Frequently Asked Questions

Below are questions related to the following topics to include: competitive & noncompetitive amendments, the National Environmental Protection Act of 1969 (NEPA), categorical exclusions (CEs), Recommendation for Funding Memorandum, Cooperative Institute (CI) and Grants Online contacts. Listed are questions and answers as they relate to each topic:

Question 1. What is the difference between the competitive and institutional application process?
Answer: A competitive application can be submitted to any Line Offices within NOAA based on the competitive award announcement.

An institutional application is submitted directly to the Cooperative Institute Program Office.

Question 2. Can a Principal Investigator at a Cooperative Institute apply for an open NOAA competitive award competition?
Answer: Yes. Using the Competitive Award Guidance Policy, PIs at CIs can apply for NOAA competitions outside of the CI.

Question 3. How does the recipient submit a proposal to Grants Online?
Answer: The proposal is submitted by the Authorized Representative at the recipient institution in Grants.gov using the unique program federal funding opportunity number (FFO) provided by the CI program office.

The proposal is automatically sent to Grants Online (GOL) once the proposal has been screened by Grants.gov. GOL then forwards the proposal to the Federal Program Officer (FPO) for review.

Question 4. How does the Grants Management Division receive the CI proposal from Grants Online?
Answer: The Grants Management Division will receive the proposal once the FPO forwards the application package via Grants Online. Please refer to the Grants Online Training site.

Question 5. What standard forms are required for recipients to submit their proposal application?
Answer: Recipients are required to complete the following forms:

- Standard Form 424-Application for Federal Assistance
- Standard Form 424A-Budget Information-Non-Construction Programs
- Standard Form 424B-Assurances-Non-Construction Programs
- Standard Form LLL-Disclosure of Lobbying Activities
- CD-511-Certifications Regarding Debarment, Suspension and Other Responsibility Matters; Drug Free Workplace Requirements Lobbying
- CD-S12-Certification Regarding Debannent, Suspension, Ineligibility and Voluntary Exclusion-Lower Tier Covered Transactions and Lobbying Information about

Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs in accordance with the provisions of the Executive Order 12372 (if the program is subject to review)

Question 6. Is there any other required materials needed before submitting a proposal application package to the Grants Officer in Grants Online?
Answer: Other materials that will be required before the amendment is forwarded to the Grants Officer include the following:

- CI Cover Letter
- Recommendation for Funding Memorandum

Question 7. Who reviews the amendment application package before it is forwarded to the Grant Officer?
Answer: The FPO reviews the application package before it is forwarded to the Grants Officer.

Question 8. What forms are required for the recipient to submit an amendment application?
Answer: Recipients are required to complete the following forms:

- Standard Form 424-Application for Federal Assistance
- Standard Form 424A-Budget Information-Non-Construction Programs
- CI Cover Letter
- Recommendation for Funding Memorandum

Question 9. What is a CI cover letter and why is it used?
Answer: The CI cover letter indicates which CI award the proposal needs to be associated with. The NOAA program office needs this letter to ensure the award will be sent to the correct FPO during the application process. The CI cover letter has information about the points of contact for the CI and the NOAA sponsor. It also has project details such as the task number, title of the proposal, and the amount of funding that is expected.

Question 10. What is the Recommendation for Funding Memorandum?
Answer: The Recommendation for Funding Memorandum is a recommendation from the NOAA sponsor to fund new or continued projects; the Funding Memorandum is completed by the NOAA Sponsor.

Question 11. Are there instructions for the NOAA Sponsor to follow when completing the Funding Memorandum?
Answer: The Recommendation for Funding Memorandum and the instructions can be found here on the CI website.

Question 12. How are funds transferred from the NOAA Sponsor to the CI program office?
Answer: The NOAA sponsor sends their preferred money transfer method in two ways: Business Operating Plan (BOP) or direct cite.

Question 13. What is the significance of National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA)?
Answer: Recipients of federal assistance are required to identify to the awarding agency

any impact an award will have on the quality of the human environment, and assist the agency to comply with this act.

Question 14. What is a categorical exclusion (CE)?
Answer: The Program Officer (PO) is responsible for identifying the "Environmental Review Procedures for Implementing the National Environmental Policy Act". The CE is important because it explains why the category is excluded from further environmental assessment.

The Program Manager will choose the correct CE to draft the CE Memorandum to complete the proposal review. The FPO must select one CE to forward the NEPA request to the Program Manager.

Question 15. What are the common NEPA categorical exclusions used that apply to CI awards?
Answer: The two commonly used CEs used for CI awards include: 6.03c3 (a) and 6.03c3 (d), however the Program Manager will select the correct CE once the proposal has been forwarded for review.

The Federal Program Officer (FPO) must select one or more categorical exclusions to move a proposal forward for NEPA review to the program manager in Grants Online.

Question 16. How does an FPO find the status of award actions submitted in Grants Online?
Answer: The FPO can find the status of an award action by:

- Go into Grants Online under the Award tab
- Click on the "Search Award" header and enter the award number
- Once the award number has been selected and the "Grants File" screen is in view, select the amendment number
- Once you have selected the amendment, then click on the "Workflow History"
- FPOs can also view the status of award in actions under the "Reports" tab
- Click on the "Award Tracking Report" header
- Fill in the following fields:
    - Start Fiscal Year
    - End Fiscal Year
    - Line Office
    - Program Office
    - CFDA Number
- Select the "Run" command and an excel spreadsheet will be available with the current award actions.

Question 17. When are annual Performance Progress Reports due?
Answer: The initial progress reports are due thirty (30) days after the first nine (9) months of the award. All subsequent progress reports are due on the twelve (12) month anniversary date of the award and should cover the last twelve (12) months.

Question 18. Are there specific guide lines that should be followed when preparing the annual performance progress reports?
Answer: Each year the Cooperative Institute Program Office (CIPO) issues a guidance memo to assist you with preparing your report. You can also get answers to your questions by contact the CIPO office at 301-734-1091

Question 19. Where are CI annual reports located?
Answer: CI annual reports are located on the CI website.

Question 20 Who do I contact in the Grants Management Division if I have a question?
Answer: You can reach the Grants Management Division Representative at 301-713-0942 ext. 135 during normal business hours of 8:00am to 6:00pm EST.

Question 21. Who do I contact for Grants Online assistance?
Answer: The Grants Online helpdesk is available to answer your related questions via email at GrantsOnline.helpdesk@noaa.gov. They can also be reached at the following phone numbers:
Phone: (301) 444-2112 or (877) 662-2478
Business hours: 8:00 am to 6:00 pm EST

Question 22. Who do I contact at the CI program office for assistance?
Answer: Please refer to the contact list for contact information, this list can be found on the CI website.