DOJ Grant Guidance

CY17 TAD Competitive Grant Cycle

Wisconsin Department of Justice

DOJ Guide to Grants

Contents

1. Overview of DOJ grants

The life of the grant (stages of the process)

Solicitation Posted; Application Period Begins → Application Review → Award Notification → Post-Award Notification → Grant Closeout

The Grant Announcement

The first step of the grants process is to download the grant announcement and review it carefully to learn the specific requirements of the grant for which you want to apply. While DOJ uses a standard grant announcement template across all program areas, basic eligibility requirements, application forms, information, and procedures vary for each solicitation. Many have strict guidelines and fixed deadlines.

Deadlines are clearly stated on the front cover of the grant announcement. Highlight the deadline, and note that while Egrants is programmed to close at 11:59 pm CST on the date listed, program staff and the Egrants Help Desk will be unavailable to assist after the close of business hours. In most situations, applications that are not completed and submitted by the deadlines will not be considered for funding.

The Application

A grant application is a formal, written request for funds to support a specific program or project. Although the exact content of a grant application is determined by specific program guidelines, most grant applications explain (1) why the funds are needed, (2) what the funds will be used for, and (3) how the funds will be managed.

All DOJ programs require you to submit your application online, in DOJ's Egrants system. Although specific application requirements vary by program, DOJ has standard sections that must be completed across programs.

Please see the Application section of this guide for more details on this process.

The Grant Award

Upon acceptance of your application, you will be sent a grant award packet signed by the Attorney General. Your award documents contain:

- Your grant number
- Your approved project period and budget
- Your financial and programmatic reporting schedule
- All general grant conditions
- Any special conditions placed on the grant

You will receive two copies of signed award documents. Both copies must be signed by both the Project Director and Signing Official. One copy should be retained for your records, while the other must be mailed back to DOJ within 30 days of receipt. **Please note that your grant is not officially active until DOJ receives your signed award documents.**

More information about your grant award documents can be found here.

The Project Period

Once you sign and return your grant award to DOJ, your project may begin on the date listed, and you can begin spending your grant funds. DOJ grant programs are all funded on a reimbursement basis, so during the grant period you will track your expenditures and submit scheduled G-2 Financial Reports to request reimbursement. During the grant period you will also be expected to submit scheduled programmatic reports, which will detail your progress towards the goals of your grant. Reporting is explained in more detail here.

During your project period, you can also request modifications to your grant. Modifications must be submitted for the following changes:

- Changes in approved budget
- Changing project staff
- Requesting an extension to the project period
- Changing performance measures

All changes to your approved grant award require prior approval. This process is detailed further here.

Closeout

After the project period of your grant has ended, you will need to submit all closeout documents and complete closeout requirements within 12 days after the end of the grant. If all activities have not been completed, you may request a change in your end date. Extension requests must be submitted **before** the end date of your grant.

In order to closeout a grant, DOJ generally requires submission of:

- A Final Programmatic Progress Report in Egrants
- A Final G-2 Financial Report
- A Final Inventory Report (Homeland Security Equipment grants)

DOJ may require submission of additional items prior to closeout – these items will be detailed in your award document package.

2. Before you Apply

Get Registered

Register for Egrants: All applications for DOJ funding opportunities are submitted through Egrants (https://egrants.doj.state.wi.us/egmis/login.aspx), our electronic grants management system. Egrants **requires registration**, and it can take anywhere from a few days to 2 weeks for your registration to become active and for you to be able to submit an application.

It is not necessary to re-register if you already have user IDs and passwords for the Egrants system. Check early, however, to ensure that your ID and password are active.

Understand DOJ Grant Requirements

DOJ Administrative Guide
Review the DOJ Administrative Guide to understand the requirements and expectations of a grantee to ensure that your organization or agency will be in compliance if it is awarded a grant. Please note that this Guide is currently being updated, and a new version will be released shortly.

Civil Rights/EEOP Guidelines
As a requirement of federal Office of Justice Programs (OJP) funding, DOJ is required to ensure that recipients of financial assistance from OJP and its components are not engaged in prohibited discrimination. The primary objective in accomplishing this mission is to secure prompt and full compliance with all civil rights laws and regulations so that needed Federal assistance may commence or continue.

Before you apply for a grant, please note that DOJ has two main processes in place to ensure compliance, which will be detailed in all grant announcements that utilize federal OJP funds. These processes are:

- Ensure that all sub-grantees submit to OCR an *EEOP Certification Form*, and submit a copy to WI DOJ to maintain on file, unless they are required to submit a full EEO Plan or the short form to OCR (for awards over $500,000). This form will be included as part of your award document package. Grantees will be expected to submit this form directly to the federal OJP Office for Civil Rights, and send a copy back to DOJ as part of the award document package.
- Ensure that all sub-grantees complete the *Civil Rights Compliance Questionnaire*, and work with the agency to correct any issues as a result of their responses to this form. If you receive a grant from DOJ, this form will be collected as part of your first quarterly program report in Egrants. You will be expected to fill out this Questionnaire and attach it in Egrants as part of this report.

The Grant Announcement

If you haven't already done so, download the grant announcement you want to apply for and review it carefully. DOJ has a standard grant announcement template for all grant programs. However, basic eligibility requirements, application forms, information, and procedures vary for each solicitation. Many have strict guidelines and fixed deadlines. Learn the specific requirements of the grant for which you want to apply.

In addition, make sure you understand all reporting requirements, making note of any data you may not be able to report and determining how your organization will collect the data required.

After determining that you are eligible for a solicitation, consider the application deadline and whether you have sufficient time to complete the registration process, prepare a quality application and budget, and complete the online submission process. It is important that you complete the application thoroughly and that you allow sufficient time to submit it before the deadline. If it is your first time applying, it can take time to upload documents into Egrants, and you may need time to correct errors found in the submission process and to re-submit your application.

Deadlines are clearly stated on the front cover of the solicitation. Egrants is programmed to close when the stated deadline has been reached, and, in most situations, applications that are not completed and submitted by the deadline will not be considered for funding. Please note that while funding announcements do not close until 11:59 pm CST on the closing date, program staff and the Egrants Help Desk are only available for assistance from 8:00am to 4:30pm.

Tips

Please consider the following tips during the application process:
- Give yourself sufficient time to get registered in Egrants.
- Familiarize yourself with the grant announcement requirements and make sure that you are eligible well before the application submission deadline.
- Consider your budget early, and familiarize yourself with the guidelines of the DOJ Administrative Guide.
- After determining eligibility and the allowability of your budget, review all reporting requirements to make sure your agency can meet all grant requirements if your project is funded.
- Utilize the Egrants User Guide and learn how to navigate in the system.
- Start to enter your application in Egrants well before the submission deadline, and contact the Egrants Help Desk with any issues that need to be resolved.

3. The Application

Writing the Application – An Overview

A grant application is a formal, written request for funds to support a specific program or project. Although the exact content of a grant application is determined by specific program guidelines, most grant applications explain (1) why the funds are needed, (2) what the funds will be used for, and (3) what the expected outcomes will be.

All DOJ programs require you to submit your application online, in DOJ's Egrants system. Although specific application requirements vary by program, DOJ has standard sections that must be completed across programs.

This section reviews the basic requirements of your application, including tips on how to—

- Develop ideas for your project's application.
- Collaborate with your community.
- Develop a budget.
- Identify your project's strategic plan.
- Select someone to write the application.
- Write and submit the application.

Writing Tips

The application process is usually highly competitive, with numerous grant applications competing for the same funds. To increase your chance of receiving funding, your application must meet at least two goals: (1) inform the reader of your plans, and (2) persuade the reader that your project is worthy of funding.

Sell the reviewers on the following points—

- The need or problem that you will address or fix with the grant money is significant and worthy of funding.
- The project or program is well planned, both from DOJ's and your point of view, to ensure a successful implementation if the funds are awarded.
- You are capable of successfully managing the funds and completing the proposed project on schedule and meeting your goals and objectives.

Respond to reviewers' needs and expectations by—

- Including details that sufficiently clarify your plans for the reviewers, who may be unfamiliar with them and who may be reading several other grant applications at the same time.
- Providing good reasons for funding the proposed project in view of the grant announcement's purpose and goals.
- Ensuring that the application is well written and that important information is easily accessible. Reviewers who have trouble accessing or understanding important information will not be convinced that the proposed project deserves funding.

Be sure all items in your budget are allowable and reasonable—

- Make sure all calculations are accurate.
- Justify the need for each expenditure; itemize and provide detail with computations.
- Supplanting is not allowed for any budget item.
- Tie the budget to the project strategy and design.

Avoid common application mistakes—

- Sloppy writing
- Not following directions
- Failing to attach required documents
- Waiting until the last minute to apply

Developing a Plan for your Application

The first step in good grant writing is to have a plan. Know what projects will advance your community's goals, then find a funding opportunity that fits your plan. Don't try to make your plan fit into a funding opportunity if it does not (in other words, don't 'chase the money'). Your project must fit into DOJ's philosophy and mission, and the need you are addressing must be well documented and clearly articulated. Typically, DOJ will want to know that a proposed activity or project reinforces its overall mission and that the project is important to meeting the needs of the community.

To make a compelling case, include the following in your application—

- The nature of the project and its goals, needs, and anticipated outcomes.
- How the project will be conducted.
- A list of proposed deliverables.
- A timetable for completion.
- How best to evaluate the results (performance measures).
- Staffing needs, including the use of existing staff and new hires or volunteers.
- A budget, covering expenses and financial requirements, to determine what funding levels to seek.

Collaboration

Community support for many applications is essential. Look for individuals or groups representing academic, political, professional, and faith- and community-based organizations that may be willing to support the application. Letters of support can influence the grant review panel. DOJ and its peer reviewers consider the type and caliber of community support as critical when they review applications. However, be sure to follow the guidelines of the grant announcement, which may limit the number of letters of support or may discourage them entirely.

Elicit support from local government agencies and public officials. Letters of support from local government and public officials detailing the areas of the project they are supporting and any financial or in-kind commitment are often requested as part of an application. Keep in mind that it may take several months to develop these relationships and acquire letters of support if something of value (e.g., buildings, staff, services) is negotiated between the parties.

Give thought to the kinds of nonmonetary contributions that may be available to you. In many instances, academic institutions, corporations, and other nonprofit groups in the community are willing to contribute technical and professional assistance, equipment, or space. Such contributions will reduce the amount of money you request for your project, and most reviewers will view evidence of such local support favorably.

Many programs require agreements in writing before they will approve a grant or award funds. These could include memoranda of understanding or shared service agreements.

The Budget

Start thinking about your budget requirements early. Funding levels of grant programs change each year. If you are developing a budget in anticipation of a solicitation being announced and do not yet know the funding amount, review the same grant solicitation (if offered in past years) to project future funding levels. You also can use past solicitations to make lists of budget items needed for the project.

Although the degree of specificity of any budget will vary depending on the nature of the project and DOJ program requirements, a complete, well-thought-out budget serves to reinforce your credibility and increase the likelihood of your application being funded.

Keep in mind the following—

- A well-prepared budget should be reasonable and demonstrate that the funds being asked for will be used wisely.
- The budget should be as specific as possible in its estimates. Make every effort to be realistic and to estimate costs accurately.

Your budget should justify all expenses and be consistent with the program narrative:

- Salaries should be comparable to those within the applicant organization.
- If new staff is being hired, additional space and equipment are considered, as necessary.
- If the budget lists an equipment purchase, it is the type allowed by the agency.
- If additional space is rented, the increase in insurance is supported.
- Only include indirect costs or administrative costs if allowed by the grant announcement.

While budget adjustments are sometimes made after the grant award, this can be a lengthy process. It's best to be certain that program implementation costs can be met with the budget you submit with the application. Only ask for the amount you need for your program, regardless of the maximum amount allowed in the grant announcement.

Your budget must include all of the information asked for in the grant announcement, including:

- **Personnel**—List each position by title and employee name, if available. Show the annual salary rate and the percentage of time to be devoted to the project. Compensation paid for employees engaged in grant activities must be consistent with that paid for similar work within your organization. List only the employees of the applicant organization; all other grant-funded positions should be listed under the consultants/contracts category.

- **Fringe Benefits**—Base fringe benefits on actual known costs or an established formula. Fringe benefits are for listed personnel and only for the percentage of time devoted to the project. Fringe benefits on overtime hours are limited to FICA, workers' compensation, and unemployment compensation.

- **Travel**—Itemize travel expenses for project personnel by purpose (e.g., staff to training, field interviews, advisory group meetings). Show how you calculated these costs (e.g., six people to 3-day training at $X airfare, $X lodging, $X meals). In training projects, list travel and meals for trainees separately. Show the number of trainees and the unit costs involved. Identify the location of travel, if known. Stay within the allowable state rates for lodging, mileage, and meals.

- **Equipment**—List nonexpendable items that are to be purchased. Nonexpendable equipment is tangible property having a useful life of more than 2 years and an acquisition cost of $5,000 or more per unit. Include expendable items either in the "supplies" category or in the "other" category. Analyze the cost benefits of purchasing versus leasing equipment, particularly high-cost items and those subject to rapid technical advances. List rented or leased equipment costs in the "contractual" category. Explain why the equipment is needed for the project to succeed. Attach a narrative describing the method that will be used to procure the equipment.

- **Supplies**—List items by type (office supplies, postage, training materials, copying paper, and expendable equipment items costing less than $5,000, such as books and handheld tape recorders) and show how you calculated these costs. Generally, supplies include any materials that are expendable or consumed during the course of the project.

- **Consultants/Contracts**—Indicate whether you will follow your organization's formal, written procurement policy or the Federal Acquisition Regulations.

  Consultant Fees: For each consultant, enter the name, if known, service to be provided, hourly or daily fee (8-hour day), and estimated time on the project. Consultant fees in excess of $650 per day require additional justification and prior approval from DOJ.

  Consultant Expenses: List all expenses to be paid from the grant to the individual consultants in addition to their fees (e.g., travel, meals, lodging).

  Contracts: Describe the product or service to be procured by contract and provide an estimate of the cost. Promote free and open competition in awarding contracts. You must provide a separate justification for sole-source contracts of $100,000 or more.

- **Other Costs**—List items (e.g., rent, reproduction, telephone, janitorial or security services, investigative or confidential funds) by major type and show how you calculated the costs. For example, for rent, provide the square footage and the cost per square foot or a monthly rental cost and how many months of rent are proposed.

- **Indirect Costs**—Indirect costs are allowed only if you have a federally approved indirect cost rate and you attach a copy of the rate approval (a fully executed, negotiated agreement). Only include indirect costs or administrative costs if allowed by the grant announcement.

Remember to include computations that clearly show how the costs were derived for each line item.

Supplanting

Federal funds must be used to supplement existing funds for program activities and must not replace (supplant) those funds that have been appropriated for the same purpose.

SUPPLANTING IS PROHIBITED

- **Definition:** To deliberately reduce state or local funds because of the existence of federal funds.
- **Prohibition:** Federal funds must be used to **supplement** existing funds for program activities and must not replace those funds that have been appropriated for the same purpose.
- **Example:** When state funds are appropriated for a stated purpose and federal funds are awarded for that same purpose, the state replaces its state funds with federal funds, thereby reducing the total amount available for the stated purpose.
- **Monitoring:** Supplanting will be the subject of application review, postaward monitoring, and audit.

Sustaining the Project

Many grant programs require applicants to include information that explains how they will fund and sustain the project once the grant funds have been expended. Describe a plan for continuing your project beyond the grant period, and outline all other fundraising efforts you are considering and any plans to apply for additional grants in the future. Please note that it is prohibited to use grant funds or grant-funded positions for your fundraising efforts. Also, provide projections for operating and maintaining facilities and equipment. Discuss maintenance and future program funding if program funds are for construction activity. Account for other needed expenditures if the program includes purchasing equipment.

Writing the Application

Identify Your Project's Strategic Plan

Being awarded a grant takes more than an idea and a funding source. It takes an organization that is well managed, that understands its purpose, and that uses its staff and board efficiently. A successful grant program requires the organization to identify its long- and short-term goals, the priorities of the proposed project, and the strengths and limitations of its staff and their procedures. This section will help you understand the importance of a strategic plan and provide a model for you to follow as you create your own strategic plan.

Why Engage in Strategic Planning?

- Stimulate team or organizational thinking.
- Add an element of science (such as research) to your thinking.
- Clarify your future direction.
- Generate support, buy-in, and teamwork.
- Improve the probabilities of success.

What Is Strategic Planning?

Strategic planning helps you develop a direction for the future and details how to get there—how to solve a problem, how to implement a program or project, etc.

Strategic planning can be broken down into two components: strategy and tactics. Strategy determines the overall direction of a plan and establishes its principle goals or mission; tactics concern the detailed plans, choices, and decisions made to reach the primary goal. In summary, a strategy helps people choose and implement tactics.

To achieve lasting improvements, you must consider not only immediate concerns or crises, but also issues that can appear tangential, such as community values, leadership styles, and the degree to which implementation disrupts routine. Above all, avoid implementing plans that achieve your goals but inflict significant hardships on organizations and communities. A plan that might work well for a large government contractor, for example, may very well run into problems if implemented by a small American Indian tribe—or vice versa.

Elements of Strategic Planning

Developing a comprehensive strategic plan involves (1) thinking through and detailing plan elements, (2) developing the logic underlying the choice of elements, and (3) clearly documenting the plan. The logic model helps ensure that the plan will work, and that the elements (goals, objectives, tasks, and action steps) will lead to the desired results. The documentation helps preserve the connections. This information is critical for the evaluation phase. If the work is not done upfront when the project is being planned, the evaluator will have to reconstruct the logic and data needed for evaluation. At this stage, sometimes the necessary data has not been collected and is not available.

A strategy specifies how a vision will be achieved. A strategic plan begins with an assessment—both external to the organization and within it. This is similar to identifying and analyzing problems. The resulting strategic plan is made up of these elements:

- Vision
- Mission
- Goals and objectives: major steps to accomplishing a goal; specific, measurable, and achievable in a defined period of time
- Tasks: more specific activities designed to accomplish objectives
- Action steps: timeline, activities, persons responsible, sequential chain of events
- Results measurement

Goal-based strategic planning is the preferred process in community-based planning. Here is a guide to getting that done:

- Identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. These can exist both within and outside of your organization.
- Identify and prioritize major problems and goals. Go through the list of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats and identify your goals and the problems that might prevent your program from reaching those goals.
- Design major strategies (or programs) to address problems and goals.
- Design or update your mission statement (some organizations may do this step first).
- Establish action plans (e.g., objectives, resource needs, roles, responsibilities for implementation).
    o Consider developing a logic model and system map to support your planning effort
- Compile your strategic plan. A strategic plan contains all the documentation assembled so far and records problems, goals, strategies, an updated mission statement, action plans, and any identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Select Someone to Write the Application

Waiting until the last minute to prepare an application is not a sound practice. Equally important is the need to select the person(s) who will write the application.

Some agencies and jurisdictions are fortunate enough to have a grant writer on staff who is responsible for preparing grant applications. If you don't have a grant writer on staff, however, you have several options:

- Designate an agency employee.
- Write it yourself.
- Obtain the services of a professional grant writer.

Should you choose to **designate an agency employee**, do not do so without having a full understanding of that person's analytical and writing skills. The person selected does not need to have a Ph.D. in grant writing, but he or she must be able to—

- Follow the instructions in the solicitation.
- Identify what must be included in the program abstract and program narrative by reading the solicitation.
- Assist staff or the agency head in determining measurable goals and objectives.
- Communicate in a clear and concise writing style.
- Establish accurate dollar amounts for the various budget items and totals for the cost categories.

Provide the designated employee with as much information as possible about the solicitation, and do not expect that person to read your mind. Ask the employee to read the solicitation and then take sufficient time to discuss the project you have in mind. Be sure that the person is familiar with the agency's goals and objectives or strategic plan, and brief the person on how you see the project fitting into your agency's master plan.

If you write the grant **yourself**, give yourself a dedicated block of time to focus on the necessary parts of the application. And make sure *you* are able to complete the tasks listed above for the designated employee.

You also can **hire a professional grant writer.** Fees may range from a flat fee to a percentage of the total amount of federal funds requested. Some grant writers work on a contingency basis, with the fee billed only if a grant award is made, while others require at least a partial payment for the time and effort put into preparing the application. **Fees charged by grant writers cannot be included as an expense in your grant budget.**

Ask the grant writer to provide a list of agencies that have used his or her services and were awarded a grant as a result. Make sure that the person's grant writing skills and areas of expertise are similar to the focus area of the grant solicitation. Be mindful that some people are self-proclaimed grant writing experts. Although they may have prepared many applications, their success rate may be minimal. **Do your research.**

Submitting your Application

Once you have written the grant application, you must complete the application package and submit it online. Remember, all DOJ grant applications are submitted through our Egrants system. Applications must be submitted by the deadline listed on the grant announcement. **Late applications will not be accepted**.

Before You Try To Submit, Did You—

- Register with Egrants?

If not, **do so as soon as possible.** You cannot submit applications to DOJ without first completing this step, which can add several weeks to your schedule.

See Before You Apply: Get Registered Click here for more information about these important steps.

Complete the Application Package
To complete your application in Egrants, you must fill out each section of your application and then mark them 'Complete.' Egrants will not allow you to submit your application until all sections are complete. Please refer to the Egrants User Guide for detailed instructions on how to fill out an application in Egrants.

Check Everything, and Then Submit
Check and recheck everything in your application package to ensure that it complies with the requirements of the grant announcement. BE SURE TO HIT THE SUBMIT BUTTON or your application will not be submitted, even if all sections are completed.

If you want verification that your application was received, contact the program manager listed in the grant announcement.

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT *of* JUSTICE
ATTORNEY GENERAL *Brad D. Schimel*

User Management	Funding Announcement	Project Management	Portfolio Management	Work Manager (33)	Maintenance	Contacts	Reporting	External Menu

Summary   Monitoring   Fund Streams   Project Reviews   **Sections**   FA Reviews   Recipients   Search

Annc. Title: Treatment Alternatives and Diversion 2014 Expanded Solicitation **Funding Area:** Local Aids
Program Area: Justice Systems Improvement   **Due Date:** 5/1/2014

PROJECT SECTIONS

Add New

Project Section	Required?	Point Value
Main Summary Information	Required	0
Approval Checklists	Required	0
Performance Measures	Required	0
Budget Detail	Required	10
Budget Narrative	Required	0
Project Narrative	Required	15
Problem Description	Required	20
Goals and Objectives	Required	15
Design and Implementation Strategy	Required	35
Other Funding	Required	5

Total Score: 100 / 100