



Grants.gov and the Two File Requirement Webinar

March 6, 2014 1:00 pm CT

Coordinator: Thank you for standing by. At this time all participants are in a listen-only mode.

Today's conference is being recorded. If you have any questions or objections you may disconnect at this time.

Now I would like to turn the meeting over to Mr. Scott Riggins. Mr. Riggins you may begin.

Scott Riggins: Thank you and good afternoon everyone. First I would like to apologize for technical difficulties that we've had this afternoon. And but we're very excited that you're here and you've been patient with us and we're to get started with the call.

We'd like to again thank you for joining us today. My name is Scott Riggins and I'm the Program Specialist with the AFI program.

Our program strives to ensure grantees receive the highest standard of customer service. We work to provide support so that grantees have the information and resources needed to effectively administer their AFI projects.

I'd would like to now turn it over to Sierra Solomon from the AFI Resource Center. Sierra?

Sierra Solomon: Great. Thank you Scott and yes thank you for bearing with us and for those had difficulty getting in we apologize. We hope to make the wait worth it and we have a great Webinar scheduled for you today.

So my name as Scott mentioned is Sierra Solomon. And I'll be co-presenting this Webinar today with my colleague Emily Appel-Newby. So Emily if you'd like to introduce yourself and say hello?

Emily Appel-Newby: Yes hi everyone. My name is Emily Appel-Newby. I'm with - a TA provider with the Assets for Independence Resource Center.

I work with applicant, grantee applicants who are looking to put together a strong application. And I've been doing this for about three years.

Prior to that I worked for an AFI grantee organization here in Washington DC.

Sierra Solomon: Great. So before we jump into the content I'm going to go over some housekeeping items for the Webinar.

So first if you're having - this seems funny now but if you're having technical difficulties you can call the AFI Resource Center.

So we have this phone number here 866-778-6037 or you can access us by email which is info@idaresources.org.

So hopefully we have moved past all of that but if you get kicked off during the call or you have any other problems you're welcome to contact us at any point during the call. We have operators who are standing by.

Another couple of notes, first this Webinar is being recorded so if you're not comfortable with it being recorded you can hop off at any time.

A transcript and a link to the recording will be available approximately two weeks after the Webinar so that will be posted online on our Web site idaresources.acf.hhs.gov.

And then we can also email all registered participants and let you know when that recording is available. So if you'd like to listen to it again or if it was really helpful for you and you want to share it with a colleague there will be a way to do that in approximately two weeks.

This Webinar will not last longer than 90 minutes and we'll talk about how we're going to approach questions during this call.

And in the operator mentioned all Webinar attendees will be muted to ensure sound quality. So feel free to chat behind the scenes, no one is going to be able to hear you.

The last note that's not on here but I do want to note ahead of time is that this PowerPoint will be sent to you after the call. We'll be sharing it with all registered participants.

So when you see long URLs going by don't panic or worry about, you know, feeling like you have to write them down. We'll send you the PowerPoint and

those URLs will all be clickable so all the information will be available to you after the call.

So asking questions so wanted to let you know we're approaching questions a little bit differently for this Webinar than others you might have been on from the AFI Resource Center.

So you'll see a little box. At the top left of your screen on the Webinar platform you'll see some buttons that says it'll say content, it'll say Attendees and one of them will be Q&A. And it will be a box that looks like this. You can see a picture of it. When you click on it it'll look like this that's on the slide.

So what you do is you can use that question box at any point during the call. You don't have to wait until the end. Anytime you have a question go ahead and put it in there electronically.

So just click the Q&A box right at the very top. You'll see it'll say type a question for the presenter.

You just click on that, type your question, hit Ask and it will come to us.

So what we're going to do is instead of answering questions at the end of this call we're actually going to collect all of your questions.

So again you can answer them at any point during the call. At the end we will collect all of them and we're actually going to use that to develop a written Q&A.

So this will be something that we will send. In addition to sending you the recording and the transcript from this Webinar will also send you a written Q&A with all the questions that were asked from the call and written responses from the grants.gov and OCS team to all of those questions.

So feel free to put them in at any point. And then that's how we will respond to them in a couple weeks.

We're hoping to have that also available to you within about two weeks. But you don't have to ask for it. We will make sure that it comes to you via your inbox.

So again we did introductions briefly that you heard from Emily Appel-Newby. And my name is Sierra Solomon. I've also been working with the AFI Resource Center for several years now.

The AFI Resource Center in general provides training and technical assistance to AFI grantees to their project partners and to other organizations that provide asset building services across the nation.

So today the Web and our objectives, what we're going to talk about? At the end of this Webinar what we would like is for you as attendees to become familiar with grants.gov, learn how to create a grants.gov account and then be able to successfully access it in the future, learn how to submit an AFI application and confirm receipt, understand what the two document maximum requirement is which was instituted in 2013 and why it must be abided by, and then understand how to merge multiple documents into a single PDF document.

So with that I'm going to turn it back over to Emily and take it away.

Emily Appel-Newby: Thanks so much Sierra. So we're going to start off on the call with a poll. I just want to get an understanding of who is on the call with us today.

When I looked at the registrant list I saw - I recognized some names of groups that were current AFI grantees but then a couple of names of organizations that I didn't recognize.

So I was trying to get an idea of who's looking to plan to apply in 2014 versus who's just trying to get just some background information for the next time that you apply so just running a quick poll so please respond if you feel comfortable.

So it looks like we have about half of the presenters are so far are definitely planning to apply in 2014. And then we have a group who are considering an application in 2014 and some who are planning to apply at a later point in time but just want to have background.

So that's a very very helpful for us to know, you know, obviously our goal is to make this Webinar is actionable as possible and we will work with all of you during the 2014 application season.

So the first section of our presentation we will want to discuss what grants.gov is and why it's so important for AFI applicants to properly follow the procedures outlined by the federal government.

Established in 2002 grants.gov is the federal government's database designed to help organizations apply for more than \$500 billion in federal

grants for more than 1000 grants programs issued by the 26 federal grant making agencies.

The program is designed to make apply for programs easier as there are now standard operating procedures across and within federal agencies.

As AFI grants are funded by the federal government all applications must be submitted via grants.gov.

Registration for grants.gov, the first step in the application process begins in the upper right-hand corner of the Web site www.grants.gov under the Register button.

From here you are provided the three options of which the first organization applicant is applicable for the case of AFI applicants.

And you can see that circled in the slide here the organizational applicant.

Prior to moving on and starting that process it's important to know what information you will be asked for and the steps that are to follow.

So as outlined here first you are required to obtain a data universal number or DUNS which is followed by registry in your organization with the system for award management, obtaining a username and password, designating an Authorized Organizational Representative AOR, and finally checking the status of your AOR.

Each step is explained in greater detail on the following slide that Sierra will present and detailed information can be found on the grants.gov Web site by

clicking on the Learn More About Organization Applicants button on the registration screen.

Sierra Solomon: Great, thank you Emily. So now we're going to go through each of those five steps in great detail, so for the first about obtaining a DUNS number.

So if you are to know your DUNS number you can enter it after you've chosen to register as an organization. However if you're not aware of your DUNS number but believe you have one you can call Dun & Bradstreet which is the administrator of the program at 1-888-705-5711. And again don't panic, that number is on the screen and will be available in the PowerPoint after the call.

And from there after you call that number you can just follow the automated prompts.

If you do not have a DUNS number you must register for one as the first step of the application process. This can be done by filling out the online form. And you can see that web address on the screen for that. And it will take approximately one to two business days to complete your request.

And this would be a common refrain. But because there is length of time at each one of these steps that it takes for them to be completed and the process to go all the way through we will ask you to please be sure to start this process well in advance of the application due date in case you encounter any problems or have any questions.

So in order to obtain your DUNS here's some of the information that you will need to know. So it's a good idea to collect this information ahead of time before beginning the process.

The name of your organization, the organization address, the phone number, of the organization, the name of the CEO or organization owner, the legal structure so whether it's a corporation, a partnership, a proprietorship, the year the organization started, the primary line of business and then the total number of full-time employees and the total number of part-time employees.

So this brings us to step two. So once you've received your DUNS you'll be required to register with the system for award management which we call SAM.

So SAM is a government-wide registry of vendors who are doing business with the federal government and it must be renewed annually.

So in order to register you must visit the Web site which is shown on your screen www.sam.gov and follow the registration instructions that are provided.

This online registration process does take around 30 minutes and then here's a timeline for this. It can take between three business days to up to two weeks before your SAM registration becomes active. And so you can see why you want to get this started right away.

So then once oh it went backwards. There we go. So then once you have your DUNS number and you're properly registered with SAM the next step is to obtain a username and password from grants.gov.

So you can see on the screen here from here and through the next several steps we've actually screen capped the screens and then we have some arrows and circles outlining exactly where on the screen to find the things that I'm talking about. So that's what you're seeing here.

So in order to do this you must first choose to register as an organization, enter the DUNS number, that you now have a click the Register button.

Once completed you'll be directed to the Applicant Registration Page where you're required to fill out the form with the requested information.

After then hitting the Continue button you will be asked to review the information that you've just entered.

If everything is accurate you can submit the application at which point the SAM e-business point of contact which is sometimes called ebiz POC for short will receive a confirmation email.

So at this point you can now log into your grants.gov account. But before you're able to submit any applications the SAM ebiz point of contact will be required to login to the ebiz POC section of grants.gov and take the next step of assigning the authorized applicant role to the individual who will be responsible for submitting and tracking the applications.

So please note that authorized applicant is the term that will display on the Web site, not AOR. And again AOR as you remember from Emily is Authorized Organization Representative.

So you will know if this is done properly by looking at the left-hand side of the screen immediately following login where you're AOR status is displayed.

And you can see that here with the arrow where that points to. That's how you can double check that this has gone through.

So in order for the ebiz POC to authorize an AOR there are additional steps that must be followed.

First the ebiz POC must log in using the designated ebiz section of the grants.gov login screen. So again this is pictured up here how you can access that.

Once logged in the Applicant's tab allows you to search for an applicant by last name, organization or a variety of other criteria.

You can then assign or reassign roles. At that point the ebiz POC will assign the correct person AOR.

In order to then track the status of you're AOR authorization you will need to return to the registration page of grants.gov by clicking on the Register button in the upper right-hand corner of the Learn More About Organization Applicants link and choose Step 5 from the menu on the left-hand side.

From there you'll click Check Your AOR Status button. Here you can login as directed and you'll be informed as to the status of your AOR authorization.

Once your AOR has actually been approved you will be ready and able to submit applications.

So a note about the timeline of these steps, so according to grants.gov this full registration process takes approximately three to five business days.

However they and we urge you to allow about four weeks to complete all of these steps. This allows if there's something that goes wrong or something doesn't submit properly or you need a piece of information.

This gives you enough time to make sure that you're able to do all of those things and you're still able and authorized to turn in an application well before the due dates.

So with that I'm going to turn it back over to Emily.

Emily Appel-Newby: Great. So now that you know how to access grants.gov let's delve into how to submit an application.

So the first step will be to find the application package for the Assets for Independence Program.

Finding grants to apply for begins in the Search Grants tab at the top of the grants.gov Web page.

Once here you can either search using the Search box on the upper right-hand corner -- oh, there's an error on the slide -- or by using the search detail located on the left-side of the page. You can see the search details.

It will be helpful to know the funding opportunity number, CFDA, Catalog For Domestic Assistance number, and the funding opportunity competition ID for the AFI program so that you can access the application on the Web site in the future.

The - all those pieces of information, the Funding Opportunity Number, CSDA number and funding opportunity competition ID will be part of the 2014 Funding Opportunity Announcement which will be released very soon.

And we - we'll be sending a blast email out to everyone who is participating in today's call letting them know when that Funding Opportunity Announcement has been released.

So you will be able to go in and search for the grant package based on the information that you find in that Funding Opportunity Announcement.

So once you have found the program which you intend to apply you can download the application package.

So I want to make a note about terminology here. The application package that you will download from grants.gov is different from the application kit distributed by the AFI Resource Center.

The application kit contains instructions and guidance on filling the - filling out the application. The package is the actual application that you will fill out.

Okay so once an application package is downloaded you can also choose to have emails sent to you with updates about the application.

So that way if there are updates to the Funding Opportunity Announcement or updates to the application package itself you will be notified by email and you can go in and download that new information.

It is also important to note that once you have downloaded the application package you do not need Internet access to fill it out.

You will save the file locally to your computer and work on it from there. And you will only reconnect to grants.gov when you're actually ready to submit it.

At the same time as you're downloading the application package it is also advisable to download the application instructions that will be available on the same page.

These instructions vary from application to application so the AFI instructions will provide detailed information about what documents must be submitted for a AFI application in particular, how to fill out the AFI application properly and other important information.

So please review these instructions carefully for the AFI Funding Opportunity Announcement. It may be the difference between an obligation that is accepted by the system and one that is not.

Once you have fully completed filling out your application, attaching the required documents and forms you should click the button on the first page

that says check the pack. So you're in the application package, you finish filling it out and uploading your forms. You should check the button called Check the Package for Errors using the button near the top of the first page.

This action will search through the application and ensure that all fields are filled in and that the application looks to be complete.

This is the - although this is an important step please do not rely on it alone to catch errors. You should also do a thorough review of both the application and the application instructions to be sure that everything is completed properly.

Once this step has been completed you can choose the Save and Submit button which will prompt you to save the application prior to beginning the submission process.

Once saved there will be onscreen instructions for you to follow which begin with you logging into your grants.gov account.

Once your application has been properly submitted you will see a confirmation screen explaining that you should also receive a confirmation email.

This screen will provide you with all the confirmation numbers and codes that you may need in the future. Please write these down immediately and keep them in a safe place for future reference.

If you run into any trouble they will be key to making sure that you're helped swiftly.

Finally at the bottom of the Confirmation screen there is a link to track your application. Throughout the review process completed by the federal government you will receive multiple email confirmations including at these points, when your application has been submitted properly, when your application has been validated and is being prepared for agency retrieval and finally when the application has been reviewed by the grantor agency.

If you have not received one of these emails and think you should have please contact the grants.gov help desk immediately.

This helps you understand why it's important to submit your application well in advance of the due date so you can be sure you have submitted it properly and it has been accepted by the system.

If you need to make any edits for it to be accepted they need to be made before the due date in order to be reviewed as part of your completed application.

So more information applicants should also review the section of the grants.gov page called What to Expect after submitting an application as it provides additional information on ensuring that your application is properly submitted.

Furthermore you may want to visit the How to Apply for Grants section. The link is on the current slide which provides further information about submitting an application.

No let's talk about how you will track an application status after you have submitted it.

In addition to looking for the confirmation emails once your application is submitted you may wish to track it periodically by going and logging into grants.gov.

This can be done by clicking on the link provided in your confirmation email or by logging you're your grants.gov account.

From there you would go under the Applicants tab and there is a Track My Applicants, my application option.

You will need to enter your tracking numbers, your confirmation numbers in the designated box and follow the on-screen instructions to track the status of your application.

I'm going to turn it back over to Sierra to explain the new two file requirement.

Sierra Solomon: Great, thank you Emily. Okay so you may have heard of a change to the way that application documents are uploaded to grants.gov called the two file requirements.

So in the following slides we're going to detail for you what this change is, how it affects AFI applications and how you can properly abide by these requirements.

All right so the Office of Grants Management which we sometimes call OGM has a Division of Grants Policy which we call DGP.

And in 2013 they implemented the two file requirement as a way to simplify the process for application submission and reduce the need for reorganizing and reordering applications upon receipt.

So the requirement means that all applicants must attach no more than two files when submitting an application. And certain exceptions to that two file requirement do exist. And don't worry we'll talk about them in detail in a moment.

The first of the documents must be the entire project description and budget justification. For example this could include the project summary/abstract, the table of contents, the project narrative, the logic model and the budget.

Then the second documents of the two files must contain all the documents that are required in the appendices. For example this could include organizational charts, third-party agreements, any letters of support, resumes and/or audit reports.

So around the two file requirement applicants should review the AFI Funding Opportunity Announcement for 2014 which as Emily said is coming shortly for specific items regarding the content of each file.

That will be in that FOA which is what we call the Funding Opportunity Announcement and we encourage you to review that very carefully.

So here are just some additional notes about the two file requirement. So when I said there are some exceptions to that rule what we mean by that is not that those things that we just talked about don't need to be in two files. They do.

However required standard forms like the SF424 or the Project Performance Site locations form will be accepted in addition to the standard two files. So we need the two files according to what we talked about in the last slide and what will be detailed in the FOA.

But standard forms can be outside of those two files and can be uploaded separately.

Second we want to encourage you to carefully observe the naming file conventions required by grants.gov. These conventions address the number of characters that are allowed and the use of special characters in the file name.

This is very important because it can impact if your application is received in its entirety and/or if it's forwarded for review.

So for these naming conventions you may use only capital or lowercase characters, the numbers zero through nine. You can use underscores, hyphens, spaces, and periods. No other characters will be accepted. And the file name must also be fewer than 50 total characters.

So you can see the link that's shown here for more details exactly on what characters are allowed by grants.gov and also of course review the instructions in the 2014 Funding Opportunity Announcement.

So many of the files as you're probably thinking that might be included in AFI application are in different formats. They might be in PDF format, Word format or Excel format.

And you'll need to cohesively combine them into these two documents that OGM now requires. So as such it will be necessary to combine multiple files of different types into a single PDF document.

There are multiple programs that can be used to facilitate this. Some do have a cost associated with them. But there are also many free services as well that we wanted to bring your attention to.

So one of the ones that has a cost associated with it is Adobe Acrobat XL Pro which requires either a software purchase or a monthly subscription.

However we've identified two called PDF merge and PDF SAM which is short for PDF Split And Merge. And they're both programs that can be successfully used to help you meet this requirement.

So we're going to show you briefly how you could use those programs today. So first PDF Merge.

So PDF Merge is an online program that you can download to your computer in order to merge multiple documents in a single PDF file.

To begin you would navigate to the Web site which is www.pdfmerge.com. Again it's just pdfmerge.com.

Once there you can download the program by clicking on the Download button on the left-hand side of the page.

Once you've downloaded the program you'll see a program called (So to) PDF on your computer which you can open and then begin to use to merge PDF documents.

So this is what the program looks like. We have it up for you on the screen. To start merging documents you should click on the Combined file button that's in the top center of the page which will bring up a small window in which you should click Add File.

From there you'll be able to browse your computer anywhere on your computer for the files that you would wish to combine.

From there after you've found the files you can drag the documents and place them in the order that you'd like them to appear in the final PDF.

You can then click the Combined button and that will allow for the documents to be combined by the program.

Once you have the new document in order to save it as a PDF file you'll need to navigate to the file menu in the upper left-hand corner and choose the Save As options.

From here the default selection should be PDF file but if it's not you should change it to such. After naming your document you can choose the Save option and your combine PDFs will be saved wherever you designate it as one single PDF file.

With that I'm going to turn it over back to Emily to talk about the other PDF program.

Emily Appel-Newby: Great. The other PDF program that we looked at to help you with creating documents that will align with the two file requirement is the one called PDF SAM. And that is available at the Web site at the address www.ilovepdfs.com.

Unlike PDF merge the program that Sierra talk to - talked about this tool does not need to be downloaded in order to use it. So you can use it completely online.

So again that Web site is www.ilovepdfs.com. So start navigate to that site and then once there you will click on the Merge PDF files button which will bring you to a Web page with a button that says Select PDF Files.

So once that is click you'll be able to browse your computers files and find the document to which you would like to combine.

Then the final step is to click on the Merge PDF button which will trigger the downloading of the combined document.

I hope that this gives you some ideas about ways that you can combine your PDF files so that you can comply with the two file requirement.

And I hope that our entire presentation has answered your questions about how to effectively use grants.gov to fill out - and to fill out an application for the AFI program in order for it to be accepted and reviewed.

The information that we are showing on the slide now is how to connect the grants.gov help desk. You can - if you have questions about the content of your application such as how to design a program or how to work on your budget those issues you would want to talk to the AFI Resource Center about the content issues.

But if your issue is with the registration process or the uploading process or some technical issue like that then you will want to contact the grants.gov database. I hope that's clear.

So the grants.gov database they are very flexible. They're open 24 hours a day seven days a week but they are closed on federal holidays.

Their phone number is 1-800-518-4726. The email address you can use to reach them is support@grants.gov.

And I also would recommend that you check out their Web site which is very comprehensive including an I portal which has the top ten frequently asked questions and topics. It has a searchable knowledge base.

And then if you do have to submit a personalized question you can't find the answer to what you're looking for it has self-service ticketing system for you to see how that is moving through the system.

When if you do contact grants.gov in order to help them - allow them to help you quickly please have the funding opportunity number available with you, the name of the agency, so the Office of Community Services within Administration for Children and Families and your specific area of concern.

So again I want to reiterate just because I help many of you with applications that because it's important to determine that your application was submitted correctly and that went through and was accepted for review please do not wait until the last minute to submit your application. If you do and something goes wrong there is no time for you to fix it.

All right so as Sierra mentioned at the beginning of the call we have a couple of goals for today's session which I hope that we were able to complete.

Our goal was to help you become familiar with grants.gov, to learn how to create a grants.gov account and successfully access it in the future, to learn how to submit an AFI application and confirm receipt, to understand what the two document maximum requirement is and why it must be abided, and to understand how to merge multiple documents into a single PDF document.

Now I'm going to turn it over to my colleague (Zach) to remind the people how the QA works to remind you that now is a good time to ask questions.

And like I said we will be able to compile those and share them with the grants.gov and the Office of Community Services team for giving you complete and correct answers.

(Zach): Hi everyone. So to remind you how to ask a question at the top of your screen there's a couple of buttons and the fourth one over says Q&A.

So you can click on that and type in any questions that you might have. And what we're going to do is we're going to compile all of the questions. We're

going to come up with answers and then we're going to send them back to you as a blast email. So everybody will receive the questions in a Q&A fashion.

All of these questions we hope to have to you within two weeks so you should look for an email from us then. But any question you have you are more than welcome to submit into the Q&A function on the screen.

Emily Appel-Newby: So we will go ahead and keep the Webinar open to give people time to go ahead and submit their questions. But other than that the content of our presentation is done.

I just did want to remind you that if you think of a question later such as may be when you're driving home or once you hear that the Funding Opportunity Announcement has been released that the AFI Resource Center is here as your source of information about how to design a AFI project and how to prepare an application.

And our contact information is available on the screen here. The phone number is 1-866-778-6037 and the email is info@idaresources.org. And our Web site which has information on a variety of topics that are pertinent is idaresources.acf.hhs.gov.

Thank you all so much for participating in our Webinar today and I wish you the best of luck with the rest of the week.

Coordinator: This concludes today's conference. You may disconnect at this time.

END