

EPA's Navigating the Grants Process
Webinar Transcript
February 28, 2008

Slide 1: Navigating the Grants Process webcast will start momentarily

Operator: Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for standing by. Welcome to the Navigating the Grant Process conference call. During the presentation, all participants will be in a listen only mode. If at any time during the conference you need to reach an operator, please press *0. As a reminder, this conference is being recorded Thursday, February 28th, 2008. It is now my pleasure to turn the conference over to Eva Wong at EPA, please go ahead.

Slide 2: Agenda for Navigating the Grants Process Webcast

Eva Wong: Hi everyone, welcome. I'm Eva Wong, as the introduction noted. And I'm just going to give you a more detailed overview of the webcast. I'm going to first walk us through some logistics. And then Andrea Denny and I are going to give you just a quick overview of our Municipal Clean Energy Environment Network program, which is responsible for hosting this webcast series. And then we have Asher Weinberg, who's going to give us some grants basics information. And also we do have another expert from our Grants Office, Dennis, who's on the line here, Dennis Finney, to answer some questions on that because I think the whole purpose of the webcast is to kind-of walk you through our federal EPA grants process. Then we have Johanna, who will tell us about some DOE support. And, kind-of wrapping it all up, we have Abby Young, who's an expert in applying for grants, as well as giving grants, on the other side, with telling us about some tips.

Slide 3: Live Meeting Logistics

Eva Wong: So now, in terms of logistics, as the gentleman noted, you're all going to be muted, so we cannot hear you basically. If you have a question or a comment, you're going to have to submit it in writing, and we'll show you how in the next slide. This session's going to be recorded, and it's going to be made available for download along with the presentation. So don't worry if there's someone who wanted to be on the webcast and wasn't able to participate. And then throughout the webcast, if you have any problems, we have Lauren Pederson from ICF who's on the line, and is going to help facilitate the call a bit. But there's her email address and her phone number if you're having any kind of technical difficulty.

Slide 4: View and Layout

Eva Wong: So, in terms of logistics, you should basically see this kind of view where you have different frames on your computer. And if you don't, then up on the top bar, you should have a "View" drop-down menu, and from there you can choose "Restore Default Layout" to restore your settings and see the multiple frames to help you navigate this webcast. Next, to go to full screen, you press F5. If you want to just see the full screen and not be distracted by seeing the attendees, and the active presenters, you can press F5.

Slide 5: Feedback and Questions

Eva Wong: Next, for feedback and questions, there are these drop-down menus or areas in the bottom part of your screen. And again, if you're having problems, please just contact Lauren Pederson. But there's a drop-down color-coded menu where you can choose if you want or need the presenter to slow down. Further, if you have a question, the best thing to do is to type it into the lower, bottom-most horizontal box, and then you start typing in your question, and then you click on the word "Ask".

Slide 6: Attendees

Eva Wong: Ok, and then next, if you want to see who else is participating on the call, you can click on the upper menu for attendees, and you should see a list of everyone who's on. And it looks like we have 50 participants from all around the country.

Slide 7: Program Overview

Eva Wong: With that, I am going to move to providing an overview on our program. Andrea Denny and I manage our Clean Energy Environment Municipal Network program. And, basically what this is, it's an informational and peer exchange network where we try to advance clean energy in local governments and their communities. And by clean energy, we mean energy efficiency, renewable energy, clean distributable generation. And we try to focus on established, cost-effective best practices. So instead of plugging hybrids, we'll be talking more about anti-idling, energy efficiency, landfill methane – sort-of more available technologies and strategies. And we want to serve as a gateway to existing resources, particularly EPA resources because there are so many just EPA resources in and of themselves and so many programs, that we try to be a good point-of-contact to help you navigate through the process of finding the right people at EPA to connect with. And where there are gaps, we're trying to develop new tools, resources, and guidance. And we want to facilitate peer to peer exchange, which is what these webcasts are meant to be one of the ways to do that. And the bottom link is a link to our website. And we are revamping our website, but for now, that's where you go to find some basic information about our program.

Slide 8: Energy Efficiency Resources Database

Eva Wong: Now Andrea is going to give you an overview of our Resource Database.

Andrea Denny: Hi everyone, this is Andrea Denny with EPA. I just wanted to quickly mention a Resource Database that we put together. Right now, it's got a very general interface. With the things that we'll be doing as part of our website overhaul is designing an interface aimed specifically at local governments. This one's a little bit more inclusive, but we do have a number of different resources in the Database that can help local governments. This includes funding opportunities, model ordinances, case studies, tools, guidance, and a number of different categories of data. And the URL is listed at the top of the slide right there. You can also just get to the database from our general website. And to use the website as a local government, what you will want to do is select "Local Government" from that first search box – it's near the

bottom, the second to last option. And that will bring up a list of topics by category, such as biofuels, building codes, energy efficiency, renewables – there are a number of others. And you can select one or more of those topics, and then you hit “Search”, and you’ll get a list of resources in the topic areas that you selected. And I hope that you’ll find it useful, and we hope that you’ll use it.

Slide 9: Clean Energy Strategies Guide for Local Governments

Eva Wong: And another resource that we’re coming out with is our Clean Energy Strategies Guide for Local Governments, where we’re covering 16 strategies under the headings of Energy Efficiency, Energy Supply, Transportation, and Urban Planning and Design. And each chapter goes into the benefits of these strategies; describing the measures; explains participants; mechanisms for implementation; costs; funding; interaction with other programs; it provides case studies for each strategy, and then we’ll have more detailed, comprehensive case studies as well at the back of the entire guide; and we provide a lot of resources and references – each chapter is roughly 25 pages not including the resources and references. They’re still in draft, but that’s what they’re looking like. And we plan on launching the draft chapters with this webcast series. So for example, our next webcast will most likely be on energy efficient product procurement, so kind-of a subset of green procurement, just focusing on the energy efficiency aspect of it. And we have a draft chapter that we send out to you all as background material. And our plan is to complete the guide and post it on our website throughout 2008.

Slide 10: Webcasts

Eva Wong: Next, this webcast series, as I was saying, is one of the resources we’re trying to provide. And these are some of the tentative topics that we’d be coming out with. And, in terms of timing, we were aiming for monthly, but it really is going to depend on speaker availability and a little bit on getting the chapters cleared through review, so it might be every 6 weeks. But we are planning on covering roughly 8 topics in this 2008 cycle. And we’ll announce them through our State and Local Clean Energy Environment Listserv, which I think many of you have already signed up for, which I think is probably how you found out about our webcast. But if not, we have a link to it at the end of this presentation to tell you how to sign up. And we’re looking for this to be more of a sort-of peer to peer exchange, not just us or other people that are non-local government representatives talking about their resources, but having local governments talking about how they were actually able to advance or overcome barriers, in terms of clean energy. And we’d love to hear from you if there are topics that you’d like to see covered – that always helps too. And just to note, there are other EPA webcasts within our branch, which focuses on state clean energy activities – we have technical forum calls; the Office of Waste has webcasts; and ENERGY STAR tends to have a lot of webcast trainings on commissioning buildings, on designing energy performing buildings, using ENERGY STAR tools, like Portfolio Manager, and the Cash Flow Opportunity Calculator, and there’s a whole Training Center. If you just Google search “ENERGY STAR Training Center”, you’ll come up with that list, and you can look on the calendar.

Slide 11: Contacts

Eva Wong: Lastly, this is our contact information, and there's a link to our website, and that bottom link is a link to our Listserv.

Andrea Denny: And I believe there's actually a way to save this presentation while you're listening. Lauren, can you confirm that?

Eva Wong: You know I think if you go to "File" – no, I don't know.

Lauren Pederson: I think it's not enabled at this time.

Andrea Denny: Ok, disregard that.

Slide 12: Grants 101

Eva Wong: So I think next, we have Asher Weinberg who's going to present. We're going to switch seats, so hold on for a second. Asher Weinberg is the Grants Coordinator for EPA's Climate Protection Partnership Division. And prior to working at CPPD, Asher spent 3 years in EPA's Office of Grants and Debarment, and a year as a grant writer for Washington-based nonprofits, so he has experience on both sides. And, Asher?

Slide 13: Federal Grant Basics

Asher Weinberg: Good afternoon, everybody. And we'll just go over a couple of basics right here. For the purpose of this presentation, we're going to concentrate on competitive awards, but I will briefly mention that there are options for unsolicited proposals and noncompetitive awards, but they are rare and discouraged agency-wide, and also they don't quite fit into the general flow of business management at the divisional level because by their nature they are not budgeted for. So really your best shot at getting a federal grant – certainly an EPA grant – would be through the competitive process. But if there are questions regarding the EPA policies regarding non-competitive awards, I would answer them at the end or shed more light onto that. Certainly I would discourage everybody about unsolicited proposals. If you think you have a really good idea that EPA is not made aware of, or that you think that EPA is not yet aware of, sending a random proposal to EPA is not the best way to get that point across. Probably meeting an appropriate EPA official at a conference, or a regional meeting, or scheduling a meeting with appropriate EPA people just to maybe exchange some ideas, is probably a better way than just sending a package into the Grants Office at EPA headquarters. So again, we'll talk mainly about the competitive process, and then we'll move on from here. Competitive announcements are posted throughout the year, and we're going to go over where you find them and how you go about navigating that process. When they are posted at EPA, we post them for a minimum of 45 days, in some cases they will be longer. The main deciding factor for how long a grant will be posted will depend upon the division making the award, how many applications, and the quality of applications they think they can receive. If the division, in this case the Climate Protection Partnerships Division, generally re-receives a lot of applications for solicitation. Most recently, over 60 applied for one of our re-solicitations. So we don't really have an interest in keeping it open for several months. Usually it would be for that minimum requirement, being 45 days. But if the division is much more specialized or they don't think that they're going to get really good

applications in a short period of time, they can extend that window of the open period. In terms of going down the list for the process of informing recipients and applicants who did not receive an award – if you are selected, you will be notified verbally first by the division that is hosting the competition. They will notify you verbally that you’ve been recommended for award, and then the EPA would go ahead and go through the funding package process, the internal bureaucratic justification and money-committing process to make that award. And you would be officially notified in writing, in a document that looks like a contract document, but is referred to here as an “award document”. For the recipients that were not selected, you would receive notification via email, usually within a very quick turnaround from when the competition closed. We’ll go through some of what the solicitation language looks like – but I’ll just mention it now, and again, if you have any questions on it, we can talk about it later. But within a competitive solicitation, it will be specified the amount of time that the office or division would take to review all of the applications and make their recommendation. And they will specify after that, furthermore, when they would notify the non-selected applicants. So it would say something to the effect of, “EPA expects to review applications within 15 days and then notify successful applicants”. Following that, when we do send out the notification that an applicant was not selected, there is usually language in there also which provides the unsuccessful applicant an opportunity to have a debriefing with the EPA.

Slide 14: Grants.gov Home Page

Asher Weinberg: As you saw from the last slide, there was a link to what’s called “Grants.gov”. Grants.gov is the portal for all federal grants activities. You can search for grants in every federal agency on this website. This is the best place to go. From here, speaking from the EPA point of view, this is the place that you want to go to find EPA grants. The Grants.gov initiative, and I’m here with Dennis, who is part of the larger...

Dennis Finney: Yeah, Grants.gov was developed in response to a public law in 1999 that required the government to improve their grant-making process and to streamline the process. And basically develop one place where the public can go to find grant opportunities, and then to apply for them at the same time at the same place. And so Grants.gov is really about finding opportunities, and then applying for them electronically. And all federal agencies are required to post their competitive grant opportunities on Grants.gov, so it really is the definitive one-stop shopping spot for finding grant opportunities in the federal government.

Asher Weinberg: Excellent, well put. Thank you, Dennis. And when you get to the main page here on the Grants.gov, you would see on the left, if you were in the searching process, you would want to find grant opportunities.

Slide 15: Search Grant Opportunities – by Agency, Advanced Search, etc.

Asher Weinberg: And the recommendation from us here at EPA if you’re looking for EPA grants, would be to search by agency. So you can click on what’s called “Browse by Agency”. At which point you would have a list of all federal agencies.

Slide 16: Find Opportunities

When you would go “Browse by Agency”, there would be a list of all the federal agencies that you could potentially browse from. If not each and every federal agency that exists, certainly the federal agencies that have grants available on Grants.gov at that particular time. You would then click on the Environmental Protection Agency, and you would see all open competitive solicitations from the EPA, which includes EPA headquarters and the regional offices. Just taking a look at the information in front of you, you’ll see on the left the close date. So the way that Grants.gov gives you your list of available solicitations is by the close date. So the date and the grants that would be closing the earliest are at the top of the screen. The ones that are closing the furthest from the date that you’re looking at this online, they would be at the bottom of your screen.

Dennis Finney: And actually, the opportunities will stay on Grants.gov visible on this screen for a month after they close. So this listing does include some recently closed opportunities. It’s not just open announcements. And also note the funding opportunity number on the right – that’s an important number. And also many times these are organized by the CFDA, which is the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance, which is assigned to each opportunity as well.

Asher Weinberg: Following along with what Dennis just mentioned, you’ll have the closing date – the date on which this solicitation closes – and then the title. Very often, probably from your point of view as prospective applicants, you can get a gist for what type of project it is via the title. For instance, they might often mention pesticides, they might often mention indoor air, they might often mention water, and you can kind-of get a sense for where this might be leading towards based on the title. Then when you hit that funding number that Dennis had mentioned, a couple of things to keep in mind on there is that it will identify whether the grant is being awarded out of a region, or whether it’s out of headquarters. If you see, it’ll say “EPA-something”, and then it’ll have a numerical extension on the end of it. But in between “EPA” and the number, if it has an abbreviation or acronym, it’s generally out of headquarters. So the top entry that you would see, for instance, is ORD, which is Office of Research and Development – that would be here at headquarters. But if you would see an “EPA-R10”, that would be EPA Region 10. Generally, the grants awarded out of the regional offices would just be for applicants in those regions. So that’s something to consider too as you are navigating through this screen.

Dennis Finney: And also, it’s important to note that if you click on the opportunity title, the screen will open up with a description of the opportunity and some additional information with a link to the full announcement also. So as you’re browsing through these opportunities, be sure and click on the opportunity titles, and you’ll get a little bit more information about the announcement.

Slide 17: Email Alerts

Asher Weinberg: And we will get to that – what Dennis just mentioned – a little later, a couple slides later on. One of the other things you can do is to get yourself notified. In addition to the browsing on the Grants.gov is to have your organization and/or yourself, as a representative in your organization, you can subscribe to email alerts for open solicitations. And you can set the criteria for which you want to be identified for.

Slide 18: Synopsis How to Apply

Asher Weinberg: And this would be a screen shot, if you were to have selected one of the opportunities that were available. Again, like Dennis had mentioned, you'll get a brief synopsis of the project, and then you could click on the full announcement for all of the information, as well as information on how to specifically apply.

Slide 19: Applicant Registration

Asher Weinberg: You've got to keep in mind that before you could actually apply for a grant on Grants.gov, you must be registered with Grants.gov. And that means that your organization needs to be registered. And that's actually a two-tiered system, personnel-wise, within your organization. Generally, you might have a grant writer or program manager – someone who might be actually working on the submission documents, but they would not necessarily be the authorized organization representative – the AOR. Generally the AOR would be someone in a higher-level management position in charge of, in both cases, both incoming and outgoing funding. And you'll have to set that – and that's a mechanism to make sure that within an organization, you don't have lower-level people on behalf of your organization submitting grants all over Grants.gov. You do really want that managerial quality control.

Slide 20: Download Application

Asher Weinberg: Once your organization is registered and you find one of these opportunities that you want to apply for, you would select this opportunity, and then you'll see on the right side the opportunity to download the instructions and application.

Dennis Finney: Yeah, on one of the earlier screens we saw the link "How to Apply". If you click on "How to Apply" you'll get this screen that we're looking at now with the selected applications for download. Also, it's important to note that you can download and begin working on the application at the same time that you're registering. You don't have to register first in order to begin working on the applications themselves. You have to be registered in order to submit the application, and that all is tied in with the electronic signature on that 424 as well. The registration process validates the whole electronic signature as well.

Slide 21: Download Application – Another way to download the package is to type the Funding Opportunity number in the box

Asher Weinberg: That's a good point, and our last competitive solicitation that we ran we had some situations where organizations were going through the application process over a week or several weeks but had not officially registered their Authorized Organization Representative. And they had gotten to the 11th hour, ready to submit, and were unable to submit because they did not have that authorized rep in place, so that is correct, you can go ahead and begin the application process, but please keep in mind – in a timely fashion – get your authorized representative registered as well. Here this is some more information that you would see – or another screen that you would see – Downloading the Application Package.

Slide 22: Application Package

Asher Weinberg: And then once you were to download the application package – this is kind-of like what it would look like. This is what you would see. At the top you would have potential administrative information for this solicitation. I will just say that – just a brief mention here – what is CFDA? We’ve heard it, and then we see it again. Each federal agency is tagged with a Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance number, called a CFDA. The first two numbers are the numbers that go with the particular agency, and then the last three (two or three, depending on which agency you are in, and what the circumstances are) relate to a specific program within that agency. Here, the Climate Protection Partnerships Division, generally everything that we would fund would be “66” because we’re EPA, and then “034”, which specifically ties to funding related to the Clean Air Act. Anyway, going further down, you’ll see in the left box, down there in “Application Materials”, in the “Mandatory Documents” – these would be the documents that would be forms, if you will, that are required to be completed for an application to be submitted. And you would click on each of those forms and you would complete them online

Dennis Finney: Yes, you would click on the forms in the left box, move it over to the right box, and then open it and begin filling out the required fields. And of course on Grants.gov there’s a good deal of instructions on how to fill out an application, lots of information about the entire process. But basically, you fill out the application forms, give the package a name, and once all of the forms are completed – up in the left top corner there’s a little box there that says “Submit”. And when everything has been completed, that submit box will illuminate, and you click on that “Submit” button, and then it will ask you for your AOR’s Grants.gov user id and password.

Asher Weinberg: Ok, right, and we’ll see some of that process in the next few slides.

Slide 23: Move Documents to the Mandatory Completed Documents for Submission Box

Asher Weinberg: So notice in this slide, what’s different is the shift of the...424, which is the cover page, has moved from the mandatory documents section to the completed documents section for submission. So you would move from the left box to the right box – open – complete. And that’s how you would keep this moving forward.

Slide 24: SF 424 V2 Cover

This is the form that we just mentioned – the 424 – this is the standard form 424 government-wide for applying for federal grants. Types of information that you would need on here: your legal name, the authorized representative, your DUNS number. Some of you might not be familiar with what a DUNS is – I think in one of the later presentations, we’re going to talk a little bit about it. But if you want to receive federal funding you need to have a DUNS number established. EIN numbers also, which would be your tax identifying number; and budget...

Slide 25: SF 424

Asher Weinberg:...and just the basic information related to your project.

Slide 26: Project Narrative Attachment Form

Asher Weinberg: Later on, you would have the opportunity to attach your narrative. The narrative is just the term we use here for your workplan, your scope of work. This is your project.

Slide 27: Project Narrative Attachment

Asher Weinberg: Again, a little screen shot of attaching the project narrative.

Dennis Finney: Yes, this is called the “Project Narrative Attachment Form”, and it’s simply a form that allows you to attach your proposal to it, or any other documents that you want to submit. And you can submit as many documents as you want, all attached to a form like this. There’s also a budget narrative attachment form, which some offices use for their budgetary narratives.

Asher Weinberg: And Dennis, while you’re here, I believe that your narrative can be written in any one of a number of formats – it could be Word, pdf, you don’t have to...

Dennis Finney: Exactly, you develop the narrative in whatever software you’re using, and then you just attach that document to this form, and EPA receives the document as the extension in the software that you prepared it in.

Slide 28: Optional Documents

Asher Weinberg: For EPA grants, whenever you see an optional document, I would say fill it out. As someone who’s had quite a bit of experience in the world of EPA grants, there’s a tendency within the office that actually awards the grants, that’s the Grants and Interagency Management Division, to want every form filled out, whether it’s optional or not. And I would say where not applicable, just type in the “not applicable”, but better to have everything completed upfront, even if you think that it doesn’t apply to you, just go ahead and fill it out, and attach it.

Dennis Finney: Well, with one caveat. One of the optional forms we have in many of our application packages is the “Disclosure of Lobbying and Litigation”, the SF-LLL, which you only need to fill out if you’ve done lobbying – so it may not be wise to fill out if you haven’t done lobbying. Well see there’s another lobbying search...ok, I stand corrected.

Slide 29: Instructions are provided

Asher Weinberg: Ok, so you will find within the Grants.gov additional instructions on how to apply.

Slide 30: EPA specific instructions may be included

Asher Weinberg: And you might also find EPA-specific instructions. So in addition to the instructions on how to use Grants.gov, there might be specific related particularly to the nuances of the EPA, or just to the solicitation.

Dennis Finney: You can also sign up for any changes to the application package on this screen that we're looking at. If it's the same type of notification that you can sign up for funding opportunities, you can also put your name in on this package and it will notify you if there was a change to the package or if the closing date was extended or something like that.

Slide 31: Submit

Asher Weinberg: Once everything has been completed, you'll see the movement of the documents to the upper right box. You will be able to, once the documents are here and complete, and your other optional forms have been included as well, you would then go to the top left and be able to submit.

Slide 32: Typical next steps

Asher Weinberg: So what happens after you submit your grant on Grants.gov? The office, either at the office or division level within EPA, they would establish some sort of technical review panel, or technical evaluation panel (TEP for short). And what they would do is they would divide up the applications, and review the applications, and then score them. Generally, each application will be reviewed by at least two separate reviewers. Generally, also at EPA and certainly in a more general sense here at the Climate Protection Partnerships Division, most of the reviews will be conducted by the actual panel review members. But in some cases where the panel review members might not be familiar enough with some of the technology or some other aspects within the project, they might try to find someone else, usually, again within our division here, to help out with the review. But in some cases that would even be sent out of the division or office. Other offices in EPA, mainly the Office of Research and Development, would have a more extensive and broad network of reviewers that would review the applications. That would extend even beyond their office, and in some cases beyond the EPA for review evaluations. But here they're usually done in house. And we score the applications, we rank them, and based upon the funding that was available within the solicitation, we will recommend a certain number of awards to fit in with the available funding. And again, they are recommendations, the next line says "decision", but it's really not a decision until it's gone all the way through the process in the EPA program office, which is here the Office of Air and Radiation, Climate Protection Partnerships Division, and really all the way through the awarding division, which is the Grants and Interagency Management Division. And it's the latter division, the Grants and Interagency Management Division that would go ahead with official notification. And again, at that point you would actually have your award document in hand. I think – taking a look at this slide – I would've rearranged it a little bit differently now, but it's ok. But where you would have the project officer and grantee discussions – I'd probably put that in and around the decision area, because what's going to go on there is after you've submitted your proposal and it's been recommended for award, there might be some parts of your project that EPA doesn't have an interest in funding. There might be some parts of your budget that we think are too high or don't fit in, so there might be some give and take, some further discussion, some renegotiation of your scope of work, and in many cases, some renegotiation of your budget before the final decision recommendation for the final funding has been approved. The timeline for this process is – say there's a closing date for an award at the end of August for a solicitation in the end of August. It should be in September - the awards recommended for funding should have been selected. At

that point, it's a very lengthy process to administratively demonstrate the recommendation for funding this award. And that can take several months. When that's done – at the program level – kind-of like the whole package, the whole recommendation, and your proposal, is sent over to – again this kind-of the sister division – the Grants and Interagency Management Division where they go through the final quality control of all of the documents that have been prepared, and all of the application materials, and all of the budget materials. And they will go ahead and do their final review, and will prepare this award document, again the grant contract, for a descriptive term. And they can take up to 60 days there, so the process is really - 6 months might be the quickest you might see. But more likely you're talking 10 to 14 months from when you submit a grant to when you'll actually get that grant in hand. So again if you submitted for a grant in August of '07, last year, it's just about now that your grant is being finished up in the program office, here in Climate Protection Partnerships Division, and it's working its way to that other division. And within spring to early summer they're going to make that award.

Slide 33: EPA Office of Grants and Debarment

Asher Weinberg: I think we're getting to the end of my presentation here. Just a couple of things – you'll see on the top of this slide a very good web link that the EPA Office of Grants and Debarment put together with some very useful information to prospective grantees. There's a lot of general introductory information on here on what the EPA grant process is, on some of the terminology – you'll see there's a glossary. And there's very useful information on things like indirect costs, procurement, even tips on writing a grant proposal. This is an excellent and brief website to generally familiarize yourself with some of the more general terms and issues that affect all grants. I'll just point out a few...time-wise we're done? Ok, time-wise we're done.

Slide 34: Important Links for Grants.gov info

Asher Weinberg: And just some more useful websites, this would be Grants.gov, "For Applicants", and "Getting Started", and EPA Office of Air and Radiation Grant website where the grants that are posted from the sub-offices in the Office of Air and Radiation, you would be able to see the solicitation on this website as well.

Eva Wong: Asher, I'm sorry to cut you off but there's a lot of questions, and I think Lauren's going to facilitate that.

Asher Weinberg: Sure.

Lauren Pederson: Sure, our first question from participants is: where can we find our EPA Region number? And can you search by this on Grants.gov?

Dennis Finney: Well you can't really search by region number, but as Asher said, in the opportunity ID number, we've asked the regions to kind-of standardize a couple of digits in that opportunity number would be R4 would be Region 4, R5 would be Region 5. But I'd recommend that the best way to determine what region the opportunity is coming from is to read the synopsis and to read the announcement.

Andrea Denny: And to find out what EPA Region you're in, if you go to the main EPA website, which is just www.epa.gov, you can find out from there if you go to the "About EPA", there's a map that shows which states are in which EPA Regions.

Lauren Pederson: Ok and our next question is: how do we know if our organization is registered? And is it one registration per organization or per department? For example, would the city of Indianapolis have one registration, or would each individual department have their own registration?

Dennis Finney: Well, the organization will determine how they're going to handle that. It is possible now on Grants.gov to have more than one AOR, so more than one AOR can be registered, and can have the ability to "sign" (electronically sign) and submit the application. There is also a link on Grants.gov where you can test an AOR ID and password, but in order to know whether your organization has registered on Grants.gov, I think you would have to research that within the organization, I can't tell you how to do that.

Lauren Pederson: Ok and along those same lines: is it only the AOR that can sign up to be notified about opportunities?

Dennis Finney: No, anyone can sign up and be notified of opportunities throughout the federal, all 26 grant-making agencies.

Lauren Pederson: The next question is: are there specific versions of software that are better to use, such as Acrobat 7 versus 8, Word versus Word Perfect, things like that?

Dennis Finney: Again, it's important to read your announcements. In each announcement that comes out of EPA there's a special section for applying on Grants.gov, and in those instructions some programs do require that you submit all your forms in pdf, some look for them in Word, and others take a variety of forms, so it's really best to check your announcements and read the section on Grants.gov and preparing those forms and documents for submission.

Lauren Pederson: Ok great, thank you, and now for our last question: so a good rule of thumb, after we submit applications is to expect at least six months until an award will be made?

Asher Weinberg: Right, that would be correct. At the minimum speed that the EPA could really work on, that would usually be a little longer. And before I wrap up, I really would be remiss because I know a lot of you are on here looking for tips, so if I can even for just one minute... Just some quick tips on proposal writing, because I had mentioned the scoring that the technical panel would do, there are - and you'll see in these solicitations that they might identify anywhere between 6 to 10 criteria elements that your criteria would be judged upon. But without a doubt, agency-wide at EPA that the main criteria element or the most weighted area is your actual project narrative. So you are going to be recommended for award - it's really not going to be a case where something like past performance, or even exceptional staff qualifications - you're not going to really... or you stand a longer shot at getting an EPA grant based upon those two kind-of lesser criteria, for instance. The main gist of where you should be dumping your energy in this proposal writing should be the meat of the project. And just one more point on that

– one of the things that is very attractive to the grant-making agencies now, is within your project, it may be local to your own area, or your own municipality, or your own locality – but if the project itself inherently has the ability to be transferred or to be taught, either extended throughout your region or even nationally, that will only help you in the long run.

Slide 35: Resources for Local Governments

Eva Wong: Thanks a lot Asher that was great. Next we have Johanna Zetterberg, from DOE; she's a state and local programs specialist in the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy at DOE. So Johanna, do you want to take over.

Johanna Zetterberg: I sure will, and I'll try to keep this presentation to 15 minutes or under. My name is Johanna Zetterberg as Eva mentioned, I work for the Department of Energy, in the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, so that is one office within several within DOE. So my presentation will only be addressing opportunities regarding energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies.

Slide 36: EERE and WIP

Johanna Zetterberg: So just to give you a brief overview. On this slide, all of the blue ovals show the program offices that are within the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy. You can see Solar, Hydrogen, Biomass, Vehicle Technologies, Geothermal, Building Technologies, Industrial Technologies, etc. The office that I sit in is called Weatherization and Intergovernmental Programs. And our job is basically to help the program offices deploy their technologies in order to accelerate market penetration of America's energy supply towards these technologies. So we are really one of two outreach offices within the larger EERE Office. Our customers, if you want to look at them that way, are states and local governments, and tribes, etc. And there is also an office called FEMP, the Federal Energy Management Program, which does the same thing, but to the federal government across the country.

Slide 37: EERE Program Offices

Johanna Zetterberg: So here is an actual graphic of our org chart that shows all of the program offices. And this is relevant here because the program offices sometimes have their own opportunities for you, and so one place you can check for opportunities is their home pages, which I'll get to in a little bit.

Slide 38: EERE Project Management Centers

Johanna Zetterberg: Now in addition to the org chart I just showed you, and let me just mention all of these program offices are at the DOE Headquarters in the D.C. area, we have two - what are called Project Management Centers - one serves the western states, and one serves the eastern states. Now if you were around when DOE used to have regional offices, much like EPA does, we no longer have those offices. Those have been condensed now into these two Project Management Centers. The role of the PMCs is basically to help with implementation of policies and programs that are developed at Headquarters. So if you need help about implementation, or

are in the implementation phase of some type of project, you can contact Julie Riel if you're in the west or James Ferguson if you're in the east. And their contact information is on this slide.

Slide 39: Presentation Outline

Johanna Zetterberg: I'll just give you a brief overview of what I'm going to talk about in my presentation. EERE has several different types of financial and non-financial resources for which local governments are eligible, but you'll need to access them in different ways. I'm going to start with the non-competitive financial opportunities, the State Energy Program, and then I'll talk about an example from one of the program offices, which will be the Vehicle Technologies Program Office. Some of you on the call might be from local governments that already participate in this program. Next I'm going to move on to competitive opportunities, once again, one that's under the State Energy Program, and then I'll talk about another example from a program office, and that will be from the Solar Program Office. You may have heard about the Department of Energy's Solar America Initiative, or the Solar America Cities Award, so that's what I'll be talking about. Next I'm going to tell you how you can understand the submission process for unsolicited proposals, and I believe that everything that Asher said about how the EPA use these types of proposals would be also relevant here to DOE. And then I'm going to talk about one of the sort-of best-kept secrets in EERE in terms of resources for local governments is the Technical Assistance Program. And it does not offer financial assistance, it offers technical assistance, but nonetheless, it is very valuable and I would encourage you to take advantage of it if you can. Finally I'm going to wrap up with just a brief mention of Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program that was authorized in the Energy Independence and Security Act of last December, because I know that you may have some questions about this program and its status. Let's jump right in.

Slide 40: EERE Financial Opportunities Page

Johanna Zetterberg: This slide shows the EERE Financial Opportunities homepage. And this is your portal to information on the DOE funding processes that available to you as well as other customer groups, such as businesses, and consumers, and the states. There will be some opportunities through this page for you, but I highly recommend that you use Grants.gov as your main portal, because that will list all of the opportunities within EERE and actually within the whole Department of Energy. But on this page, the link that you will be interested in is this link here, where it says "States" because it will take you to more information about the State Energy Program.

Slide 41: State Energy Program

Johanna Zetterberg: So if you follow that link, you will come to this page. And the State Energy Program is the main conduit for funding from DOE to states and local governments. It's a formula grant, it's about \$40 million a year based on congressional appropriations. The formula is roughly one-third equally among all states and territories, one-third according to population, one-third according to energy consumption, and then there's a 20% match requirement from states for funding that's received. Local governments are eligible to access this funding, but you need to apply directly to your state energy office in order to access it. Each state energy office is

different, and is empowered to design and carry out its own energy efficiency and renewable energy programs and projects, so you'll need to speak with your state's office for specific eligibility requirements. I believe that SEP formula grant funds tend to be awarded by states to local governments on the basis of merit, but often it seems that first come is first served. So you should definitely form a strong relationship with your state energy office – find out what your state's priorities are, and how funds, technical assistance, resources are located. So how do you find out who your contacts are for your state energy office? If you click on the “Information Resources” tab at the top of this page here highlighted in green...

Slide 42: State Energy Program – Information Resources

Johanna Zetterberg: ...it will take you to this page. And this shows a map of the country as well as a drop-down box from which you can choose your state, and then it will take you to a page that will have the contacts there for you.

Slide 43: State Energy Program Contacts

Johanna Zetterberg: Now if you want to speak with someone from DOE in more detail about this, you can speak with Cathy Iverson again if you're in the west or Angela Young if you're in the east.

Slide 44: EERE Program Offices: VTP

Johanna Zetterberg: Ok I'm going to move on now to an example from the Vehicle Technologies Program Office, about a non-competitive resource that's available. This is a program or project within the Vehicle Technologies Program Office called Clean Cities. And the basic goal of this program is to reduce petroleum consumption in the transportation sector by advancing the use of alternative fuels and vehicles, idle reduction technologies, hybrid electric vehicles, fuel blends, and fuel economy. The way the program works is that it brings together volunteer coalitions comprised of public and private partnerships that aim to cultivate advanced transportation in their community. The Clean Cities Program offers technical assistance, including help with creating a strategy and bringing some grant funding to you as well. So you can look more online about this program if you want to be participating in it, go to their homepage.

Slide 45: 2008 State Energy Activities FOA

Johanna Zetterberg: Ok now I'm going to talk a little bit about some of the competitive resources that are available for local governments within EERE. Earlier in the presentation I told you about the State Energy Program formula grants. This program that I'd like to tell you about now is sort-of a slice of that program. It complements the formula grants by awarding funding to the states that score the highest against a set of criteria. The criteria usually focus on goals such as innovation, replicability, and market transformation of renewable energy technologies and energy efficiency technologies. We introduced this model last year, and we were responding to a directive of Congress under Section 140 of EPA Act 2005 – that's the Energy Policy Act –for states to meet an energy-efficiency goal of reducing state-wide consumption of gas or electricity by three-quarters of a percent from 2005 levels. So basically, Congress gave this goal directive and

we offered competitive funding available for states to figure out the best ways to meet that goal. In 2008, we're going to be rolling out a similar competitive grant process. And even though this Funding Opportunity Announcement series targets states, we're going to be encouraging states to partner with local governments on proposals. And in fact, there will likely be an area of interest within this solicitation that will specifically target local governments. So if you're interested in this you can begin speaking with your state appropriate agencies – if there's an energy office or whatever it might be – to develop a proposal once the solicitation announcement comes out. You can watch Grants.gov for the announcement, you can contact James Ferguson or Julie Riel, who I mentioned earlier, but I'm sure we'll also get the announcement out on the listserv from which you heard about this webcast. So you shouldn't have to go looking for it.

Slide 46: EERE Program Offices: Solar

Johanna Zetterberg: Now I'm going to talk about an example of a competitive funding opportunity from one of the program offices, and that's the Solar Technology Program. And as you can see in the lower right-hand corner here on their webpage, here's this little green link, and that was the link to – I believe it took you to the Grants.gov page, from which you could learn more about and apply for this solicitation. So this Solar Cities Program is part of the Solar America Initiative, and the basic concept is that cities receive a combined roughly \$2.5 million in financial assistance, plus approximately \$3.25 million dollars in technical assistance to become ready for solar investments in terms of companies coming into the city and building a viable solar industry. In 2007 there were 13 Solar America Cities that were selected, and in 2008 there will be another round – and that's what that link that I showed you in the lower right-hand corner in green was for – that was for the second round. So that solicitation is actually closed now, it's not open, but I wanted to show this to you as an example of getting information about opportunities directly from the program offices.

Slide 47: Unsolicited Proposals

Johanna Zetterberg: Now I would like to just point you to this website here, which is listed at the top of the slide, and it has information including this Guide for the Submission of Unsolicited Proposals. You should know that most grants at DOE are awarded through a solicitation process, but it is possible to obtain funding this way if you are deemed to merit it. Unsolicited proposals may be selected for funding if they demonstrate a unique or innovative concept, or a unique capability; if they offer a concept or service not otherwise available to the government; if they do not resemble recent, current or pending competitive solicitations; and they must independently originate with the proposer without government supervision. DOE considers unsolicited proposals non-competitive so if you are interested in that option go to that website and read the Guide.

Slide 48: Technical Assistance Project

Johanna Zetterberg: Moving along, I'll tell you about the Technical Assistance Project, which I mentioned at the beginning of the presentation. The Technical Assistance Project, which I'll call TAP, provides state and local officials quick access to experts at the Department of Energy's national laboratories, and this would be for assistance with crosscutting renewable energy and

energy efficiency policies and programs. “Crosscutting” just means, doesn’t neatly fit into one of the program offices that’s on the EERE org chart. The laboratories that participate in this are the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), Oak Ridge National Laboratory, and the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. So this is basically like a SQUAT team of Department of Energy experts coming in to help you with an individualized problem or question that you want to solve. The assistance is short term – it’s usually limited to 30-60 hours of staff time and about \$5,000 to go towards the staff time, and it is free to you. So if you have a question on, for example, how would I structure a public benefits charge in my community? Or, how would I do this type of renewable energy project? You can receive very unique and very targeted attention. The program has been in existence for several years, it’s already done about 125 requests, and this is a really great way to get direct resources as a local government from DOE.

Slide 49: TAP Contacts

Johanna Zetterberg: And if you’re interested in finding more about the application process, once again, call Julie or James or Misty Conrad. All three of those people review all of the proposals that come in, so you can contact any one of them. And I think the application process is actually very easy and they can guide you through it. It’s certainly not the Grants.gov type of hoops that you’ll jump through.

Slide 50: Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant

Johanna Zetterberg: Now I’ll just briefly tell you about the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant program, authorized in EISA. If you want to look up the language yourself, it’s Title V, Subtitle E, Sections 541-548. And basically it directs the Secretary of Energy to establish a block grant program, which is modeled after the Community Development Block Grant program which is administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The program authorizes \$10 billion over 5 years – and the 5 years are 2008 to 2012 – to local governments for them to develop and implement energy efficiency and conservation strategies. Before you get too excited, it’s really critical to understand that no appropriations have been made for this, it was only authorized in EISA. And at this point no action is required of DOE. This slide shows the formula for the grants. So you can see here that \$2 billion per year over 5 years equals to \$10 billion; and 68% goes to cities and counties based on a population formula; 28% goes to the states, which will then be passed down to local governments that don’t meet the population threshold of the formula; and then 2% is set aside each for our Tribal Programs, and for our Competitive Program administered by DOE. The purpose of the Block Grant program is to provide funds for local governments to develop and implement energy efficiency and conservation strategies. Some of the activities covered are energy audits, establishing financial incentive programs for energy efficiency improvements, implementing building codes, installing renewable energy technologies on government buildings for onsite generation, and implementing energy distribution technologies. Strategies must be approved by the Secretary of Energy in consultation with the Administrator of the EPA, Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the Secretary of the Department of Transportation for approval of strategies that are not explicitly stated in Section 544. The sort-of action trigger contained within the law is that the Secretary of Energy must publish a formula to distribute program funds in the Federal Register no later than 90 days from the beginning of each fiscal year for which grants are to be made

available. But like I mentioned earlier, grants have not been made available because appropriations have not been made. That is pretty much all of the information I know about this program, and if you have more information, you can contact the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

Slide 51: Thank you

Johanna Zetterberg: I believe that wraps it up. If you have further questions you can contact me anytime, here's my contact information. And I will turn this back over to whoever is next, thank you very much.

Eva Wong: Thanks a lot Johanna. I think in the interest of time, we'll just take one question, and then let Abby speak, take one question for Abby, and then open it up. And any questions that get addressed after 3:30, because I know some people...we can stay on, I think most of the presenters can stay on to answer them, but I know people might have to drop off...we can type up those questions and responses, and we'll send them to all the registered participants, along with the powerpoint. So, just so you know...ok, so one question Lauren.

Lauren Pederson: We understand that there's been some very significant budget cuts proposed in DOE, particularly for energy efficiency, and will this affect the likelihood of getting an energy efficiency grant?

Johanna Zetterberg: I think I would need some clarification on that, which we probably can't do. If you're speaking about the Block Grants, then as I mentioned, no appropriations have been made for that so money is not actually available. If you're speaking about any of the other grants that I mentioned, those should not be affected.

Eva Wong: Ok thanks. Next Abby Young is going to present, she'll be our last presenter. And she was hired by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District about a year ago to develop a \$3 million grant program for climate protection. And prior to that, she spent 11 years at ICLEI, the Local Governments for Sustainability, directing and fundraising for the U.S. Cities for Climate Protection campaign. So Abby, I think you can take control over the powerpoints.

Slide 52: Navigating the Grant Process Tips for Grant Seekers

Abby Young: Excellent, well I only have a few slides and what I was going to do is just talk through - based on my experience spending over a decade writing proposals, in large part to federal agencies, and then more recently on the other side of the table as a grantor - just to share with folks some tips that I have for how you can use your time wisely, in terms of quickly assessing whether or not you should go for an opportunity and spend the time and effort in developing a proposal; what are some things that you should remember in terms of writing a proposal that will be as strong as possible; and then finally, some ideas on what to think about in terms of time management for the proposal process. For some folks that are listening some of this may be really basic, but I've found, especially recently being a grantor and reviewing proposals coming in, that even the most seasoned grant writers make a lot of basic mistakes. So hopefully these will be tips that are useful.

Slide 53: Step 1: Figure Out If You Will Apply

Abby Young: So the first step – figure out if you’re going to apply. So, someone’s emailed you, the EPA or somebody else has sent you a solicitation – it sounds great, but how do you quickly suss out whether this is an appropriate thing to apply for and whether it’ll be worth your time. So a couple of things to think about – and as I go through this I’m going to use the EPA as an example as my sample federal agency, it’s the one I’m most familiar with. So nine times out of ten I’ve found that I can spend about 5 minutes on a federal government or an EPA solicitation, and figure out whether or not I will be applying. And so the first thing you want to look at – and I loved the presentation on Grants.gov, because that’s where you want to go first – so if you’re not registered, get registered. It’s very quick, and you might as well do it now. You have a couple choices on Grants.gov: you can look at the synopsis of the proposal or you can look at the full proposal, and I would recommend going straight to the full proposal. And if the tab connecting you to that link doesn’t work- which oftentimes you click it and it says that there’s no proposal available - if you look at the synopsis and go toward the bottom of the synopsis, there’s always a link to the full solicitation, so you can always access it there. Once you’re at that full solicitation, on that first page there’s going to be a paragraph about eligibility – it’ll say “basic eligibility” or “eligible applicants” – that’s the first thing you want to look at because if you’re not eligible you can’t apply, you’re done. And what you’re looking for if you’re a local government is of course “local governments”, but not always. Sometimes local governments won’t be listed but higher or other levels of government might be where you can apply through them - so state governments or, in a recent case in my experience, air agencies we eligible applicants, and we had a local government approach us about applying through us to get a grant. So keep that in mind as well. So once you’ve decided that it looks like you are eligible, the next thing to think about is do you have enough time? And what I usually do when I go to Grants.gov is I search according to close date, and I search in reverse order, so I can see the farthest out close dates. There’s always some that are December 31st, but basically most of them are May or sooner. And you can start looking at those and see which ones are closing, giving you enough time to prepare a presentation. Three days isn’t enough time, so those are some things to think about. And I’m going to talk a little bit more about time management on a later slide. So once you’ve looked at eligibility, you’re eligible, it looks like you’ve got a couple of weeks, that seems like enough time... Then you want to think about first: would your proposal be competitive? And I’m going to take an objective look at this and talk about dollars. Also on that first page of the solicitation synopsis, it’s going to talk about how much money is available for the solicitation, the total amount available. It’ll talk about the estimated number of grants that they’re thinking they are going to make and it may even say what they think the average grant size is, or they may set a cap, they may say grants will be under this size. So think about that because some solicitations, they’re only going to fund three projects, or some are much bigger and there’s a lot of money and the projects are going to be smaller size, so these are things you want to think about. If it’s going to be a highly competitive program and they’re only making three grants, and you really don’t have the time for it, and the average size of the grants isn’t going to be that bit, maybe this is one you don’t want to follow up on. So that’s something to look at too, be sure to look at the dollars involved. So then, once you’ve looked at all these things, it still sounds pretty good, you want to get a general sense or feel for how much work is going to be involved. And at this point what you want to do is look a little bit deeper into the solicitation, into where they talk about the requirements of the proposal, or the proposal

requirements, or maybe they call it the application requirements. Sometimes they call it application formatting, and it'll be a section that probably will start about halfway through the full solicitation, and it'll talk about all of the things you need to submit. It'll mention the cover sheet, and it'll mention the different forms that Asher showed you, but then it'll have a big section on the proposal narrative. And I'm so glad that Asher mentioned how important that proposal narrative was, because that really is where you're making your case. So look at that section, and it'll tell you whether or not you have to have a lot of research citing, whether or not you need to have partners going in on the proposal with you, and all of the different sections of the proposal. As you're looking at that, also have a mind toward – have you written a proposal similar to this that you might be able to draw from? So these are the quick things that you can do to get a sense for whether or not it's going to be worth your time to apply.

Slide 54: Step 2: Write a Strong Proposal

Abby Young: Then once you've decided you're going to leap in, you're going to want to write a strong proposal. And I cannot tell you how important it is – you would think this would not be rocket science – but please follow directions. And when we talk about following directions, we're talking about following the rules for attachments. If they say they're not going to look at any attachments they're really not. If they say they only want one letter of support don't give them eight, because they're going to pick one and it might not be your best one. So follow directions. Follow directions for formatting – if they say one-inch margins do one-inch margins. Pay attention to page limits – that's so important. I had a proposal submitted to me once – we had an eight-page page limit, they submitted it and it was 13 pages long and I didn't read the last five pages. So be sure that you're following directions. One thing that I do – when I get the solicitation and I've decided I'm going to apply, this sounds basic, but I get two different colored highlighters and I go through the entire solicitation one time. Everything that has to do with formatting I highlight in one color, everything that has to do with content and what the EPA is looking for I highlight in a different color. That way, as I'm developing my proposal it is very easy for me to go back and double check things. Otherwise you can drive yourself crazy. Submit questions early. In all cases, the solicitation will list the contact person – they might list it up front or they might list it on the back, on the last page. If you're lucky they'll give you a phone number, but they usually don't, it's usually just an email address. So you have to submit your questions via email – and in a lot of cases they don't answer individual questions, they will post the questions weekly with answers or less than weekly. So you really need to think through what your questions are and get those submitted as early as possible. My next bullet – “they're really not asking the same question twice” – this often happens, I apologize, no offense intended to my EPA friends, but a lot of times these solicitations are quite confusing. They're talking about “outputs” and “outcomes”, and they're asking about “deliverables” and using terms you've never heard of before. If, as you're going through it you think they're asking for the same thing twice, you're wrong – they never are. So what you have to do in that case is to take a step back and think about what the agency, what the solicitor (EPA in this case), is trying to get out of you. With that first question what are they trying to get out of you, and with that second question what are they trying to get out of you. And I'll give you an example. This year I was developing a proposal to the EPA – it was a mobile source grant – and at one point they were asking for “associated work projects”. I couldn't figure out what they meant by “associated work projects”. And finally as I went back through everything they were asking for, I realized that nowhere were

they asking me to list deliverables. So I thought, “associated work projects”, maybe that’s their term for deliverables. So I submitted the question, and I was lucky because I got an answer the next day, and they said yes, precisely, we’re asking for deliverables. So sometimes you have to do a bit of investigation and interpretation, but you always want to check that your interpretation is correct, because if it’s not you’re going to lose points. Finally, as Asher mentioned, you want to pay attention to the point system. Also pay attention to the big ticket point items, and also don’t lose track of the small ticket point items. And one that that’s really important – try to see if different point items, different criteria, are dependent on one another. When we did a recent grant solicitation – we are the grantor, our air agency – we asked in our criteria for applicants to demonstrate reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, and we also later on asked for them to demonstrate cost-effectiveness. Well “cost-effectiveness” was interpreted as costs divided by tons of greenhouse gas emissions reductions. So if they were reporting very few emission reductions, they were going to lose points in both categories. So it’s important to see where things like that might happen. You want to make the reviewer like you. The person who is evaluating your proposal, you want them to like you, so following directions, making it easy – use their headings, go through the solicitation, use their precise headings – that way they know you’re addressing what they asked for. Write like you’re explaining it at a cocktail party – that is so important. So many times I review proposals where it’s clear that the person writing the proposal themselves is not really clear on how to describe what they want to do. So talk it through, pretend like you’re describing it to somebody who doesn’t know what you’re talking about. And if you can speak it, you can write it. And then finally, please have somebody proof read, that should go without saying but you’d be surprised how many people don’t do that.

Slide 55: Step 3: Submit it on Time

Abby Young: And then quickly, for time management, make it as easy on yourself as possible. Create a proposal timeline. But the most important thing to think through is - who has to review your proposal before it can be submitted? Is it just your city manager who’s going to sign off on it? Is it also your legal department? Think about that – make sure they’re not going to be going on vacation the week that the proposal’s due. Request your support letters early because the people you’re requesting them from also have to go through a review process. I’m going to skip the cut and paste thing, I think we all know that be a blessing and a curse. Know in advance where to find your DUNS number or your Employer Identification Number, particularly if you’re the one who’s going to have to do the submitting.

Slide 56: Abby Young

Abby Young: I kind-of jumped around because I know we were pressed for time, but those are some key tips, and then if you follow those, just step back, watch the cash roll in and enjoy your well-funded program.

Eva Wong: Abby, thanks a lot that was fantastic. How about if we take one question for Abby and then open it up to all the speakers? And like I said, at 3:30 we will continue to answer questions, but we will record the questions and responses in writing.

Lauren Pederson: What does “other” usually mean in eligibility, I know you mentioned it during your presentation, there’s an “other” category?

Abby Young: I did?

Lauren Pederson: Yes, that was one of the questions that came through.

Dennis Finney: Well, I know from our experience, sometimes there are special eligibility requirements or special stipulations that don’t fall into the regular categories. And if “other” is selected, usually there will be an explanation on what that other is, somewhere in the announcement or on Grants.gov.

Lauren Pederson: Ok great, thank you.

Questions and Answers

Eva Wong: Lauren, are you going to tell us some of the questions that weren’t answered?

Lauren Pederson: One participant asked: They are aware of the publicly available databases that lists awards, but often it is difficult to identify awards based on original solicitation title and funding numbers, and that’s the same as award numbers. Other than, for example, the DOE IITS database and the occasional status section of postings, are there any other ways to link awards and their respective solicitations?

Asher Weinberg: Each agency has their own discretion on how they want to handle that. I think that’s an excellent question that - hopefully as we are streamlining the grants process and federal grants management, grants line of business, and all of these other existing initiatives - clearly as a customer of the federal government I empathize with your position, you should have that. But the answer is every federal agency can do what they want. Furthermore, generally within the agency - I don’t even think it’s mandated I think it’s just a policy of doing that - I think at the office, sub-office, and divisional level you’ll find different things. Here at EPA Office of Air and Radiation there is no website that has a link to all of the winners to the solicitations. One division within EPA that does do a decent job is within the Office of Research and Development, NCER. NCER does post their star competition and graduate awards that they give out to graduate fellows, they do post those winners. But the answer is no, unfortunately no.

Dennis Finney: Well and for the future, maybe you’ve heard about the Transparency Act, which was passed a year ago. In fact, it’s one of Obama’s pieces of legislation this recent year. And the Transparency Act is requiring all agencies their award information in one place, which is called governmentspending.gov, and that’s just getting in place now, it was just rolled out in January, it’s not complete yet. But in the future that’s the place to go. It’s the similar concept of Grants.gov, trying to develop one site where the public can go to find all award information that’s coming out of federal agencies.

Lauren Pederson: And our next question: If someone is considering pursuing a grant, would it be important to have discussions with the appropriate people at the EPA to ensure that the objective

of the project is in line with the goals of the organization? In other words, do we need to do some pre-proposal collaboration before we head into pursuing a grant?

Asher Weinberg: On behalf of EPA here, I would say that there are nuances that need to be taken into account regarding the integrity of the competitive process. So informal communication, as far as before a solicitation becomes available, I would say would be encouraged. You want to, if you are a partner with the EPA, or are involved in similar-type projects, you come across EPA personnel at relevant conferences, you are sitting on similar types of speaking boards or review boards, it certainly is appropriate to have that exchange of ideas. The situation regarding the competitive integrity would come about when you have people that are on the review panel itself having some kind of contact with the applicant that would give them an unfair advantage. So you might want to have, as an applicant or prospective applicant, some of these pre-solicitation meetings. But it would be important to disclose all of this in a timely enough fashion to make sure that the person that did speak with you would recuse themselves from sitting on the actual review panel. Once the solicitation becomes valid, you really can't - here at EPA, anyways, our business practice is to not really have a lot of direct communication with the applicants, because again, of an appearance or a potential appearance of unfair competitive advantage. And what Abby said is exactly the business practice of the EPA - your questions from when a solicitation becomes open would be submitted to an email address, it would be within that division that's soliciting a solicitation. The question would be addressed and then posted on a website.

Lauren Pederson: And the next question: Can you give an example of applying through an eligible entity, such as a non-profit organization?

Abby Young: Well I don't know that anyone would apply through a non-profit - that would be odd. But if, for example, a local government were partnering with a not-profit on a project and the solicitation were available to non-profits but not to local governments, the non-profit would be the applicant. And then - you folks in the federal agencies, you can chime in here - where the partnership would manifest itself would be in the budget and in the contractual line items, correct?

Asher Weinberg: Right, we actually - again, a business practice of the EPA - you don't really see partnerships dual applicants very often. You would have more along the lines of how Abby ended there, there would be some contractual work dividing up some of the project. But generally, the EPA would not make an award to entities - one a non-profit and one being a state - one would be the actual "prime", the official recipient, and then they could sub out some of the other work as they see fit. And in fact, what we would say as a general rule of thumb is that you want to be careful about identifying a partner. Because if you go ahead and identify one specific partner - depending upon how much money you're talking about - you raise sole-source issues which, in the world of procurement, is an extra hoop to jump through, because your subbing of contractual obligations and procured services should be competed. But that might be a question to be asked or addressed later on.

Abby Young: I actually see the question written here - I think they're actually asking would a non-profit apply through an eligible entity - and I think that probably happens a lot, but it's the same just as Asher and I described it. The non-profit would basically be the contractor.

Lauren Pederson: And then the last question we received: Are there any funding opportunities specific to rural areas?

Dennis Finney: Well one suggestion would be to go to Grants.gov, and in the find search, type in “rural”, “rural areas”, and see if that phrase was in the announcement title or somewhere in the announcement where that would be picked up. That would be my suggestion, any others?

Johanna Zetterberg: I’ll just chime in – I think this came in during my presentation – if you could qualify a little bit better rural areas, for example, into a county or some other entity that can be eligible for assistance - that would also be a good thing to search by. Or even a consortium of counties or local governments that all happen to be rural.

Lauren Pederson: Ok great and that was all of the questions we received through the live meeting.

Eva Wong: Ok, well thanks to the 37 people who hung in there. And again we’ll be announcing the next webcast through our listserv, so if you’re not signed up, please sign up. And I just want to thank you all and thank our speakers.