



# United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Washington, D.C. 20240

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## Memorandum

To: Service Directorate

From: **Acting**  
Director *Marshall P. Jones Jr.*

Subject: Financial Assistance Requirements: Standard Format for Program  
Announcements and Grants.gov Find (**Response Due: October 20, 2003**)

Over the past few years, Government-wide efforts have been underway to standardize and streamline Federal financial assistance (grants and cooperative agreements) processes, as required by the Federal Financial Management Improvement Act of 1999, Public Law 106-107. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has issued several recent policy directives that have implications for all Federal financial assistance programs. Over the summer, the draft directives were published in the Federal Register and discussed among the Service's Financial Assistance Management Forum. The Department issued interim policy related to the latest OMB directives on September 17, 2003. Due to its length, the DOI policy and other related information have been posted at [http://sii.fws.gov/r9cgs/financial\\_assistance.htm](http://sii.fws.gov/r9cgs/financial_assistance.htm). These directives address two primary initiatives:

- Implementing a standard format for financial assistance program announcements; and,
- Posting synopses of program announcements at Grants.gov FIND (<http://fedgrants.gov>).

The purpose of the standard format is to have Government-wide consistency that will make it easier for potential applicants to find information on Federal financial assistance opportunities. All program announcements, including paper and electronic issuances, will now be required to follow the specified format. The purpose of Grants.gov FIND is to establish a central electronic venue for synopses of announcements for Federal financial assistance funding opportunities. The data elements in Grants.gov FIND are designed to give applicants basic information about funding opportunities and provide information as to where to find the full announcement.

This policy becomes effective October 1, 2003, and applies to all discretionary grants and cooperative agreement announcements, regardless of the funding amount. Service financial assistance program announcements that have already been issued and will close prior to October 1, 2003, are exempt from this policy. Departmental policy also exempts non-discretionary assistance programs, such as many of the Federal Aid programs (see Section 8.B., "Exemptions," of the DOI policy for full details). Service program offices will be responsible for adapting their program announcements to the new standard format, as well as posting their program announcement synopses in Grants.gov FIND.

Discussions on the possible impact of these Government-wide financial assistance initiatives have begun in the Service's Financial Assistance Management Forum. This Forum was launched in November 2002 as a means to foster communication among Service grant managers and address some Service-wide financial assistance topics. The Forum is open to all Service financial assistance programs and includes Washington and Regional office representatives, and currently meets weekly (see the above web site for more information and Frequently Asked Questions). Based on the discussions to date, some Service financial assistance programs appear to be well positioned to adapt to the new format and posting requirements. Others will likely need to work closely with the Washington Office to identify the best way to implement these initiatives and other upcoming initiatives, such as competition and reporting requirements. In order to facilitate this communication, each program Assistant Director will need to appoint one contact person from their organization who will work with the Washington Office to begin discussing these issues and developing strategies for implementation. This initial contact needs to occur on a program-by-program basis and will include the Regions, as well as the Service's Financial Assistance Management Forum, in order to ensure full-circle communication within the bureau. Please e-mail the name of your designated individual to Rebecca Ferguson, Division of Contracting and Facilities Management (CFM), at [Rebecca\\_Ferguson@fws.gov](mailto:Rebecca_Ferguson@fws.gov) by October 20, 2003.

Finally, as previously mentioned, there are other pending initiatives that will likely be implemented in the near future. One of these initiatives is a draft Departmental policy regarding competition in financial assistance. The draft is available on CFM's intranet site at [http://sii.fws.gov/r9cgs/fin\\_assistance\\_initiatives.htm](http://sii.fws.gov/r9cgs/fin_assistance_initiatives.htm). Assistant Directors and Regional Directors are encouraged to submit consolidated comments to Rebecca Ferguson by October 20, 2003, who will then forward the comments to the Department. As the Service becomes aware of new initiatives, the drafts will be posted on the above referenced web site and you will be alerted through the Service's Financial Assistance Management Forum of their status and opportunities to comment.

Questions about this memo, the referenced interim policy and other related initiatives should be directed to Bob Ashworth or Rebecca Ferguson, in the Division of Contracting and Facilities Management, at (703) 358-1901.