be communicated as bullets) along with due dates.

Response: No change at this time. We appreciate the comment and the long-term potential of electronic capabilities, particularly as technology advances and more potential applicants acquire the capability for system-to-system connectivity. We therefore will consider increased use of tables and data elements as we prepare future updates of the announcement format.

Comment: Two commenters suggested that we instruct agencies to avoid use of cross-references whenever possible. For on-line announcements, any cross-references should be hyperlinked to the referenced information.

Response: We modified the announcement format to recommend that agencies provide hyperlinks to cross-referenced sections.

Comment: One commenter stated that some items of information identified for inclusion at the agency's option are important enough to be required for all announcements. The commenter mentioned a number of different items including information on: the level of funding available; the expected number of awards; application submission, with clear references or hyperlinks to any general requirements that apply to multiple opportunities; performance standards and goals; any eligibility and co-pay requirements for beneficiaries; and details of local match funds.

Response: Agree in part. We revised Section III.3 to clarify that the section must include any eligibility criteria for

beneficiaries' eligibility. Section IV.2 already requires the information on application submission; for requirements applicable to multiple programs, that section must state the requirements or provide a reference to another source for the information.

We added a second reference to two other suggested items of information but retained them as agency options. Section II of the format listed information about the level of funding and expected number of awards as examples of information a program office might include in that section. In light of the comment, we revised the final format to also give them as examples of information that an agency could include in its overview.

The final format does not include requirements for the other suggested information elements. It is neither practical nor desirable to lengthen the format by trying to make it a comprehensive list of requirements for all Federal agency programs. The format is intended primarily as a framework to be used by program officials who prepare announcements, as they are in the best position to judge what is information is needed by potential applicants for their programs. The framework will help them organize the information so that potential applicants can find similar information in the same parts of all announcements.

ii. Specific Sections of the Announcement

Comment: One commenter suggested that Section II, "Award Information," include the earliest anticipated start date.

Response: No change. We expect that agencies will continue to provide information about "earliest anticipated start dates" when doing so is appropriate, given the agencies' business practices for the particular funding opportunities.

Comment: Two commenters suggested revising Section II as it relates to the information an agency supplies about its anticipated "substantial involvement" in cooperative agreements. One commenter recommended that an agency's inclusion of details on its anticipated involvement should be optional. In contrast, the other commenter thought it important for the announcement to include this information—and not refer potential applicants to other sources—because it is too important to their decisions about whether to apply.

Response: No change. The section's use of "should," rather than "must," already makes inclusion of the information an agency option, as

recommended by the first commenter. We believe that agencies will provide this detail when they judge that it is relevant to potential applicants, both in deciding whether to apply and in preparing applications. As for allowing announcements to reference other sources for that information, doing so avoids lengthening announcements by having to fully restate information that appears elsewhere.

Comment: One commenter suggested including information concerning the eligibility requirements (if any) of the principal investigator in Section II, "Award Information."

Response: No change. Section III, "Eligibility Information," already states that the agency should address any factors affecting the eligibility of principal investigators or project directors.

Comment: One commenter suggested that the term "cost sharing" in Section III.2 may confuse readers and asked that we replaced it with the term "local match." The commenter stated that most non-profits use "local match" to refer to the type of requirement described in the announcement format and that, in some States, "cost sharing" refers to co-payments by beneficiaries.

Response: Agree in principle. In response to this comment, we expanded the title of the section to "cost sharing or matching." The revised section title includes both terms currently used in OMB Circulars A-102 and A-110, the circulars containing the government-wide guidance on this subject for awards to States, local and tribal governments, institutions of higher education, and other nonprofit organizations. In the full text of that section, we expect that each program office will use the term that conforms best with what is predominately used by their potential applicants.

Comment: Two commenters asked for additional coverage in Section III.2 on preferences for the type of cost sharing or matching. The commenters noted that OMB Circulars A-102 and A-110 allow recipients to meet matching or cost-sharing requirements either by providing cash or in-kind contributions but added that some agencies have additional requirements on the types of cost sharing or matching that they will accept. One commenter asked that the announcement be clear about any agency requirement and how it affects the evaluation of an application. The other commenter suggested that the format require Federal agencies to describe whether cost sharing at a particular level is required by statute or, although required, is negotiable. The second commenter also questioned