ALLIANCE FOR HEALTHY HOMES

Protecting Children from Lead and Other Environmental Health Hazards

Not Ready for Prime Time:
Electronic Grant Application Submission Requirements during HUD's FY 2005 SuperNOFA Process, as experienced by some Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Control Applicants

Background

In recent years, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has standardized its solicitation of applications for its various competitive grant programs by measures such as mandating the use of five department-wide rating factors for evaluating the merits of proposals, establishing norms for application submission requirements, and consolidating the timing of most Notices of Fund Availability (NOFA) into one annual "SuperNOFA". These requirements are directed at reducing inconsistencies, improving efficiency, streamlining public access to information, and ensuring that objective measures of competence drive award decisions.

As a result of policies promulgated in 2003 by the Office of Management and Budget for streamlining and unifying federal grant-making activities, all federal agencies are required to transfer their systems for receiving fund applications to grants.gov, a portal for electronic grants information and application submission.[1] For its 2005 grant solicitations, HUD needed to use this nascent system to manage the submission of grant application materials.

During the spring of 2005, hundreds of potential applicants attempted to fulfill new threshold requirements triggered by the technology of grants.gov and to use its software to download, complete, and submit the electronic files. In addition to the fact that problems can be expected with any new system, end-users could be expected to have different experiences based on their respective capacities and resources. The applicant pool ranged from new applicants to multi-grant recipients, universities with high-powered systems to community-based organizations using dial-up at the library, understaffed city and state agencies to well heeled consulting firms.

Because the lead poisoning prevention and healthy homes community has been so beleaguered by the results of the breakdowns[2] in the 2004 grant application review process of HUD's Office of Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Control (the Office), and the 2005 grants.gov requirements

---

[1] *Federal Register*, Vol. 68, No. 195 (October 8, 2003), pp. 58146-58154

[2] In 2004, the then-Deputy Director of HUD's Office of Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Control delegated authority for reviewing grant applications to a hastily recruited and ill-prepared contractor. The contractor hired temporary employees to review applications, trained only 60% of them, and failed to supervise them, as evidenced by the fact that their errors resulted in improper awards and denials of awards. Because expert Office staff were excluded from meaningful assessment roles, under the theory that staff knowledge of applicants in a relatively small and specialized field resulted in past funding decisions "that may not have been totally based on merit," the Office was unable to identify contractor staff errors. The failures of this approach have been recorded in an Interim Report, and are the subject of continuing investigation, by HUD's Office of the Inspector General. See Office of the Inspector General of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, *Interim Report Memorandum 2005-PH-0002,* May 16, 2005.

clearly presented new challenges, the Alliance for Healthy Homes (Alliance) determined that a survey of organizations and agencies interested in grants from the Office might help clarify the latest issues for the Office and applicants alike.

Survey Methodology

The Alliance developed a survey instrument (attached as Appendix One) covering what appeared, from anecdotal information and the Alliance's own experience, to be the features and requirements of grants.gov that might pose difficulties for applicants. The survey was posted on June 24 on www.surveymonkey.com, a web-based tool for gathering and compiling public opinion research. Because this tool enabled participant anonymity, results should be interpreted with caution since there is no confirmation of any information about the respondents, including whether they were qualified to apply for grants.

Through multiple listserv announcements and its own website, the Alliance invited feedback from all who applied online, those who sought a waiver from submitting online, and those who opted not to apply. Responses were accepted over a period of 18 days. Alliance staff used the data reports generated by the standard www.surveymonkey.com process to analyze and report on the statistical results, which are presented in Appendix Two (attached).

Findings

A. Threshold Eligibility Requirements

The grants.gov electronic submission process required that otherwise-eligible entities complete four sequential credentialing steps: 1) register with the Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) maintained by Dun and Bradstreet; 2) use the number provided by DUNS to register with the Central Contracting Registry (CCR) to designate the e-Business Point of Contact (EBiz); 3) have the person who will submit applications register with the Credential Provider as the authorized organizational representative (AOR); and 4) have the EBiz designee communicate to grants.gov using the DUNS number and a CCR-assigned number that the AOR is, in fact, the AOR. The first two steps were somewhat widely publicized prior to the issuance of the NOFA, while the others were revealed in the NOFA.

The multiple layers of registration and duplication of the same information within and between the different layers seemed redundant to many participants, adding delays, confusion, and needless tension to initiating the application process. Registry problems included intramural uncertainty about which entity's number or point of contact could be used for what. Knowing to start early and recent experience with grants.gov prevented problems for some applicants.

Most survey participants already had a DUNS number from Dun and Bradstreet, although there were problems such as an expired number. Thirty-nine percent of those who reported experience with notices about CCR registration regarded the information as unhelpful or confusing. Of those new to the CCR, two-thirds had difficulty registering. One applicant reported:

> *It took a long time to fill out the form, which had many duplicate fields for the*
> *same information. In response to one of the several requests for an e-mail*
> *address, we had a typo, and this was the address that got recorded. The result*

> *was that we did not get our ID #s for several days, after we inquired as to why one hadn't been sent.*

Of those new to the credential registry, two-thirds had difficulty making the AOR designation. The feedback on this included:

> *It was not at all clear how to designate the individual as an AOR . Still can't figure out if it's possible to designate additional AORs in case another staff person would be responsible for a different grant.*
>
> ***
>
> *Only the commissioner can sign contracts. Because of the way it was set up, he had to be approved by someone two levels below him. We didn't tell him.*
>
> ***
>
> *I would estimate that this task of authorizing us took well over 4 days, up to 3 hours a day of just waiting online for the authorization to process [or] on hold for an extended period of time.*
>
> ***
>
> *I found the explanations on the grants.gov site to be so obscure in explaining this requirement. There was LENGTHY text that could have been simplified.*

B. Decisions to Apply

Generally the electronic submission requirement was not a barrier to decisions to apply - although some applicants said they used or would prefer paper submission. One commenter stated:

> *Most of our grant preparation time was spent downloading new application packages, incorrectly formatted/designed pdf forms, and refilling the information. More time was spent in trying to navigate the system than pulling together the data needed to apply. We had little confidence in the electronic submission process, but our need for funding was greater than our trepidation.*

C. Help in Understanding the Electronic Submission Requirements

Grants.gov disseminated a variety of print and broadcast assistance materials, and HUD taped web videos to supplement the NOFAs. Half of those who reported experience with the grants.gov video regarded the information as unhelpful or confusing, and nearly half of those who reported viewing the OHHLHC web video regarded this information unhelpful or confusing.

Most respondents[3] regarded written information from grants.gov as unhelpful or confusing. Comments about grants.gov documents included "very poor," "incredibly user unfriendly," "confusing," "not clear," and "obscure."

Numerous commenters who reported contact with the help desk at grants.gov or with HUD staff regarded the verbal information as helpful. Several commented on the compartmentalization of

---

[3] In the presentation of survey data results, "respondents" refers to survey participants who answered the question under discussion; responses of N/A or no answer are excluded from these calculations. The raw data is summarized in Appendix Two.

the process, stating that personnel at grants.gov, CCR, and the credential provider should have been more knowledgeable about how all of the systems work.

D. Submitting the Application

> *... having an e-grant system whereby we fill out forms electronically, print them out, scan them, and zip them is not really an 'electronic application,' although we do use a lot of electronic techniques in the process.*

The downloadable application submission program tailored by grants.gov for each NOFA, "PureEdge™ Viewer," was designed to permit potential grant applicants to access, complete, and submit applications electronically and securely.[4] The application program for each NOFA consisted of:

1) a linked group of fillable forms that automatically linked word processing data such as applicant name and DUNS number between the forms; and

2) an interface for saving and uploading the core application as well as applicant documents such as narratives and attachments created in commonly used software programs.

The NOFA printed in the *Federal Register* provided instructions for the narrative and budget submissions, required and optional attachments, page limits, and a list of required forms.

The majority of respondents – 77% - were unable to upload applications on their first attempt, and most of them tried several times before succeeding. Sixty-seven percent of respondents reported that they were able to upload applications within 15 minutes. The mean time spent uploading reported by those whose wait exceeded 15 minutes was 45 minutes.

Only 14% of respondents who downloaded the package reported difficulty with the download, but 26% had difficulty with the software's performance on their computers.

> *The software wouldn't work on some of our systems and bogged down and crashed others. Every time you closed it, the software left a chunk of itself in memory, and after the third or fourth time, crashed your computer. Our commissioner's office runs on NetWare and XP, and we couldn't even get it to install there. We will all upgrade to that system next year.*

Some 57% of respondents reported difficulty with automatic calculations performed for indirect cost rates in the multi-part, multi-year budget form (Standard Form 424CB), causing inconsistency between the applicant-generated spreadsheet submitted as an attachment and this required form.[5] Trying to correct this created errors.

Nearly 40% of respondents had difficulty understanding and dealing with error[6] messages.

---

[4] www.grants.gov

[5] Subsequently, the Alliance was informed that, if there was any discrepancy between totals in the applicant-generated spreadsheet and this form, the total in the form takes precedence as the official amount requested.

[6] As the applicant uploaded the complete submission, certain form data fields were automatically reviewed by pre-programmed protocols to detect errors, and the application submission was stalled whenever errors were identified until the applicant found and overrode the errors.

> *The check for errors is not helpful. It can only give one error at a time and the*
> *specific HUD form where the error can be located is not very specific. The HUD*
> *424CBW form has formula errors and should be carefully reviewed and*
> *corrected.*

Although it was vital to be able to attach electronically the most relevant application materials (e.g., 20+ page narratives, letters of support or commitment, budget detail, and forms not provided in the PureEdge™ package), 27% of respondents had difficulty with the attachments interface.

Submission requirements explicitly or implicitly required electronic attachment of portable document files (pdfs);[7] 37% of respondents reported difficulty with creating or obtaining pdfs.

> *There is a problem with signed forms, letters of support, etc. in that these have to*
> *be scanned to be electronically attachable and not everyone has scanning*
> *capability. There should be some way to have an ID # substitute for a signature.*

Clear directions for creating .zip files, which *can* be completed with free software, would have helped the 19% of respondents who reported difficulty with meeting the .zip file requirement.

> *[W]e do not have the capacity to create .pdf or .zip files (nor do we have a*
> *scanner), and as a nonprofit cannot afford to purchase the software necessary to*
> *do it. This created the need to FAX a huge volume of documents for the*
> *application.*
>
> <p align="center">***</p>
>
> *Why would you include the fax cover sheet as a required form if the idea is to*
> *send everything in a zip file?*

E. Waivers of Electronic Submission Requirements

Electronic submission was mandatory unless an applicant requested a waiver from the applicable HUD assistant secretary at least 30 days before the date the application was due. Thirty-three percent of respondents had difficulty with electronic submission waiver instructions. Fully 57% of survey participants had no comment on these instructions, perhaps an indication that getting a waiver did not seem a viable option.

F. Inconsistencies and Other Irreconcilable Differences

Nearly two-thirds of respondents reported difficulty with inconsistencies between the NOFA and grants.gov and remarked on the gaps in the guidance provided by both.

> *HUD needs to work a little on meshing the NOFA and the online application.*
> *That is, all forms required in the NOFA should appear online instead of the*
> *applicant having to download them independently. Instructions about electronic*
> *submission, e.g. how attachments should be ordered or combined, how long the*

---

[7] Unless applicants wanted to risk dividing their submissions into faxes of original signed documents and electronic submission of the rest of the application, they needed to be able to scan originals into portable document format and/or purchase special software for this.

narrative should be, how the narrative should be formatted, should be included in the online application.

***

"There needs to be much better coordination between what's provided in the online grant application package and what's stipulated in the NOFA. It was difficult to determine what was required and what wasn't.

***

Application packages did not contain all of the forms required; you had to find them from other sources. Although referred to often in the NOFA, the grants.gov instructions were only for the use of the system.

***

Since the submission, forms have been edited/corrected on hudclips.org. In fact, the document map of HUD 96013 has changed COMPLETELY, with all text field descriptors having been changed. Someone should 'look into' the forms that were available to applicants prior to the submission deadline for this funding opportunity. I find it disturbing that they require electronic submission, but never closely checked something as basic as pdf forms.

***

I e-mailed a person from the HUD office regarding a possible conflict in the instructions contained in the General Section and our specific NOFA. I never heard back.

***

Some of the documents that were required to be able to submit the application were not included and had to be located on the HUD website. Once they were located, it was discovered that they were in different formats, so they had to be scanned and attached as a pdf file. In addition, the electronic application contained some forms that were not required, which confused the process even further, i.e., no indication was given as to whether they needed to be completed and submitted as well. It would have been simpler, and clearer, had all the required forms been included with the application and all superfluous forms omitted.

***

We found it more difficult to search for and complete and then attach separately the required forms not contained within the electronic submission. In the future it would be great if HUD had all the required forms in the package format.

***

The required forms on the download weren't consistent with the NOFA and you had to hunt up the rest of the forms and include them in the zip file.

***

More of the program-specific required forms should have been included in the electronic portion. We had to obtain software so we could fill in the required PDF forms. Then we had to attach them. There were more required attachments than there were spaces allowed; thus, we had to add required attachments under the 'optional attachments' category.

***

The NOFA specified that the application must be in order. It was impossible to predict the order because we had no control of how the electronic forms printed.

***

*The NOFA was confusing regarding what items were considered to be an
'attachment' vs. 'supporting documentation' to the rating factors.*

General Conclusions

Clearly the grants.gov has been designed to manage millions of routine and simple information
management transactions across multiple federal agencies and programs. By the spring of 2005,
those responsible for the portal's infrastructure and the systems surrounding it had not yet
worked out their quality control mechanisms for ensuring competent operations and effective
communication. It is likely that the opportunity to coordinate instructions and prevent
conflicting messages from the electronic submission system and HUD may have been hampered
by the extreme care taken by HUD to safeguard information about NOFAs. In any event, the
portal was not prepared to manage the needs, questions, and varying capacities of applicants for
healthy homes and lead hazard control grants.

Many survey respondents commented that much of their agencies' and organizations' scarce
time was diverted from planning the proposed project (or other work) to master the requirements
of the new system, overcome inconsistencies in instructions, and wait online or on hold for their
questions and applications to progress. From duplicative identification verifications at the
beginning of the application process, to idiosyncratic application packaging instructions and slow
uploads at the conclusion of the process, the applicant experience was hardly automated or
streamlined.

The pile-up of authorizing documentation seems especially overbuilt. Awarding agencies have
plenty of opportunities to perform due diligence for and verify the identity of successful
applicants. Since few local or state agencies or community-based organizations would undergo
the effort to submit a competitive application unless they were qualified to submit and receive an
award, the burden to clarify the very existence and application authority of the entity might best
remain with federal agency staff.

Of greatest concern is the potential impact of this flawed process might have on struggling
grassroots organizations and local agencies on the frontlines in the nation's highest risk
communities. HUD and grants.gov must reduce this apparent new disparity in access to scarce
resources before the federal government's most important partners opt out.

Recommendations

1. Grants.gov, with assistance from each NOFA agency's program staff, should test the
   operation of and instructions for the electronic submission package for each NOFA and
   resolve any problems before the NOFA is announced.

2. Electronic submission of HUD's OHHLHC grant applications should not be required
   again until grants.gov software, instructions, and submission processes have been
   adjusted to ensure that the system is user-friendly, straightforward, and completely and
   clearly explained.

3. SuperNOFA and grants.gov requirements should be consistent, fully explained (with flow
   charts showing sequential process steps), and written in plain English.
   - All required and optional forms should be included in the grants.gov package.

- NOFAs should contain clear information about applicant hardware and software requirements for electronic submission.
- The order in which documents are to be packaged should be clarified in each NOFA and achievable in the grants.gov software.

4. There should be no complicated prerequisites to meet in order to submit an application.
   - A one-step user-friendly process should permit an applicant that possesses a DUNS number to 1) inform grants.gov that its entity seeks to qualify, 2) obtain a confidential and unique password from grants.gov, and 3) get started.

5. Greater assurance should be provided regarding the security of facsimile submission of materials not available to the applicant electronically.
   - The agency should send a confirming fax, with the number of pages received, to the applicant.

6. All forms should be fillable, properly formatted, error-free, and a software type that permits users to save their entries.
   - Budget forms and other materials that rely on calculations should be available in spreadsheet software.
   - Budget forms and other materials that rely on calculations but are not presented in spreadsheet software should have no pre-programmed calculations that users cannot override.

7. Complete sets of all forms and materials for each NOFA should be simultaneously published online, independent of their availability in the "official" download process through which submissions are assigned unique identifiers.

8. Staff at the grants.gov Help Desk should be knowledgeable about the entire electronic submission system, from how to complete all steps (DUNS, CCR, etc.) to qualify for electronic submissions through following up to verify completion of the submission process.

9. The Help Desk should be open every business day until 6 p.m. Pacific Time.

<u>**Appendix One**</u>
<u>Survey: HUD's FY 2005 Electronic Grant Application Process</u>

<u>Threshold –Becoming Qualified to Apply</u>

Did you already have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number?

    a. Yes
    b. No, but getting one was easy/fast
    c. No, and getting one was difficult/slow
    d. No, and I was not able to get one in time to submit
    e. Comment:

    _____
    _____
    _____

Had you already registered with Central Contractor Registry (CCR) and obtained a Trading or Marketing Partner Identification Number (TPIN or MPIN)?

    a. Yes
    b. No, but registering was easy/fast
    c. No, and registering was difficult/slow
    d. No, and I was not able to register in time to submit
    e. Comment:

    _____
    _____
    _____

Had you already designated an Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) with Grants.gov?

    a. Yes
    b. No, but accomplishing the designation was easy/fast
    c. No, and requesting and approving the designation was confusing
    d. No, and the Grants.gov confirmation of the designation was slow
    e. Comment:

    _____
    _____
    _____

Did the requirement of electronic submissions affect your decision about whether to apply?

    a. Yes – we did not apply because of the electronic submission requirement
    b. No – we applied despite the requirement
    c. Not applicable, the requirement was not a determining factor
    d. Comment:

    _____

Did you apply for or receive a waiver of the electronic submission requirement?

    a. Applied for and received a waiver
    b. Applied for and was denied a waiver
    c. Did not apply for a waiver
    d. Comment:

        _____
        _____
        _____

Understanding the Electronic Filing Requirements

Rate the usefulness and clarity of information from each of the following:					
Resource	Helpful	OK	Not Helpful	Confusing	N/A
Timing of notices about CCRRegistration and other requirements					
Web video about grants.gov					
OHHLHC's NOFA web video					
Grants.gov help desk					
Instructions from Grants.gov					
NOFA's					
o Lead Hazard Control					
o Lead Hazard Reduction Demonstration					
o Lead Outreach					
o Lead Technical Studies					
o Operation LEAP					
o Healthy Homes Technical Studies					
o Healthy Homes Demonstration					
o Other					

Submitting the Application

Rate the ease of complying with and using the online application process				
Element	Easy	OK	Difficult	N/A
Downloading the grants.gov software package				
Software performance on your computer				
Filling out online forms (like the SF 424)				
Saving information in fields and forms				
Understanding and dealing with error messages about form entries				
Consistency of requirements between the NOFA and Grants.gov				

Automatic calculations in SF 424 CB (budget forms)				
Using attachment(s) interface				
Making/obtaining .pdfs of documents				
Creating .zip files				
Instructions about waiver of electronic submission requirement				

How many times did you try to submit a completed (error-free) application before you succeeded? _____

When you succeeded approximately how long did the upload take? _____ minutes

Applicant Information

Type of Applicant:
  a. State government
  b. Local government
  c. Tribe
  d. Community- or faith-based organization
  e. Hospital
  f. University
  g. Other non-profit organization
  h. For-profit entity

Have you been funded by OHHLHC before?

  a. Yes, as a direct grantee under: (check all the apply)
    o Lead Hazard Control
    o Lead Hazard Reduction Demonstration
    o Lead Outreach
    o Lead Technical Studies
    o Operation LEAP
    o Healthy Homes Technical Studies
    o Healthy Homes Demonstration
    o Other
  b. Yes, as a sub-recipient to a grantee under: (check all that apply)
    o Lead Hazard Control
    o Lead Hazard Reduction Demonstration
    o Lead Outreach
    o Lead Technical Studies
    o Operation LEAP
    o Healthy Homes Technical Studies
    o Healthy Homes Demonstration
    o Other
  c. No.

Did you apply for a grant this year?

    a. Yes: (check all that apply)
- Lead Hazard Control
- Lead Hazard Reduction Demonstration
- Lead Outreach
- Lead Technical Studies
- Operation LEAP
- Healthy Homes Technical Studies
- Healthy Homes Demonstration

Other

    b. Started to apply but did not finish application for:
- Lead Hazard Control
- Lead Hazard Reduction Demonstration
- Lead Outreach
- Lead Technical Studies
- Operation LEAP
- Healthy Homes Technical Studies
- Healthy Homes Demonstration
- Other

Because:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

    c. No

In Your Own Words

Based on the experience of a few others and ourselves, we have tried to include the most common issues in the questions above. Please comment below on anything we have not covered, expand upon your experiences described above, and provide any NOFA-specific comments.

To submit your responses, complete the survey as a word document, and attach it to an email to bgumm@afhh.org OR print, complete, and fax it to us at 202-543-4466.

Thank you for taking the time to respond to the survey. We appreciate your responses.
Alliance for Healthy Homes

<u>Appendix Two</u>
<u>Detail - SuperNOFA Survey Responses</u>
n = 51

<u>Qualifying to Submit Application</u>

1. **Did you already have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number?**
   Yes = 86%
   No, but getting one was easy/fast = 2%
   No, and getting one was difficult/slow = 6%
   No, and I was not able to get one in time to submit = 4%
   No answer = 2%

   > *Most applicants already had a DUNS number from Dun and Bradstreet.*

2. **Had you already registered with Central Contractor Registry (CCR) and obtained a Trading or Marketing Partner Identification Number (TPIN or MPIN)?**
   Yes = 45%
   No, but registering was easy/fast = 18%
   No, and registering was difficult/slow = 33%
   No, and I was not able to register in time to submit = 2%
   No answer = 2%

   > *66% of applicants new to CCR had difficulty registering.*

3. **Had you already designated an Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) with Grants.gov?**
   Yes = 27%
   No, but accomplishing the designation was easy/fast = 16%
   No, and requesting and approving the designation was confusing = 47%
   No, and the Grants.gov confirmation of the designation was slow = 8%
   No answer = 2%

   > *66% of those who had not already designated an AOR had difficulty making the designation.*

4. **Did the requirement of electronic submissions affect your decision about whether to apply?**
   Yes – we did not apply because of the electronic submission requirement = 2%
   No – we applied despite the requirement = 63%
   Not applicable, the requirement was not a determining factor = 31%
   No answer = 4%

   > *The electronic submission requirement was not a barrier to decisions to apply.*

Understanding the Electronic Filing Requirements

5. **Rate the usefulness and clarity of information from each of the following resources:**
      - Timing of notices about CCR Registration and other requirements
        Helpful = 14%
        OK = 37%
        Not helpful = 10%
        Confusing = 22%
        N/A or No Answer = 18%

> *39% of those who reported experience with notices about CCR registration regarded the information as unhelpful or confusing.*

      - Web video about grants.gov
        Helpful = 2%
        OK = 22%
        Not helpful = 18%
        Confusing = 6%
        N/A or No Answer = 53%

> *Half of those who reported experience with the grants.gov video regarded the information as unhelpful or confusing.*

      - OHHLHC's NOFA web video
        Helpful = 6%
        OK = 20%
        Not helpful = 16%
        Confusing = 8%
        N/A or No Answer = 51%

> *Nearly half of those who reported viewing the OHHLHC web video regarded the information unhelpful or confusing.*

      - Grants.gov help desk
        Helpful = 29%
        OK = 20%
        Not helpful = 20%
        Confusing = 20%
        N/A or No Answer = 12%

> *45% of those who reported contact with the help desk at grants.gov regarded the information as unhelpful or confusing.*

- Instructions from Grants.gov
  Helpful = 4%
  OK = 31%
  Not helpful = 14%
  Confusing = 41%
  N/A or No Answer = 10%

Most respondents regarded written information from grants.gov as unhelpful or confusing.

Submitting the Application

6. **Rate the ease of complying with and using the following elements of the online application process:**
   - Downloading the grants.gov software package
     Easy = 37%
     OK = 37%
     Difficult = 12%
     N/A or No Answer = 14%

14% of respondents who downloaded the package reported difficulty.

- Software performance on your computer
  Easy = 24%
  OK = 41%
  Difficult = 22%
  N/A or No Answer = 14%

26% of respondents had difficulty with the software's performance on their computers.

- Filling out online forms (like the SF 424)
  Easy = 22%
  OK = 43%
  Difficult = 20%
  N/A or No Answer = 16%

24% of respondents had difficulty with the online forms.

- Saving information in fields and forms
  Easy = 29%
  OK = 24%
  Difficult = 31%
  N/A or No Answer = 16%

37% of respondents had difficulty with saving information.

- Understanding and dealing with error messages about form entries
  Easy = 12%
  OK = 39%
  Difficult = 33%
  N/A or No Answer = 16%

39% of respondents had difficulty understanding and dealing with error messages.

- Consistency of requirements between the NOFA and Grants.gov
  Easy = 2%
  OK = 29%
  Difficult = 51%
  N/A or No Answer = 18%

Nearly two-thirds of respondents reported difficulty with inconsistencies between the NOFA and grants.gov.

- Automatic calculations in SF 424 CB (budget forms)
  Easy = 12%
  OK = 24%
  Difficult = 47%
  N/A or No Answer = 18%

57% of respondents reported difficulty with Form 424CB's automatic calculations.

- Using attachment(s) interface
  Easy = 24%
  OK = 37%
  Difficult = 22%
  N/A or No Answer = 18%

27% of respondents had difficulty with the attachments interface.

- Making/obtaining .pdfs of documents
  Easy = 29%
  OK = 20%
  Difficult = 29%
  N/A or No Answer = 22%

37% of respondents had difficulty with obtaining .pdf documents.

- Creating .zip files
  Easy = 33%
  OK = 25%
  Difficult = 14%
  N/A or No Answer = 27%

19% of respondents had difficulty with creating .zip files.

- Instructions about waiver of electronic submission requirement
  Easy = 8%
  OK = 22%
  Difficult = 14%
  N/A or No Answer = 57%

33% of respondents had difficulty with electronic submission waiver instructions.

---

7. **How many times did you try to submit a completed (error-free) application before you succeeded? (n=36)**

  Succeeded on first attempt = 22%
  Succeeded on second attempt = 22%
  Succeeded after more than two attempts = 55%
          (range 3-20, mean 6.7 attempts)

77% of respondents were unable to upload applications on their first attempt, and most of them tried several times before succeeding.

---

8. **When you succeeded approximately how long did the upload take? (in minutes) (n=36)**
  Mean time = 18.75 minutes
  Maximum time = 180 minutes
  Minimum time = 1 minute
  1-5 minutes = 53%
  6-10 minutes = 9%
  11-15 minutes = 5%
  More than 15 minutes = 33%
          (range 16-180 minutes; mean 45.4 minutes)

67% of respondents were able to upload applications within 15 minutes, but the mean time spent uploading by those who exceeded this timeframe was 45 minutes.

Applicant information

9. **Type of Applicant:**
    i.   State government = 7
    j.   Local government = 24
    k.   Tribe = 0
    l.   Community- or faith-based organization = 4
    m. Hospital = 0
    n.   University = 2
    o.   Other non-profit organization = 6
    p.   For-profit entity = 0
    q.   No answer = 8

10. **If you have been funded by OHHLHC or another HUD program before, please note the name of the program(s) under which you received funding.**
    We did not analyze responses to this question.

11. **If you did consider applying for a grant this year, please select which ones.**
    We did not analyze responses to this question.

12. **Did you submit a completed application or applications?**
    Yes = 76%
    No = 10%
    No Answer = 14%