CHAPTER 3

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0301 OVERVIEW

This chapter establishes Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) policy for developing and issuing information about funding opportunities under VA discretionary Federal financial assistance programs and the application submission deadlines. This chapter outlines the requirements of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Standard Data Elements for Electronically Posting Synopses of Federal Agencies’ Financial Assistance Announcements.

The policies in this chapter apply to all VA programs that award discretionary Federal financial assistance awards and cooperative agreements. This chapter does not apply to mandatory Federal financial assistance programs or to applications for single-source awards and unsolicited applications.

0302 POLICIES

030201 ANNOUNCEMENTS. 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, program offices are encouraged to streamline and simplify the program announcement process to better serve applicants.

030201.01 Issuing Notice and Grants.gov. Competing applications will be solicited using both a synopsis, which will be posted at Grants.gov FIND, and a funding opportunity announcement formatted and issued in accordance with this chapter. Competing applications, which include those classified as “limited competition” (whether the universe of potential applicants is known, e.g., States, or unknown), may not be solicited on any other basis.

The term “funding opportunity announcement” refers to all financial assistance solicitations regardless of type or where issued. The types of funding opportunity announcements recognized for use in VA include Requests for Applications, program announcements, standing announcements, and application guidance. Funding opportunity announcements will be linked to or uploaded in Grants.gov.

A. All funding opportunity announcements will be posted on the internet, regardless of the means of issuance. When multiple media sources are used to disseminate information about funding opportunities, program offices will attempt to ensure that potential variations in the information provided and the timing of information release do not create an unfair advantage to the users of one medium rather than another.

B. Grants.gov FIND is a government-wide site for posting summary information about funding opportunities. The funding opportunity synopsis at Grants.gov FIND will include a link to (or upload of) the funding opportunity announcement. The synopsis will include
the standard data elements required by the OFFM Policy Letter on use of Grants.gov FIND (dated October 8, 2003) ([http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/grants_docs.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/grants_docs.html)).

C. Federal awarding agencies may also issue funding opportunity announcements in other ways including posting on the program office’s website, publishing in the *Federal Register*, or mailing to all eligible applicants in a universe of known applicants.

D. Federal awarding agencies may use other media in addition to issuance as required by this chapter.

E. If a program office chooses to publish a notice in the *Federal Register* providing summary information about the funding opportunity, the notice will include the following information about the funding opportunity:

1. Federal Awarding Agency Name;

2. Funding Opportunity Title;

3. Announcement Type (whether the funding opportunity is the initial announcement of this funding opportunity or a modification of a previously announced opportunity);

4. Funding Opportunity Number (required, if applicable). If the Federal awarding agency has assigned or will assign a number to the funding opportunity announcement, this number must be provided;

5. *Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance* (CFDA) number(s);

6. 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 the relevant Federal awarding agency.

7. Full programmatic description of the funding opportunity;

8. Federal award information, including sufficient information to help an applicant make an informed decision about whether to submit an application. (See also 38 C.F.R. §49.200.414 Indirect (F&A) costs, paragraph (b));

9. Specific eligibility information, including any factors or priorities that affect an applicant's eligibility or its application's eligibility for selection;
10. Application Preparation and Submission Information, including the applicable submission dates and time;

11. Application Review Information including the criteria and process to be used to evaluate applications. See also 38 C.F.R. §49.200.205 Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants;

12. Federal Award Administration Information. See also §200.210 Information contained in a Federal award.

030201.02 Approvals. Heads of the program offices 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. Additionally, the responsible program office official will coordinate with the Administration’s regulatory and/or administrative office in order to ensure the funding opportunity announcement complies with the requirements of this chapter and meets the programmatic needs established within statute and VA policies and priorities.

030201.03 Timing. The process for development of draft funding opportunity announcements should begin early enough in the fiscal year during which awards will be made (or the prior fiscal year) to allow the program office to maximize the time available for the applicant to prepare its application and for the program office to carry out its objective and business reviews and make timely awards.

Program offices should provide applicants at least 60 days from the date of issuance of a funding opportunity announcement to prepare and submit applications; however, no less than 30 days shall be provided, except 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.

030201.04 Technical Assistance. Funding opportunity announcements will be as clear and comprehensive as possible to limit the need for potential applicants to consult with program office staff. If program office staff members do provide telephone or other informal consultation, they will provide consistent interpretations and treat all requesters equitably.

030201.05 Clarity and Simplicity. Except for funding opportunity announcements for which a limitation of competition has been approved, the process of developing and issuing a funding opportunity announcement will not restrict competition. Potential applicants will not be given selective advance notification of planned or pending funding opportunities and program offices will not tailor announcements to selected projects or outcomes, e.g., by using unduly restrictive evaluation criteria.
030202 CONTENT REQUIREMENTS FOR FUNDING OPPORTUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

030202.01 Overview. A funding opportunity announcement, hereafter referred to as a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA), is a 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 sufficient information to potential applicants to judge whether to submit an application.

030202.02 Template. Program offices will follow the standard NOFA template and content requirements specified in 2 CFR Part 200 and Appendix A of this policy chapter, Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA). The policy directive is part of the implementation of the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 1999 (Public Law 106-107). This policy is also designed to further implement the Grants.gov initiative, one of the 24 electronic (E-Gov) initiatives under the Presidents’ Management Agenda.

A. For VA, each “Required” section will be included in each NOFA and address the considerations specified in the NOFA template. Additionally, all section headings will be included regardless of whether the content is “Required” or “Optional.” If no content is provided under an “Optional,” section, program offices will indicate “Not Applicable” under the heading.

B. In developing and reviewing a NOFA, particular attention should be paid to the following:

- Use of the correct CFDA number for the program/project to be funded. Funding opportunity announcements (and synopses) may not be issued without a valid CFDA number.

- If the announcement is expected to result in the award of a cooperative agreement(s), that possibility will be mentioned as well as the type of anticipated substantial Federal involvement. This language should be tailored to the specific type(s) of activities that may be funded under that announcement.

- A clear statement of eligibility, including whether faith-based and community-based organizations and Indian tribes are eligible to apply. Any limitation of eligibility that is not required by statute will be supported by an approved justification signed at the level of the head of the program office or by another staff member appointed through official delegation.

- Whether or not the applicant will be required to match or share in project costs if an award is made, any application requirements related to matching or cost sharing,
and the manner in which proposed matching or cost sharing will be evaluated (e.g., scored evaluation criterion or preference factor).

- Any responsiveness criterion that may be objectively judged for its presence or absence (e.g., page limitation) that will cause a program office to return the application without review.

- The requirement to include the Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number in the application.

- The required number of copies of the application (for hard-copy submissions), where to submit applications, the medium for submitting applications, and any special requirements for electronic submission, e.g., registration in the System for Award Management.

- The deadline for submitting applications (see paragraph 030203 below).

- A statement indicating the applicability of Executive Order 12372 (Intergovernmental review of Federal programs) and 38 CFR part 40 (Intergovernmental review of Department of Veterans Affairs programs and activities), and additional guidance pertinent to the intergovernmental review process, as appropriate.


- Evaluation criteria that will be applied to the review of applications, including whether points will be assigned, and any factors that will be applied in selecting applications for award. If evaluation criteria vary in importance, the NOFA should specify the relative percentages, weights, or other means that will be used to distinguish among them (e.g., point values).

- Contacts for further information.

030302.03. Review. In any review of individual announcements or program office operations, the adequacy of announcements will be judged by the degree to which they comply with the requirements and implementation of this chapter.

030203  DEADLINES FOR SUBMISSION OF COMPETING APPLICATIONS.

A. To be considered timely, applications will be sent on or before the published deadline date. The head of the program office may authorize or delegate the authority to authorize other ways of determining timeliness, but these requirements will be identified in the NOFA.
B. Competing applications not meeting the deadline specified in the funding opportunity announcement are considered late and may not be considered. Program offices are responsible for notifying applicants submitting late applications and either returning the application or advising the applicant of its disposition.

C. The head of the 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.

030204 ASSISTING APPLICANTS. 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.

- 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.

A. If offered, this assistance will be made available to anyone requesting it. In all cases, ultimate responsibility for the quality of the application remains with the applicant. Care will be taken to ensure that the provision of technical assistance is consistent among potential applicants and does not affect the review process for that or other applications.

B. 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.)
0303 AUTHORITY AND REFERENCES

030301 Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990

030302 Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act (FFMIA) of 1999 (Public Law 106-107)

030303 Executive Order 12372 (Intergovernmental review of Federal programs)

030304 38 C.F.R. part 40 (Intergovernmental review of Department of Veterans Affairs programs and activities)

030305 2 C.F.R. Part 200 Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards

030306 38 C.F.R. Part 49 Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards

030307 Federal Acquisitions Regulation (FAR) 31.205-32 Precontract Cost


030309 OFFM Policy Directive on Use of Grants.Gov FIND

030310 OFFM Policy Directive on Financial Assistance Standard Program Announcements

030311 OMB Circular No. A-11, Preparation, Submission and Execution of the Budget

030312 OMB Circular No. 136, Financial Reporting Requirements

030313 OMB Grants Policy Statements

030314 VA Office of Financial Policy, Publications Library

0304 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

030401 The Assistant Secretary for Management and Chief Financial Officer (CFO), oversees all financial management activities relating to the Department’s programs and operations, as required by the Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990 and 38 U.S.C. 309. Responsibilities include the direction, management and provision of policy guidance and oversight of VA’s financial management personnel, activities and operations. The CFO establishes financial policy, systems and operating procedures for all VA financial entities and provides guidance on all aspects of financial management.
030402. Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and other key officials are responsible for ensuring compliance with the policies and procedures set forth in this chapter.

030403. The Office of Budget (Budget) is responsible for providing guidance and support to the Department’s Administrations and staff offices (e.g., Office of Information Technology and Office of Acquisition, Logistics, and Construction) on matters relating to budget formulation and execution. The Deputy Assistant Secretary for Budget, will request reimbursable authority from OMB to obligate these reimbursements and other income as a part of the annual apportionment or subsequent reapportionment submission. The Service Directors will allot the reimbursements and other income to the program officials, but only if there is reasonable assurance that such items will be collected.

030404. The Office of Finance, Office of Financial Policy (OFP) is responsible for developing, coordinating, reviewing, evaluating, and issuing VA financial policies, including those that impact financial systems and procedures for compliance with all financial laws and regulations. The Management and Financial Reports Service (047GB) within OFP is responsible for preparing various VA comprehensive financial reports, such as those required by the President and the Executive Branch, including OMB/Treasury reports from the Hyperion (MinX) software. OFP is also responsible for working with the Office of Inspector General’s independent contract auditors on VA’s annual Consolidated Financial Statements audit and preparing and reviewing Consolidated Financial Statements, Notes and Required Supplementary Information, etc.

030405. Each Administrations’ Office of Regulation is responsible for the coordination of regulation development, tracking, control, policy integration, and economic impact analyses for proposed VA regulations. These offices have the responsibility to review any official publications and notices (including NOFAs) made by program offices to ensure their legality and accuracy, including coordination with the Office of General Counsel, where appropriate. When the need for a regulation is identified, program offices should coordinate with their respective Administration’s Regulatory office to define goals and objectives, identify legal requirements, draft the regulation and required notices, and drive the concurrence process through to publication in the Federal Register. For example, program offices within VHA would contact the Office of Regulatory and Administrative Affairs (10B4).

**0305 PROCEDURES**

Refer to section 0302 Policies.
0306 DEFINITIONS

030601 Funding Opportunity Announcement. A program office’s formal means of conveying to the public detailed information about the competition for available Federal financial assistance. Refers to all financial assistance solicitations regardless of type or where issued.

030602 Grants.gov FIND. A government-wide site for posting summary information about funding opportunities.

0307 RESCISSIONS

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

0308 QUESTIONS

Questions concerning these policies and procedures should be directed as follows:

Office of Management, Office of Financial Policy, Grants Management Services

0309 REVISIONS

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<thead>
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<th>Section</th>
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<td>0301 Overview</td>
<td>Updated references to “grants,” “grant programs,” and “grant offices” to incorporate definition clarifications from OMB Uniform Grant Guidance.</td>
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<td>Removed references to superseded guidance; replaced Central Contractor Registry with updated System for Award Management. Updated references to superseded 2 CFR guidance with OMB Uniform Grant Guidance references.</td>
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APPENDIX A: Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA)

A. ESTABLISH GUIDANCE FOR CREATING NOFAs FOR GRANTS

VA will use the format described to develop the grant program Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) to be published in the Federal Register or where required.

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 (Federal Register Vol. 68. No 120). 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:
FEDERALAWARDING 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 include 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 other 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 Federal Register Vol. 68. No 120. 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
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).