HOW TO WRITE A WINNING EN GRANT APPLICATION

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this presentation is to help states, tribes and territories prepare successful Exchange Network grant applications. It provides an overview of the Solicitation Notice, summarizes best practices, and offers a list of takeaway messages of application do's and don'ts.
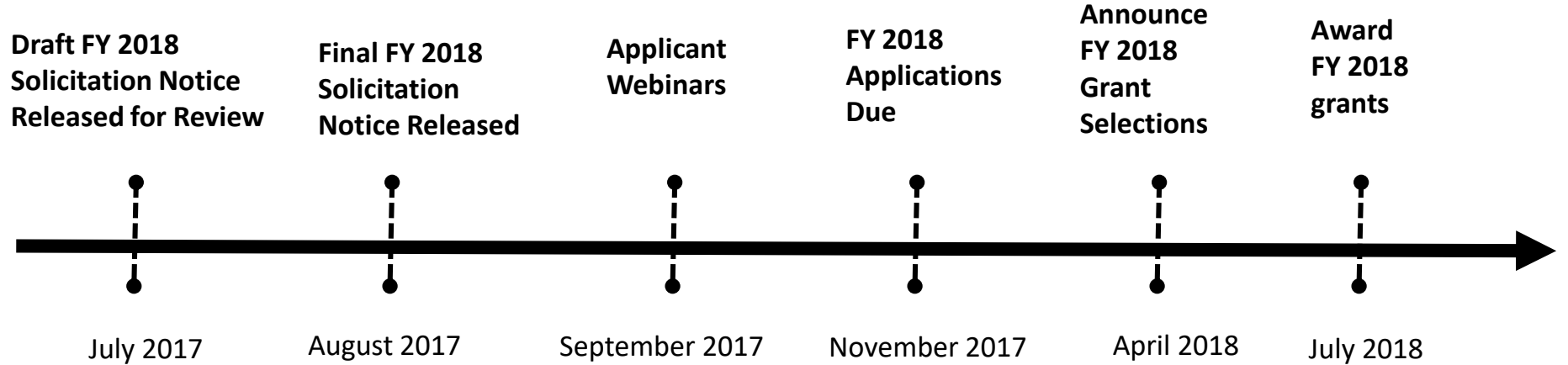
Presentation Overview

- Synopsis of EN Grant purpose and application process
- Critical Elements of the Solicitation Notice
- Process
- Best Practices
- Takeaways
- Reminders
- Stay Connected
- Questions/ Contacts

Exchange Network (EN) and Grant Overview

- EN uses a standards–based approach so partners can share data via the internet regardless of the information technology

- Grant Funding Purpose
  - To develop technologies to share data among partners through the EN
  - Develop underlying shared or reusable services that provide the foundation of EN operations
  - Make data available to their personnel, the public or other communities of interest.

Timeline - FY 2018 Application Process

Draft FY 2018 Solicitation Notice Released for Review

Final FY 2018 Solicitation Notice Released

Applicant Webinars

FY 2018 Applications Due

Announce FY 2018 Grant Selections

Award FY 2018 grants

July 2017   August 2017   September 2017   November 2017   April 2018   July 2018

Critical Elements of the Solicitation Notice

- Linkage to EPA mission and Program Priorities
- Eligibility
- Types of assistance agreements
- Threshold criteria
- Application instructions
- Evaluation criteria

Linkage to EPA Mission and Program Priorities

- EPA Policy-Work supported by assistance agreements must link directly to EPA mission/Program Priorities

- Proposed work must be activities specifically mentioned in the priorities section of the Solicitation Notice or Appendix A

- Categories in FY 17
  - **Territory and Tribal Capacity-** building to enhance environmental programs and share environmental data electronically EN partners
  - **Data flows** - Submitting data to priority program systems
  - **Data Availability** - develop reusable tools/applications for automated access to environmental data
  - **Shared services** - EPA or state for use by multiple partners

Exchange Network Grant Eligibility

- Activities not eligible for funding:
  - Development and deployment of nodes
  - Operations and Maintenance (O&M)
  - Data flow enhancements

- Entities Eligible
  - States
  - Federally Recognized Tribes and Native Villages
  - Inter-tribal consortia of Federally Recognized Tribes
  - U.S. Territories

Types of Assistance Agreements

- Stand-alone, Performance Partnership or Consolidated Grant

- Grant or cooperative agreement

- Direct funding and/or in-kind services

- Sole application or partnership

Threshold Criteria to Receive FY 18 Grant

- Application goals result in full implementation of:
  – Data flow (s)
  – Data publishing
  – Deployment of a web service or
  – Another activity specified in the grant solicitation notice (e.g. pilots projects)

- Comply with solicitation notice submission instructions- Appendix E
  – Page limit, font, and margin specifications
  – Submittal by deadline
  – Project periods of no more than 3 years
  – Limit of 4 active grants by 12/31/17
  – No unaddressed compliance issues with prior federal assistance agreements
  – No duplicative funding

Application Instructions

- Submit using grants.gov (mandatory!), unless applicant has obtained a waiver

- Provide all required documents
  - See Appendix E
  - See checklist in Appendix H and on website

- Applicant receives **two** confirmation emails from grants.gov if submission is successful

Evaluation Criteria

- All applications are evaluated on the following criteria:
  - Outputs and Outcomes Leading to Environmental Results
  - Feasibility and Approach
  - Exchange Network Priorities - Most Points
  - Budget, Resources and Key Personnel
  - Past Performance
  - ULO's

Applicant's Grant Development Process

- Discover EPA priorities and grant process –Spring/Summer

- Determine what your group needs –Summer

- Align application with Solicitation Notice Priorities and Criteria – Fall

Discover EPA Priorities and Grant Process

- At National & Regional workshops and webinars

- Priorities:
  - FY 2018 Solicitation Notice
  - What else are leaders talking about?

- Problems
  - Will an EPA program be ready to receive your data?

Find Out What Your Group Needs

- Talk to each program or organization
  - Current data flow method(s)
  - Status of their database and usage of shared services
  - Program trends, priorities & needs

- Develop relationships
  - Are some organizations interested in trying something new? Willing to collaborate ?
  - If yes, you may be investing time for a future project or partnership

Align With Solicitation Notice

- Read draft guidance immediately in July
- Start with
  - A flow & see where you can build on it to meet your needs
  - A dataset that needs to be more accessible
- Outline proposals immediately & get program feedback with each version
- Draft a schedule for each application goal to submit
  - Allow time for internal and partner approvals

Best Practices

- Read Solicitation Notice (SN) carefully
  - Note all requirements for a complete application (Notice includes a document checklist)
  - Highlight the key elements

- Call us if you have any questions or require clarification

- Note in cover letter the type of assistance agreement being sought

- Address the evaluation criteria
  - Only include text that will be awarded points
  - Make it easy for the reviewers

Best Practices

- Project narrative is the most important element and it must :
    - Clearly define each goal
    - Explain how each goal meets programmatic or administrative business need
    - Explain project methodology and demonstrate technical understanding
    - Result in the development and deployment of a fully functional product or service that your organization and/or EN partners will use

- Review carefully before submitting
    - Have a colleague not familiar with the project and/or the EN review
    - Make sure it is complete and follows all instructions

Reminders

- Be explicit about reusing existing products/services

- Describe partner roles and responsibilities and include commitment letters

- Include AG letter if not a state agency or department

- Make sure indirect cost agreement will not expire before award

- Include a schedule with a October 1, 2017 as the project start date

- Submit final technical reports for completed grants

- Keep track of expenditures – there are point penalties for applicants with excessive unliquidated obligations

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Common Pitfalls

- Applications
  - not related to EN technology
  - not aligned with priorities
  - **Without** a concrete proposal
  - Do not propose to build and deploy a completed product or service
- Goals, outputs and outcomes not well organized or described or terminology is not used correctly
- Budgets not broken down by **project** goal
- Applications that include ineligible activities (e.g., node development, O&M)
- Project narratives that exceed 10 pages
- Partnerships in the same state

Goals, Outputs, Target Dates and Outcomes

Goal	Output	Target Date[1]	Outcome
EIS & GHG Data Flows	1.1 CERS data mapped to XML schema	Jan. 1, 2011	Increased availability of timely, high quality data to other Exchange Network partners will improve environmental decision-making.
	1.2 EIS flow to EPA becomes operational	June 1, 2011	
	1.3 GHG flow to EPA becomes operational[2]	Dec. 31, 2011	
	1.4 Improve GIS locations & geospatial metadata for air release points[3]	Sept. 30, 2012	
	1.5 Add Assessment Module[3] to evaluate air emissions near new construction projects	Mar. 31, 2012	
WQX[4]	2.1 Data mapped to XML schema[2]	Mar. 31, 2011	Increased availability of data to other Exchange Network partners
	2.2 Implement WQX Flow[3]	Sept. 30, 2011	Electronic availability of standardized, timely, high quality data over the Exchange Network will improve the analysis of water quality monitoring data and lead to better decision-making.
	2.3 Written documentation of implementing WQX with multi-state AWQMS database	Jan. 31, 2012	
	2.4 Publish Web Service	Sept. 30, 2012	

Stay Connected!

- Subscribe to EN Alerts
- Participate in Stakeholder conference calls
- Join us for EN Grant Open Hours at EN2017
- Visit our website!

Contacts

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