PRIMER:
APPLYING FOR FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Congress has largely abandoned the practice of Congressionally-directed spending (often referred to as "earmarks"). As a result, federal agencies are awarding an increasing number of federal funding agreements through competitive, merit-based solicitations.

In considering whether to apply for federal financial assistance, potential applicants need to consider a number of issues:

- **Business plan**: Successful applicants must be able to clearly articulate the scope of their project, including project partners, and make disclosures and financial commitments. Assess whether a funding opportunity is right for your business.

- **Financial needs and capabilities**: Be prepared to commit to cover a share of project costs. In some cases, the level of applicant cost-share is a key competitive factor.

- **Eligibility**: Many federal funding opportunities include nuanced requirements for eligibility.

- **Invest in a competitive application**: Preparing a competitive application requires an investment of time and money, which typically takes a *minimum* of 2 to 4 weeks.

- **Competition is fierce**: Many applications are not successful. Be realistic about the chances an application will be successful.

DETAILED APPLICATION PROCESS

The following provides an overview of the steps for submitting a competitive application:

I. **Steps to take *before* applying for a grant opportunity**

    A. **Verify that your Adobe Software Version is Compatible with www.grants.gov.**
        o http://www.grants.gov/applicants/AdobeVersioningTestOnly.jsp

    NOTE: The pre-application registration process can take 2 to 3 weeks (or longer).

B. Apply for a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number.
The U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has adopted the use of the DUNS number as a way to identify organizations that receive grant awards, and to track how grant money is dispersed.

- o Information needed to apply:
    - Organization name.
    - Organization address.
    - Local telephone number.
    - Name of CEO/organization owner.
    - Legal structure of the organization.
    - Year the organization started.
    - Primary line of business.
    - Total number of employees.
- o Apply:
    - Online: http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform/displayHomePage.do.
    - By phone: 1-866-705-5711.

C. Apply for a Central Contractor Registration (CCR) Number.
CCR is a government-wide registry for vendors doing business with the federal government. The website used by the federal government to announce most federal funding opportunities (www.grants.gov) uses CCR to establish roles and IDs for those electronically applying for grants.

- o Before registering with CCR, you should make sure that you have the following:
    - DUNS number.
    - IRS Employment Identification Number (EIN) or Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN).
- o Register online for a CCR number at: http://www.ccr.gov.

D. Apply for a Marketing Partner ID (MPIN) Number and an E-business Point of Contact (E-Biz POC) Number.
A MPIN is a personal code that the E-Biz POC for your organization creates when registering with the CCR. The MPIN acts as a password and is used to assign an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR).

- o To obtain an MPIN:
    - Go to www.ccr.gov.

- Click on "Update or Renew Registration," then follow the instructions.
- Once you have logged in, click on the "Points of Contact" tab.
- Scroll down to "Government Business POC" and complete all of the fields including the MPIN and email address.

II. Register for Grant Opportunities.

In order to download the official documents and submit an application for a federal funding opportunity, you must be registered online with grants.gov. *NOTE: Acknowledgment of registration can take 3 to 5 business days (or more).*

o Register online: http://www.grants.gov/applicants/get_registered.jsp.

III. Download the Application Package.

Follow the link provided in the Federal Funding Opportunity Announcement. A library of key federal funding opportunity announcements can be found at: www.vnf.com/funding.

IV. Understand the FOA Requirements.

Depending on the funding opportunity announcement (FOA), the federal agency may require a Letter of Intent, Concept Paper or other submission as a prerequisite to submitting a full application. These are often due in the weeks and months prior to the application deadline. Alternatively, some FOAs solicit project proposals in phases, while others specifically request one application for the entire proposal.

Importantly, each FOA has different requirements that must be fulfilled for an application to pass an initial review before it will even be considered for merit review. In order to avoid being eliminated for further consideration, it is important to understand and comply with the application requirements and be responsive to the objectives of the FOA before submitting your application.

V. Complete the Application Package.

Development of a successful application requires collaboration of technical and business professionals within the applicant's organization. It also requires the applicant to work closely with project partners in putting together a winning

proposal and with enough lead time to collaboratively develop the scope of the proposal.

Successful applicants are often aided by experienced professionals who understand the policy, strategic and technical priorities of the grant-making agency and the nuances associated with applying for federal funding opportunities.

Errors can cause otherwise qualified applicants to lose grant opportunities. Common errors include: ineligibility due to application formatting, technical issues or not being responsive to the solicitation requirements; failure to effectively describe the applicant's strengths; or failure to frame an application in a manner that is cognizant of agency priorities.

VI.   Submit the Application Package.

There can be technical glitches in submitting an electronic application on time. Applicants should be prepared to submit their application at least 48 hours in advance of the application deadline in order to avoid any such problems.

For funding opportunities administered by the U.S. Department of Energy's Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA-E), applicants must submit their applications through the ARPA-E Exchange. Applicants can register with ARPA-E Exchange here: https://arpa-e-foa.energy.gov/Registration.aspx

VII.   Post Award.

After the agency makes its awards, there is still work to be done. The grantee and the awarding agency must negotiate the terms of the grant in order to maximize the funding opportunity.

About Van Ness Feldman

Van Ness Feldman has helped clients secure nearly $3 billion in federal funding for projects in recent years. The firm's lawyers and policy professionals are experienced in every step of the funding process, including developing and implementing strategies for securing appropriations from Congress, shaping agency funding programs, assisting with the development of funding applications, negotiating funding agreements, and managing ongoing reporting and compliance requirements. For more information on the firm's capabilities in this area, please contact Shannon Angielski or any member of the firm's Federal Funding Practice at 202.298.1800.