



MEMORANDUM

TO: Faculty, Deans, Chairs, and Directors

FROM: Brent K. Brown, Director - Office of Sponsored Projects ^{BB}

RE: Grants.gov, Stimulus Funds & Internal Submission Deadlines

DATE: 3/13/2009

The implementation of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 promises to make life interesting for the entire research community at the University over the next few months. While there will be new and expanded funding opportunities for extramural support, many of these programs will be administered via the Grants.gov system and you should be aware of, and plan for, the current constraints of that system.

As you may be aware, the Grant.gov submission system has undergone recent changes. For example, all application forms have now been converted from Pure Edge to Adobe Forms. Server updates have also been implemented. While these efforts were intended to improve the Grants.gov process, OSP's recent experience is that submitting applications successfully via Grants.gov has in fact become more difficult. These problems are not unique to the University and were cited by the Office of Management and Budget in a memo to all Federal departments and agencies. A copy of that memo is attached.

During the most recent cycle of federal application deadlines, the problems and delays OSP experienced with the Grants.gov system included:

- Extremely slow file transfer rates. In many cases it took several hours to upload a single application to Grants.gov.
- Complete failure to connect with Grants.gov servers for an extended period of time with an average of more than 10 attempted submissions per application.
- Application errors, such as technical errors in the application forms and use of unsupported versions of Adobe.
- Undefined Grants.gov generated errors. In several cases application errors were generated by the Grants.gov system which could not be reconciled with the application or the Grants.gov "Help" desk.

The majority of applications had one or more of these problems. Resolving each issue for each application required significantly more time and effort than prior application cycles. Consequently, several applications were at risk of not reaching the funding agency in time for consideration because they were on hold at Grants.gov pending resolution of these issues. This in turn negatively affected OSP's ability to timely review non-Grants.gov submissions.

As a reminder, the OSP will process and submit applications according to the order in which the OSP receives a complete, ready-to-submit application. Complete applications must be accompanied by a complete signed Document Summary Sheet. Applications that are received by the OSP five business days in advance of the deadline are given priority. With OSP's recent experience it is clear that proposals submitted late to OSP face an increased risk of not clearing the submission process on time.

Accordingly, I encourage you to submit completed proposals to the OSP as early as possible to avoid last minute submission bottlenecks and problems, but in any event no later than five business days prior to the deadline. A five business day lead time allows the OSP the opportunity to provide an appropriate institutional review, repair and potentially enhance the application, proactively limit complications, and deal with unexpected delays or problems. This guideline applies to all applications regardless of whether the submission will be made via Grants.gov or not.

In order to continue to meet service demands during the next few months, the OSP will also make temporary staffing reassignments and staffing additions in coordination with the Office of the Vice President for Research.

As always, OSP remains a resource to you and shares your goals of increased extramural support. Please contact the OSP should you need any assistance. We appreciate your efforts to participate in sponsored activity and hope that in working closely together we can make the submission process as efficient and effective as possible.