

NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION

This report is NASA's enclosure to the "Government-Wide Portion of the Report to Congress Under P.L. 106-107". This is the second annual progress report to Congress, and covers the period of May 2002 through May 2003. This report covers NASA's efforts to streamline and simplify the award and administration of Federal grants and cooperative agreements in the following areas:

- I Participation in the Government-Wide Streamlining and Grants.Gov Efforts;
- II Internal Efforts to Create an Environment Conducive to Grants Streamlining and Simplification;
- III Preparing for the Recent and Coming Changes Affecting the Pre-Award Process Including the Electronic Synopsis, Announcement Template, and the Grants.Gov Portal and Electronic Applications; and
- IV Other NASA Grants Streamlining and Simplification Efforts.

I. Participation in the Government-wide Streamlining and Grants.Gov Efforts

- NASA is a participating agency in the Inter-Agency Electronic Grant Committee (IAEGC) – Electronic Standards Workgroup. As part of this workgroup, NASA has provided the key technical lead and ongoing support for the Federal E-Authentication initiative. This initiative provides technical leadership in the GSA-led development and implementation of a common government-wide authentication service to enable identity management and interoperability of public key infrastructure (PKI) within the Federal community. This includes the establishment of a core Federal PKI within which the Federal community can interoperate and communicate securely with the public.
- NASA is the leader of the inter-agency group tasked by OMB to determine the Dun and Bradstreet's (D&B) Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) as the universal identifier. This universal identifier will be used across all Federal grant recipients throughout the grants lifecycle. As part of this group, NASA supported OMB: by drafting the *Federal Register* notice dated October 30, 2002; writing responses to comments received; and by drafting the final policy directive on the use of the DUNS number. This final policy directive was published in the *Federal Register* on June 27, 2003. A universal identifier is the key to improved oversight of Federal grantees and grant programs. Effective October 1, 2003, the universal identifier will be a required data element for grant and cooperative agreement applications, will provide improved statistical reporting of Federal grants and cooperative agreements, and will provide a more effective means to identify discrete organizations/entities that receive those awards. To implement this requirement, NASA plans to provide guidance to its Centers and recipients.

- NASA is working with other Federal agencies and OMB as part of the Pre-Award Workgroup to develop uniform administrative rules, a single CFR for all eight existing OMB Circulars, and a subtitle within this CFR for Federal agencies to co-locate their regulations for the award and administration of grants and agreements. This workgroup drafted the proposed *Federal Register* notice to obtain public comment on the changes to the Federal grants and agreements policy framework that was published on June 6, 2003.
- NASA participates in the Grants Networking meetings to share agency information on grant and cooperative agreement processes with other Federal grant making agencies.

II. Internal Efforts to Create an Environment Conducive to Grants Streamlining and Simplification

The Sponsored Business Research Activity group of the NASA Office of Procurement conducts regular outreach activities with internal constituencies including the following:

- A teleconference is held every month with Grant Officers from all NASA Centers to discuss Grant Officer concerns and communicate changes in grant and cooperative agreement policy. For example, the NASA Office of Procurement has used this forum to educate Grant Officers on upcoming policy changes such as the announcement format change.
- The NASA Grants Steering Committee meets every month to discuss NASA policies related to grants and cooperative agreements. This committee includes various functional disciplines including legal, program management, education and outreach, resources management, and finance. This group worked together to create the “Guidebook for Proposers Responding to a NASA Research Announcement”.
- The NASA Office of Procurement regularly issues Grant Notices (GN) and Grant Information Circulars (GIC) to provide guidance in implementing policies. These issuances include changed pages to the NASA Grant and Cooperative Agreement Handbook to communicate policies in such areas as incremental funding, and changes in the contract numbering scheme.
- NASA’s web-based Procurement Library includes: the NASA FAR Supplement, the Grant and Cooperative Agreement Handbook, GNs, GICs, links to Center grants homepages, and grants points of contact.
- NASA is in the planning stages of developing a Shared Services Center to consolidate certain NASA business functions. NASA intends to consolidate grant and cooperative agreement awards through this center. By consolidating the grant

and cooperative agreement awards, NASA hopes to increase Grant Officer expertise in this area.

- The NASA Peer Review Services (NPRS) project office holds bi-monthly meetings on the status of SYS-EYFUS and NSPIRES development.*

NASA also conducts outreach activities to external constituencies including the following:

- NASA has an appointed University Liaison and Outreach official within its Office of Education. This official is responsible for spearheading NASA's effort to create synergy with universities and other educational institutions. For example, many universities need assistance in preparing grant proposals. In response to this concern, the NASA Office of Education sponsored a Grant Writing Seminar for the grant community to address both conceptual and practical aspects of the grant-writing process. This official also serves on the NASA Grants Steering Committee to help NASA understand how its policies affect the grant and cooperative agreement community.
- NASA is a member and a participant in the Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP). NASA uses this forum to update recipients on NASA policy changes and to discuss recipient concerns. In response to recipient concerns, NASA is in the process of changing three FDP grant and cooperative agreement provisions to eliminate duplicative reporting requirements and clarify security procedures.
- NASA developed a “Guidebook for Proposers Responding to a NASA Research Announcement (NRA)”. This comprehensive guidebook was written to assist the grant and cooperative agreement community in: (1) responding to NASA solicitations for research; (2) understanding the NASA award process; and (3) adhering to grant administration requirements. This guidebook is posted on NASA’s Research Opportunities webpage and is updated regularly.
- NASA’s SYS-EYFUS application system has the capacity to send bulk email messages to all registered users. NASA plans to use this system to communicate with potential applicants. There are approximately 6,000 registered users in the system, which have registered as a part of submitting a Notice of Intent for a NASA research proposal. For example, when NASA changes policies that affect users,

* SYS-EYFUS is not an electronic proposal system. Rather it is a system to manage research solicitation activity, plan for the receipt of research proposals, track the receipt and peer evaluation of these proposals, and manage funded research (grants, cooperative agreements, etc.) awards. The only proposal information that is requested electronically is the Notice of Intent to submit a proposal and a Proposal Summary. NASA does not require, or allow for the submission of, electronic proposals. This was done intentionally. NASA was aware of the Grants.Gov effort and when developing SYS-EYFUS great effort was made to only program in requirements that would allow the NASA research mission to continue uninterrupted and at reduced administrative cost to the taxpayer. NSPIRES is the next generation of SYS-EYFUS.

bulk email messages are a way NASA keeps the grant and cooperative agreement community informed.

- The NASA Office of Procurement has an “open-door” policy with the grant and cooperative agreement community to address their questions and concerns. For example, the NASA Office of Procurement has issued clarifications on security procedures and export control. NASA values the feedback it receives from the grant and cooperative agreement community and uses this information to periodically update NASA’s Grant and Cooperative Agreement Handbook.
- NASA is in the process of creating a “Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)” feature on its procurement webpage to address the common concerns of the grant and cooperative agreement community. The NASA Office of Procurement plans to post this feature on its Sponsored Research Business Activities page during FY04.

III Preparing for the Recent and Coming Changes Affecting the Pre-Award Process Including the Electronic Synopsis, Announcement Template, and the Grants.Gov Portal and Electronic Applications

A. Electronic Synopsis

- During this reporting period, NASA participated in the pilot period of Grants.Gov FIND by posting ten sample grant announcements using XML and an agency-to-agency interface.
- NASA is scheduled to begin operational posting of announcements of grant and cooperative agreement opportunities to the Grants.Gov FIND site beginning in October of 2003. The NASA Acquisition Internet Service (NAIS) contractor is in the process of modifying the Electronic Posting System (EPS) to interface with Grants.Gov FIND by October 1, 2003. This change is internal to NASA and will be seamless to the grant and cooperative agreement community.

B. Announcement Template

- The NASA Office of Procurement is in the process of preparing a *Federal Register* notice to revise the NASA Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Supplement and the NASA Grant and Cooperative Agreement Handbook to incorporate the revised format for announcements of grant and cooperative agreement opportunities. NASA plans to use the revised format during fiscal year 2004.
- The NASA Office of Procurement has used its monthly Grant Officer teleconferences and Grants Steering Committee meetings to provide advance notice of announcement format changes within NASA. The Grants Steering Committee is working with the Office of Procurement to develop the sections of the announcement format that are NASA-specific. This committee is also ensuring that

the announcement format reflects the requirements of all NASA programs, including research programs and educational programs. Before the implementation date, a GN and GIC will be issued to all NASA grant officials to provide practical guidance on these changes.

- To educate the grant and cooperative agreement community on the new format, NASA's Guidebook for Proposers Responding to a NASA Research Announcement (NRA) will be updated and posted to NASA's Research Opportunities web page in fiscal year 2004. The SYS-EYFUS system will send an email message to all registered users (approximately 6,000) informing them of the new changes posted on the web page.

C. The Grants.Gov Portal and Electronic Applications

- NASA is in the process of converting all of its grants and cooperative agreements to the Letter of Credit method of payment. As of January 2003, all recipients were required to request their grant payments through the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) / Payment Management System (PMS).
- NASA is developing a system called NSPIRES for the technical community to enhance and replace the SYS-EYFUS system as both the internal peer review support system for NASA and the web portal for the science research community to do research business with NASA. One key change to the system is the transition from the current Principal Investigator (PI) based system to a system that is organization based. This NSPIRES system will interface with the Grants.Gov site and provide functions that supplement the functions already served by Grants.Gov. The completion date for development of the first phase of NSPIRES is October 31, 2003.
- The NSPIRES system will include the following capabilities: organizational management of accounts and users, including PIs; electronic and non-electronic cover page preparation and submission in collaboration with Grants.Gov -- interfacing with Grants.gov "E-Apply"; Notice of Intent preparation and submission; annual progress and task book reporting; participation in the peer review process by the science community by supporting proposal reviews; announcement of NASA research opportunities in conjunction with NASA's postings to Grants.Gov; and publication of task books/results of NASA-funded research.
- Through the FDP, NASA has established a group of university-affiliated users who will participate in testing NSPIRES. It is NASA's expectation that by working with these FDP testers, NASA can implement an upgraded system that meets the needs of the end users in facilitating their business interactions with NASA and also meets NASA's internal business needs. For example, the NSPIRES system will interface with the Macintosh systems that are common in the university community and will send out reminder notices of required reports. The testers' review of the NSPIRES

system will include business rules, use cases, user interface design, and user friendliness criteria.

IV Other NASA Grants Streamlining and Simplification Efforts

- In order to facilitate a better understanding of NASA-supported research, NASA's Office of Biological and Physical Research develops comprehensive publications called Research Task Books each year. These Task Books, one for each research program area, include descriptions of all peer-reviewed projects, or tasks, funded by NASA during all or part of a particular fiscal year. These publications are an important source of information about NASA-funded research, providing users such as NASA program managers and scientists, funded investigators, peer reviewers of NASA grant proposals, the scientific community, and the Congress an up-to-date account of selected NASA research. NASA is currently working with its other research program offices to standardize its internal process for issuing Research Task Books.
- Principal Investigators are currently required to update their respective Task Book entries on an annual basis in addition to submitting their Technical Reports (Progress and Final) on the anniversary date of the award. NASA plans to combine the requirements of these two reports into one report with a single submittal date. This approach will ease the administrative burden on the Principal Investigators and retain the benefits of the compiled Task Book research information. NASA also plans to increase communication with the Principal Investigator and all interested grant parties by creating automatic "Report Due" and "Report Received" notifications.
- The E-Government Act of 2002 mandates that agencies publish summaries of R&D awards. NASA directed the development of an automated Abstract Collection and Transmittal System (ACTS) system (an extension of SYS-EYFUS) to collect abstracts directly from R&D contractors and recipients of grants and cooperative agreements.