



Department of Veterans Affairs

Financial Policy

Volume X

Grants Management

Chapter 3

Grant Funding Availability

Announcement Process

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0301 Overview

This chapter establishes the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) financial policies for developing and issuing electronically synopses of announcements of funding opportunities under financial assistance programs that award discretionary grants and cooperative agreements, using a standard set of data elements in conformance with Office of Management and Budget (OMB) guidelines and [68 Federal Register 37379](#).

Key items covered in this chapter include:

- VA will promote the widest possible dissemination of Federal financial assistance information to potential applicants concerning the availability of funding opportunities.
- VA will follow [2 CFR 200.203](#) on funding opportunity announcements requirements when posting publicly on [Grants.gov](#), or the [Federal Register](#).
- Heads of a grants program office will name an appropriate staff member to hold primary responsibility for approving funding opportunity announcements and ensure that there is an appropriate level of coordination.
- Whenever possible, grants program offices should provide applicants at least 30 days (not to exceed 60 calendar days) from the date of issuance of a funding opportunity announcement to prepare and submit applications.
- The process of developing and issuing a funding opportunity announcement will not restrict competition, unless limited competition has been approved in advance.

0302 Revisions

The full history of revisions to this policy can be found in Appendix A: History of Revisions.

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
Various	Reformatted to new policy format and completed five-year update.	OFP (047G)	Reorganized chapter layout	April 2020
0301 Overview	Updated references to “grants,” “grant programs,” and “grant offices” to incorporate definition clarifications from OMB Uniform Grant Guidance.	OFP (047G)	Updated references	July 2014

0303 Definitions

2 CFR §200 – Federal government grants regulations, which are maintained by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). These regulations apply to all federal grant programs, unless exempted by authorizing statute, public law, or other federally binding enactment.

Funding Opportunity Announcement or Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) – a notice in Grants.gov describing the type of funding available on a competitive basis and provides a contact where an application may be submitted, per [2 CFR §200.203](#).

Grants.gov – An OMB designated government-wide Web site for posting summary information about funding opportunities.

0304 Roles and Responsibilities

Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and other key officials are responsible for ensuring compliance with the policies and procedures set forth in this chapter.

Head of a Grants Program Office (HGPO) has the primary responsibility for the grant program, including grant awards and administration. HGPO ensures Federal compliance with applicable statutory, regulatory, and administrative policy requirements. HGPO ensures that guidance and Notices of Funding Availability (NOFA) follow appropriate templates, include correct administrative and national policy requirements, and comply with OMB and VA regulations.

0305 Policies

030501 General Policies

- A. VA will promote the widest possible dissemination of Federal financial assistance information to potential applicants concerning the availability of funding opportunities. Consistent with the requirements of this chapter, grants program offices are encouraged to streamline and simplify the program announcement process to better serve applicants.
- B. VA will follow [2 CFR 200.203](#) on funding opportunity announcements requirements when posting publicly on Grants.gov, or the Federal Register. These are the OMB-designated government-wide Web sites for applicants to make an informed decision.

030502 Announcements

- A. Heads of the grants program offices will ensure that funding opportunity announcements:
- Are reviewed, approved and issued in a coordinated manner to media sources;
 - Comply with the requirements of this chapter; and
 - Meet the programmatic needs established within statute.
- B. VA must post on the OMB-designated government-wide Web site (i.e., Grants.gov FIND) a summary of information about funding opportunities in a location preceding the full text of the announcement, per [2 CFR §200.203](#). The funding opportunity synopsis at Grants.gov FIND will include a link to (or upload of) the funding opportunity announcement.
- C. VA may issue funding opportunity announcements using any media source including but not limited to posting on Grants.gov, program websites, publishing in the Federal Register, or mailing to all eligible applicants in a universe of known applicants. When multiple media sources are used to disseminate information about funding opportunities, grants program offices will attempt to ensure that potential variations in the information provided and the timing of the release of the information do not create an unfair advantage to the users of one source rather than another.
- D. The process for the development of draft funding opportunity announcements should begin early enough to allow the grants program office to maximize the time available for the applicant to prepare its application, and for the grants program office to carry out its objective and business reviews and make timely awards.
- E. Whenever possible grants program offices should provide applicants at least 30 days (not to exceed 60 calendar days) from the date of issuance of a funding opportunity announcement to prepare and submit applications. Less than 30 days can be provided, in the case of a limited competition for urgent awards if a full 30 days would adversely affect the project or program and viable applications may be prepared in less time.
- F. Funding opportunity announcements will be as clear and comprehensive as possible to limit the need for potential applicants to consult with grants program office staff. If grants program office staff members must provide telephone or other informal consultation, they will provide consistent interpretations and treat all requesters equitably.
- G. The process of developing and issuing a funding opportunity announcement will not restrict competition, unless limited competition has been approved in advance.
- H. Potential applicants will not be given selective advance notification of planned or pending funding opportunities and grants program offices will not tailor

announcements to selected projects or outcomes, e.g., by using unduly restrictive evaluation criteria.

030503 Content Requirements for Funding Opportunity Announcements

- A. A funding opportunity announcement, hereafter referred to as a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA), is a grants program office's formal means of conveying to the public detailed information about the competition for available Federal financial assistance. These NOFAs must be able to withstand scrutiny concerning the fairness and equity of the competition and provide enough information to potential applicants to judge whether to submit an application.
- B. Grants program offices will follow the funding opportunity announcement standard NOFA template and content requirements specified in [2 CFR Part 200, Appendix I](#) and [Appendix B](#) of this policy chapter, Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA). When applicable, grants program offices will also adhere to statutory NOFA requirements identified in their grant program's statutory authority found in [38 CFR](#).
- C. When a grants program office publishes a public notice in the Federal Register, or Grants.gov providing summary information about the funding opportunity, the notice will include the following information:
 1. A summary of information about the funding opportunity displaying:
 - a. Federal Awarding Agency Name (i.e., Department of Veterans Affairs);
 - b. Funding Opportunity Title;
 - c. Announcement Type (whether the funding opportunity is the initial announcement of this funding opportunity or a modification of a previously announced opportunity);
 - d. Funding Opportunity Number (required, if applicable). If the VA has assigned or will assign a number to the funding opportunity announcement, this number must be provided;
 - e. Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number(s);
 - f. Key Dates. Key dates include due dates for applications or Executive Order 12372 submissions, as well as for any letters of intent or pre-applications. For any announcement issued before a program's application materials are available, key dates also include the date on which those materials will be released; and any other additional information, as deemed applicable by VA.

2. Full programmatic description of the funding opportunity in [2 CFR §200, Appendix I](#) to include:
 - a. Program Description – Required
 - b. Federal Award Information - Required
 - c. Eligibility Information
 - d. Application and Submission Information
 - e. Application Review Information
 - f. Federal Award Administration Information
 - g. Federal Awarding Agency Contact(s) – Required
 - h. Other Information – Optional
3. Federal award information, including sufficient information to help an applicant make an informed decision about whether to submit an application. (See also [2 C.F.R. §200.414 Indirect \(F&A\) costs](#));
4. Specific eligibility information, including any factors or priorities that affect an applicant's eligibility or its application's eligibility for selection;
5. Application Preparation and Submission Information, including the applicable submission dates and time;
6. Application Review Information including the criteria and process to be used to evaluate applications. See also [2 C.F.R. §200.205 Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants](#);
7. Federal Award Administration Information. See also [2 C.F.R. §200.210 Information contained in a Federal award](#).

030504 Deadlines for Submission of Competing Applications

- A. To be considered timely, applications will be submitted on or before the published deadline date.
- B. Applications not meeting the deadline specified in the funding opportunity announcement are considered late and may not be considered. Grants program offices are responsible for notifying applicants submitting late applications and either returning the application or advising the applicant of its disposition.

- C. Heads of the grants program office may authorize or delegate the authority to grant a general extension of a published application deadline that affects all applicants or only those applicants in a defined geographical area when justified by circumstances such as acts of God (e.g., floods or hurricanes), widespread disruptions of mail service, or disruptions of electronic (e.g., application receipt services) or other services, such as a prolonged blackout, that affect the public at large.

030505 Assisting Applicants

- A. Federal financial assistance agencies may designate appropriate staff to provide limited technical assistance to applicants in developing their applications. Pre-award technical assistance should be limited to providing:
- Explanations of programmatic requirements, regulations, guidelines, technical evaluation, and funding criteria;
 - Guidance to applicants on possible linkages with other resources;
 - In appropriate situations, advice on developing the project plan, including setting goals and objectives, task delineation, staffing patterns, scope of services, and program management systems. This type of assistance would normally be appropriate when it is required to ensure that an adequate number of viable applications are available for review and possible award; and
 - Information related to the technical requirements of the funding announcement, completing forms, use of Grants.gov, and other information that while publicly available may need limited explanation.
- B. If technical assistance is offered, the assistance will be made available to anyone requesting it. In all cases, the ultimate responsibility for the quality of the application remains with the applicant. Care will be taken to ensure that the technical assistance provided is consistent among potential applicants and does not affect the review process for applications.
- C. If letters of intent or pre-applications are required, staff may review them to determine relevance to the program announcement's topics, whether any required activities are included, and the conformance of the project plan with program regulations and guidelines. (Letters of intent or pre-applications also may be handled and reviewed by a designated review function external to the Federal financial assistance agency.)

0306 Authorities and References

[2 C.F.R. Part 200, Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards](#)

[Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance \(CFDA\)](#)

[Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs](#)

[Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act \(FFMIA\) of 1999 \(Public Law 106-107\)](#)

[Office of Federal Financial Management \(OFFM\) Policy Directive on Financial Assistance Standard Program Announcements](#)

[OFFM Policy Directive on Use of Grants.Gov FIND](#)

[OFFM Policy Directive on Financial Assistance Standard Program Announcements](#)

[OMB Grants Policy Statements](#)

[VA Office of Financial Policy, Publications Library](#)

0307 Rescissions

VA Financial Policies and Procedures, Volume X, Grants; Chapter 3, Grant Funding Availability Announcement, December 2013.

0308 Questions

Questions concerning these financial policies should be directed to:

VHA	VHA CFO Accounting Policy (10A3A) (Outlook)
VBA	VAVBAWAS/CO/FINREP (Outlook)
NCA	NCA Financial Policy Group
All Others	OFP Accounting Policy (Outlook)

Appendix A: History of Revisions to this Chapter

A. The following table provides the history of revisions to this chapter.

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
0301 Overview	Updated references to “grants,” “grant programs,” and “grant offices” to incorporate definition clarifications from OMB Uniform Grant Guidance.	OFP (047G)	Updated references	July 2014
030201 Announcements	Updated references to “grants,” “grant programs,” and “grant offices” to incorporate definition clarifications from OMB Uniform Grant Guidance.	OFP (047G)	Updated references	July 2014
030201.01 A, C, D, and E	Updated references “grants,” “grant programs,” and “grant offices” to incorporate definition clarifications from OMB Uniform Grant Guidance.	OFP (047G)	Updated references	July 2014
030201.01 E	Updated items for inclusion in Notice of Funding Opportunity to be consistent with the updated OMB Uniform Grant Guidance.	OFP (047G)	Updated for consistency with OMB Uniform Grant Guidance	July 2014
030201.02 Approvals	Updated references to “grants,” “grant programs,” and “grant offices” to incorporate definition clarifications from OMB Uniform Grant Guidance. Incorporated reference to	OFP (047G)	Updated for consistency with OMB Uniform Grant Guidance	July 2014

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
	Administrative involvement in the regulatory and notice process.			
030201.03 Timing	Updated references to “grants,” “grant programs,” and “grant offices” to incorporate definition clarifications from OMB Uniform Grant Guidance.	OFP (047G)	Updated for consistency with OMB Uniform Grant Guidance	July 2014
030201.04 Technical Assistance	Updated references to “grants,” “grant programs,” and “grant offices” to incorporate definition clarifications from OMB Uniform Grant Guidance.	OFP (047G)	Updated for consistency with OMB Uniform Grant Guidance	July 2014
030201.05 Clarity and Simplicity	Updated references to “grants,” “grant programs,” and “grant offices” to incorporate definition clarifications from OMB Uniform Grant Guidance.	OFP (047G)	Updated for consistency with OMB Uniform Grant Guidance	July 2014
030202 Content Requirements for Funding Opportunity Announcements	Incorporated references to Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA). Updated references to “grants,” “grant programs,” and “grant offices” to incorporate definition clarifications from OMB Uniform Grant Guidance.	OFP (047G)	Updated for consistency with OMB Uniform Grant Guidance	July 2014
030202.02 B	Removed references to superseded guidance; replaced Central Contractor Registry with updated System	OFP (047G)	Updated for consistency with OMB Uniform Grant Guidance	July 2014

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
	for Award Management. Updated references to superseded 2 CFR guidance with OMB Uniform Grant Guidance references.			
030203 Deadlines for Submission of Competing Applications	Incorporated references to Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA). Updated references to “grants,” “grant programs,” and “grant offices” to incorporate definition clarifications from OMB Uniform Grant Guidance.	OFP (047G)	Updated for consistency with OMB Uniform Grant Guidance	July 2014
030204 Assisting Applicants	Incorporated references to Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA). Updated references to “grants,” “grant programs,” and “grant offices” to incorporate definition clarifications from OMB Uniform Grant Guidance.	OFP (047G)	Updated for consistency with OMB Uniform Grant Guidance	July 2014
0303 Authority and References	Updated references to superseded 2 CFR guidance with OMB Uniform Grant Guidance references.	OFP (047G)	Updated for consistency with OMB Uniform Grant Guidance	July 2014
030405 Roles and Responsibilities	Updated to include Regulatory offices which are involved in the NOFA and regulation development process.	OFP (047G)	Updated for consistency with OMB Uniform Grant Guidance	July 2014

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
0306 Definitions	Updated references to “grants,” “grant programs,” and “grant offices” to incorporate definition clarifications from OMB Uniform Grant Guidance.	OFP (047G)	Updated for consistency with OMB Uniform Grant Guidance	July 2014

Appendix B: Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA)

A. GUIDANCE FOR CREATING NOFAs FOR GRANTS

1. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has published policy directive requiring Federal agencies to use the Grants.gov FIND module to electronically post synopses of funding opportunities under Federal financial assistance programs that award discretionary grants and cooperative agreements. The policy directive includes attachments which contains the government-wide standard set of data elements to be used by Federal agencies when posting synopses ([68 Federal Register 37379](#)). The purpose is to standardize postings making them as clear as possible to the public. The National Archives and Records Administration publishes the Federal Register Document Drafting Handbook to provide guidance to Federal Agencies with examples for complying with the Office of the Federal Register's format and editorial requirements for Federal Register documents found on the National Archives Federal Register web site: <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/write/handbook/>

2. The two references listed above have been used to develop a standard outline for VA NOFA. Program offices will follow the format below including each line except those identified as optional. Paragraph 3 of this appendix provides the details of the context that fall under each heading. Underlined Italicized words will not appear in the NOFA

Heading – DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Authority- (regulation)

SUMMARY:

FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY NAME:

FEDERAL OPPORTUNITY TITLE:

ANNOUNCEMENT TYPE:

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER:

CFDA NUMBER:

KEY DATES:

ADDRESSES:

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Program Description

II. Federal Award Information

III. Eligibility Information

- a. Eligible Applicants
- b. Cost Sharing or Matching
- c. Other

IV. Application and Submission Information

- a. Address to Request Application Package
- b. Content and Form of Application Submission
- c. Submission Dates and Times
- d. Intergovernmental Review
- e. Funding Restrictions
- f. Other Submission Requirements

V. Application Review Information

- a. Criteria
- b. Review and Selection Process
- c. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates (Optional)

VI. Federal Award Administration Information

- a. Award Notices
- b. Administrative and National Policy Requirements
- c. Reporting

VII. Federal Awarding Agency Contact(s)

VIII. Other Information (Optional)

3. Below is a detailed description of what must be included in the uniform format for Federal Agency's announcements of funding opportunities under which discretionary awards of grants or cooperative agreements may be made. The format has two parts, the first part provides overview information and is designed to present the text in a logical format identifying the subjects and issues involved so the reader can quickly identify the notice. Each of these sections in the first part is designed to be short where the intended reader is a non-expert. The *italicized* words are descriptive and do not need to be included in the NOFA. The second part, under SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION, includes the full details of the announcement and specific directions to the grantee. Some information will/may be repeated in SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION.

Heading - **DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

Authority - **38 C.F.R.** _____ (The applicable statute or regulation)

AGENCY: Administration (VHA, VBA, NCA spelled out) or VACO office name.

ACTION: Notice of Funding Availability

SUMMARY: *A brief description of the funding opportunity. Use language a non-expert will understand that will concisely describe what this NOFA is for. Supporting information, details, discussions, and precise legal citations **do not** belong in the SUMMARY and should be included in SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION. (This section is designed to be short)*

ANNOUNCEMENT TYPE: *If the program has different types of NOFA's enter that information here. (Optional)*

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER: *Enter appropriate number if applicable to the program (Optional)*

CFDA NUMBER: *Enter appropriate CFDA code beginning with 64.xxx.*

DATES: *Enter information about the deadline dates including application deadlines and any pre-application or letter of intent deadlines, if applicable. The deadline for submissions, either a time and date for electronic submissions or postmark or delivery date requirements for other types of submissions. If more than 4 dates are required enter the dates in SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION.*

ADDRESSES: *Provide information related to where to apply, such as grants.gov or the mailing address appropriate for submitting applications. For competitive applications, this should be indicated as Grants.gov. For other programs, not using Grants.gov, specify where the application should be submitted, including any special requirements appropriate to the contacts and mailing address. This section should provide the appropriate web address, email address, or mailing address to receive information related to how to apply for funding under a specific NOFA. If applicable the VA web site can be included for submitting comments. Other details including how to apply will be included in SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION.*

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: *Under this section you should include the name and telephone number of a person or persons within your program who can answer questions about the NOFA. You may also include links to VA websites where Q&A information may be found for the program.*

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: *This section provides the details related to a Notice of Funding Availability and must follow OMB Guidance. All of the following titles are **required sections** with specific instructions found at [68 Federal Register 37379](#). Items not required for each Notice of Funding Availability will be specified as optional. The roman numerals and numbering with titles and subtitles are required to be included in the NOFA. Required titles*

where no programmatic information applies may be noted by writing the required title followed by “Not Applicable.”

I. Funding Opportunity Description:

This section contains the full programmatic description of the funding opportunity. It may be as long as needed to adequately communicate to potential applicants the areas in which funding may be provided. It describes VA’s funding priorities or the technical and focus areas in which the VA intends to provide assistance. As appropriate, it may include any program history (e.g., whether this is a new program or a new or changed area of program emphasis). This section may communicate indicators of successful projects (e.g., if the program encourages collaborative efforts) and may include examples of projects that have been funded previously. This section also may include other information VA deems necessary, such as citations for authorizing statutes and regulations.

II. Award Information

Provide sufficient information to help an applicant make an informed decision about whether to submit a proposal. Relevant information could include the total amount of funding that VA expects to award through the announcement; the anticipated number of awards; the expected amounts of individual awards (which may be a range); the amount of funding per award, on average, experienced in previous years; and the anticipated start dates and periods of performance for new awards. This section also should address whether applications for renewal or supplementation of existing projects are eligible to compete with applications for new awards. This section must indicate the type(s) of assistance instrument (i.e., grant, cooperative agreement, and/or other instrument) that may be awarded if applications are successful. If cooperative agreements may be awarded, this section either should describe the “substantial involvement” that VA expects to have or should reference where the potential applicant can find that information (e.g., in the funding opportunity description in Section I or award administration information in Section VI). If procurement contracts may be awarded, you must say so.

III. Eligibility Information

This section addresses considerations or factors that make an applicant or application eligible or ineligible for consideration. This includes the eligibility of particular types of applicant organizations, any factors affecting the eligibility of the principal investigator or project director, and any criteria that make particular projects ineligible. You should make clear whether an applicant’s failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the time of an application

deadline will result in VA returning the application without review or, even though an application may be reviewed, will preclude VA from making an award. Key elements to be addressed are:

1. Eligible Applicants. You must clearly identify the types of entities that are eligible to apply. If there are no restrictions on eligibility, this section may simply indicate that all potential applicants are eligible. If there are restrictions on eligibility, it is important to be clear about the specific types of entities that are eligible, not just the types that are ineligible. For example, if your program is limited to non-profit organizations subject to Section 501(c) (3) of the tax code, your announcement should say so. Similarly, it is better to state explicitly that Native American tribal organizations are eligible than to assume that they can unambiguously infer that from a statement that non-profit organizations may apply. Eligibility also can be expressed by exception, (e.g., open to all types of domestic applicants other than individuals). This section should refer to any portion of Section IV specifying documentation that must be submitted to support an eligibility determination (e.g., proof of 501(c) (3) status as determined by the Internal Revenue Service or an authorizing tribal resolution). To the extent that any funding restriction in Section IV.5 could affect the eligibility of an applicant or project, you must either restate that restriction in this section or provide a cross-reference to its description in Section IV.5.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching. You must state whether there is required cost sharing, matching, or cost participation without which an application would be ineligible (if cost sharing is not required, you must explicitly say so). Required cost sharing may be a certain percentage or amount or may be in the form of contributions of specified items or activities (e.g., provision of equipment). It is important that the announcement be clear about any restrictions on the types of cost (e.g., in-kind contributions) that are acceptable as cost sharing. Cost sharing as an eligibility criterion includes requirements based in statute or regulation, as well as those imposed by administrative decision of the VA or program office. This section should refer to the appropriate portion(s) of Section IV stating any pre-award requirements for submission of letters or other documentation to verify commitments to meet cost-sharing requirements if an award is made.

3. Other. If there are other eligibility criteria (i.e., criteria that have the effect of making an application or project ineligible for award, whether you refer to them as “responsiveness” criteria, “go-no go” criteria, “threshold” criteria, or in other ways), you must clearly state them. For example, if entities that have been found to be in violation of a particular Federal statute are ineligible, it is important to say so. In this section you also must state any limit on the number of applications an applicant may submit under the announcement and make clear whether the limitation is on the submitting organization, individual investigator/program director, or both. Also use

this section to address any eligibility criteria for beneficiaries or for program participants other than award recipients.

IV. Application and Submission Information

1. Address to Request Application Package. You must tell potential applicants how to get application forms, kits, or other materials they need to apply (if this announcement contains everything they need, this section need only say so). You may give an Internet address where they can access the materials. Since high-speed internet access is not yet universally available for downloading documents, there also should be a way for potential applicants to request paper copies of materials, such as a U.S. Postal Service mailing address, telephone or FAX number, Telephone Device for the Deaf (TDD) or Text Telephone (TTY) number, and/or Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) number.

2. Content and Form of Application Submission. This section must identify the required content of an application and the forms or formats that an applicant must use to submit it. If any requirements are stated elsewhere because they are general requirements that apply to multiple programs or funding opportunities, this section may refer to where those requirements may be found. This section also should address any preliminary submissions that VA requires or encourages, either to facilitate its own planning or to provide potential applicants with feedback to help them decide whether to submit a full proposal. For a full application, this includes all content and forms or formats that constitute a complete application, including: general information (e.g., applicant name and address), budgetary information, narrative programmatic information, biographical sketches, and all other required information (e.g., documentation that an applicant meets stated eligibility criteria or certifications or assurances of compliance with applicable requirements, such as evidence of compliance with human subjects requirements). You must either include required forms or formats as part of this announcement or state where the applicant may obtain them. In this section, you should specifically address content and form or format requirements for:

- Pre-applications, letters of intent, or white papers that your program or VA requires or encourages (see Section IV.3), including any limitations on the number of pages or other formatting requirements similar to those for full applications.
- The application as a whole. For hard copy submissions, that could include any limitations on the number of pages, font size and typeface, margins, paper size, number of copies, and sequence or assembly requirements. If electronic submission is permitted or required, that could include special requirements for formatting or signatures.

- Component pieces of the application (e.g., if all copies of the application must bear original signatures on the face page or the program narrative may not exceed 10 pages). This includes any pieces that may be submitted separately by third parties (e.g., references or letters confirming commitments from third parties that will be contributing a portion of any required cost sharing).
- Information that successful applicants must submit after VA or the program offices notifies them of its intent to make awards, but prior to award. This could include evidence of compliance with human subject requirements or information the VA needs to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

3. Submission Dates and Times. Your announcement must identify due dates and times for all submissions. This includes not only the full applications but also any preliminary submissions (e.g., letters of intent, white papers, or pre-applications). It also includes any other submissions of information before award that are separate from the full application. If the funding opportunity is a general announcement that is open for a period of time with no specific due dates for applications, this section should say so. Note that the information on dates that is included in this section also must appear with other overview information in a location preceding the full text of the announcement (see “Overview Information” segment of this format). For each type of submission that you address, indicate whether the submission is encouraged or required and, if required, any deadline date for submission (or dates, if the program office plans more than one cycle of application submission, review, and award under the announcement). The announcement must state (or provide a reference to another document that states):

- Any deadline in terms of a date and local time.
- What the deadline means (e.g., whether it is the date and time by which the program office must receive the application, the date by which the application must be postmarked, or something else) and how that depends, if at all, on the submission method (e.g., mail, electronic, or personal/courier delivery).
- The effect of missing a deadline (e.g., whether late applications are neither reviewed nor considered or are reviewed nor considered or are reviewed and considered under some circumstances).
- How the receiving Federal office determines whether an application or pre-application has been submitted before the deadline. This includes the form of acceptable proof of mailing or system-generated documentation of receipt date and time.

This section also may indicate whether, when, and in what form the applicant will receive an acknowledgement of receipt. You should also consider

displaying the above information in ways that will be easy to understand and use. It can be difficult to extract all needed information from narrative paragraphs, even when they are well written. A tabular form for providing a summary of the information may help applicants for some programs and give them what effectively could be a checklist to verify the completeness of their application package before submission.

4. Intergovernmental Review. If the funding opportunity is subject to Executive Order (EO) 12372, “Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs,” you must say so. In alerting applicants that they must contact their State’s Single Point of Contact (SPOC) to find out about and comply with the State’s process under EO 12372, you may wish to inform them that the names and addresses of the SPOCs are listed in the Office of Management and Budget’s home page at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc.html.

5. Funding Restrictions. You must include information on funding restrictions in order to allow an applicant to develop an application and budget consistent with program requirements. Examples are whether construction is an allowable activity, if there are any limitations on direct costs such as foreign travel or equipment purchases, and if there are any limits on indirect costs (or facilities and administrative costs). You also must tell applicants if awards will not allow reimbursement of pre-award costs.

6. Other Submission Requirements. This section must address any other submission requirements not included in the other paragraphs of this section. This might include the format of submission, i.e., paper or electronic, for each type of required submission. Applicants should not be required to submit in more than one format and this section should indicate whether they may choose whether to submit applications in hard copy or electronically, may submit only in hard copy, or may submit only electronically. This section also must indicate where applications (and any pre-applications) must be submitted if sent by postal mail, electronic means, or hand-delivery. For postal mail submission, this should include the name of an office, official, individual or function (e.g., application receipt center) and a complete mailing address. For electronic submission, this should include the URL or e-mail address; whether a password(s) is required; whether particular software or other electronic capabilities are required; what to do in the event of system problems and a point of contact that will be available in the event the applicant experiences technical difficulties.

V. Application Review Information

1. Criteria. This section must address the criteria that VA or the program office will use to evaluate applications. This includes the merit and other

review criteria that evaluators will use to judge applications, including any statutory, regulatory, or other preferences (e.g., minority status or Native American tribal preferences) that will be applied in the review process. These criteria are distinct from eligibility criteria that are addressed before an application is accepted for review and any program policy or other factors that are applied during the selection process, after the review process is completed. The intent is to give applicants visibility into the evaluation process so that they can make informed decisions when preparing their applications and so that the process is as fair and equitable as possible. The announcement should clearly describe all criteria, including any sub-criteria. If criteria vary in importance, the announcement should specify the relative percentages, weights, or other means used to distinguish among them. For statutory, regulatory, or other preferences, the announcement should provide a detailed explanation of those preferences with an explicit indication of their effect (e.g., whether they result in additional points being assigned). If an applicant's proposed cost sharing will be considered in the review process (as opposed to being an eligibility criterion described in Section III.2), the announcement must specifically address how it will be considered (e.g., to assign a certain number of additional points to applicants who offer cost sharing, or to break ties among applications with equivalent scores after evaluation against all other factors). If cost sharing will not be considered in the evaluation, the announcement should say so, so that there is no ambiguity for potential applicants. Vague statements that cost sharing is encouraged, without clarification as to what that means are not helpful to applicants. It also is important that the announcement be clear about any restrictions on the types of cost (e.g., in-kind contributions) that are acceptable as cost sharing.

2. Review and Selection Process. This section may vary in the level of detail provided. The announcement must list any program policy or other factors or elements, other than merit criteria, that the selecting official may use in selecting applications for award (e.g., geographical dispersion, program balance, or diversity).

You also may include other details you deem appropriate. For example, this section may indicate who is responsible for evaluation against the merit criteria (e.g., peers external to VA or Federal agency personnel) and/or who makes the final selections for award. If you have a multi-phase review process (e.g., an external panel advising internal VA personnel who make final recommendations to the deciding official) you may describe the phases in this section. You also may include: the number of people on an evaluation panel and how it operates, the way reviewers are selected, reviewer qualifications, and the way that conflicts of interest are avoided. In addition, if you permit applicants to nominate suggested reviewers of their applications or

suggest those they feel may be inappropriate due to a conflict of interest, that information should be included in this section.

3. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates (Optional). This section is intended to provide applicants with information they can use for planning purposes. If there is a single application deadline followed by the simultaneous review of all applications, the program office can include in this section information about the anticipated dates for announcing or notifying successful and unsuccessful applicants and for having awards in place. If applications are received and evaluated on a “rolling” basis at different times during an extended period, it may be appropriate to give applicants an estimate of the time needed to process an application and notify the applicant of VA’s decision.

VI. Award Administration Information

1. Award Notices. This section must address what a successful applicant can expect to receive following selection. If your practice is to provide a separate notice stating that an application has been selected before you actually make the award, this section would be the place to indicate that the letter is not an authorization to begin performance (to the extent that you allow charging to awards of pre-award costs at the recipient’s own risk). This section should indicate that the notice of award signed by the program officer (or equivalent) is the authorizing document, and whether it is provided through postal mail or by electronic means and to whom. It also may address the timing, form, and content of notifications to unsuccessful applicants.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements. This section must identify the usual administrative and national policy requirements your program office or VA’s awards may include. Providing this information lets a potential applicant identify any requirements with which it would have difficulty complying if its application is successful. In those cases, early notification about the requirements allows the potential applicant to decide not to apply or to take needed actions before award. The announcement need not include all of the award terms and conditions but may refer to a document (with information about how to obtain it) or Internet site where applicants can see the terms and conditions. If this funding opportunity will lead to awards with some special terms and conditions that differ from VA’s usual (sometimes called “general”) terms and conditions, this section should highlight those special terms and conditions. Doing so will alert applicants who have received awards from VA previously and might not otherwise expect different terms and conditions. For the same reason, you should inform potential applicants about special requirements that could apply to particular awards after review of applications and other information, based on the particular

circumstances of the effort to be supported (e.g., if human subjects were to be involved or if some situations may justify special terms on intellectual property, data sharing or security requirements).

3. Reporting. This section must include general information about the type (e.g., financial or performance), frequency, and means of submission (paper or electronic) of post-award reporting requirements. Highlight any special reporting requirements for awards under this funding opportunity that differ (e.g., by report type, frequency, form/format, or circumstances for use) from what VA's awards usually require.

VII. Agency Contact(s)

You must give potential applicants a point(s) of contact for answering questions or helping with problems while the funding opportunity is open. The intent of this requirement is to be as helpful as possible to potential applicants, so you should consider approaches such as giving:

- Points of contact who may be reached in multiple ways (e.g., by telephone, FAX, and/ or e-mail, as well as regular mail).
- A fax or e-mail address that multiple people access, so that someone will respond even if others are unexpectedly absent during critical periods.
- Different contacts for distinct kinds of help (e.g., one for questions of programmatic content and a second for administrative questions).
- Including VA web sites that may list common Q&A or information about the NOFA and the program.

VIII. Other Information (Optional)

This section may include any additional information that will assist a potential applicant. For example, the section might:

- Indicate whether this is a new program or a one-time initiative.
- Mention related programs or other upcoming or ongoing VA funding opportunities for similar activities.
- Include Internet addresses for VA Web sites that may be useful to an applicant in understanding the program (NOTE: you should make certain that any Internet sites are current and accessible).
- Alert applicants of the need to identify proprietary information and inform them about the way the VA will handle it.
- Include certain routine notices to applicants (e.g., that the Government is not obligated to make any award as a result of the announcement or that only program officers can bind the Government to the expenditure of

funds).