DEPARTMENTAL MANUAL

TRANSMITTAL SHEET

PART	SUBJECT	RELEASE NUMBER
505 DM 2	FEDERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS Grants Administration Procurement Contracts, Grant and Cooperative Agreements	3784
FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT Office of Acquisition and Property Management		DATE JAN 9 2008

EXPLANATION OF MATERIAL TRANSMITTED:

This Departmental Manual Release, 505 DM 2, updates Departmental policy on procurement contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements which upholds the principle that the bureaus will use appropriate instruments for acquiring goods and services or in providing financial assistance. The policy is being revised to provide guidance for circumstances in which bureaus are working with known partners and incorporates OMB provisions allowing an exception to posting single source awards on Grants.gov. It provides criteria for justifying single source awards and requires more accountability through periodic compliance reviews and appropriate documentation.

The revision also changes the role of the Solicitor's Office to provide legal review where it's most needed for federal financial assistance programs in the review and development of new programs and policies or when a proposed cooperative agreement or grant is of such complexity or novelty that a legal review is warranted. The threshold of $750,000 and above requiring SOL review of grant and cooperative agreement awards is eliminated.

James E Cason

Associate Deputy Secretary

FILING INSTRUCTIONS:

Remove:	Insert:
505 DM 2 (5 sheets)	505 DM 2 (6 sheets)

Department of the Interior
Departmental Manual

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Part 505: Grants Administration
Chapter 2: Procurement Contracts, Grant and Cooperative Agreements

Originating Office: Office of Acquisition and Property Management

505 DM 2

2.1 **Purpose.** This chapter provides Departmental guidance to implement provisions of the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act, the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act, and related guidance issued by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and it updates Departmental guidance on Grants.gov requirements and processes.

2.2 **Background.** The OMB final guidance on the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act was published in the Federal Register on August 18, 1978, (43 FR 36860). The Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977 (revised and incorporated in the provisions at Title 31 U.S.C. §§ 6301-6308) and hereinafter referred to as the "Act", characterizes the relationship between executive agencies and contractors, States, local governments, and other recipients in acquiring property and services and in providing United States Government assistance. The Act also prescribes criteria for executive agencies in selecting appropriate legal instruments to achieve (a) uniformity in their use by executive agencies; (b) a clear definition of the relationship they reflect; and (c) a better understanding of the responsibilities of the parties to them. The Act seeks to promote increased discipline in selecting and using procurement contracts, grant agreements, and cooperative agreements, to maximize competition in making procurement contracts, and to encourage competition in making grant agreements and cooperative agreements. Title 31 U.S.C. §§ 6301-6308, however, will not be cited as the authority for any grant, contract, or cooperative agreement.

2.3 **Authority.** The Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 1999, Public Law (P.L.) 106-107, was enacted to improve the effectiveness and performance of Federal financial assistance programs, to simplify Federal financial assistance application and reporting requirements, to improve the delivery of services to the public, and to facilitate greater coordination among those responsible for delivering such services.

2.4 **Applicability.**

A. The authorities for this chapter apply to all bureau and office programs which use procurement contracts, grant agreements, and cooperative agreements, and to all recipients eligible for these awards. This chapter also applies to Federally recognized Indian tribal governments, except for those awards made pursuant to the authority of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (P.L. 93-638, 88 Stat. 2204), as amended.

However, Sec. 9 of P.L. 93-638 does provide for use of a grant agreement or cooperative agreement when mutually agreed to by the Secretary of the Interior and the tribal organization involved.

B. This chapter does not apply to instruments such as intra- and inter-agency agreements, international agreements (excluding grants and cooperative agreements with foreign recipients), memoranda of understanding or agreement, cooperative research and development agreements, concession contracts, or permits. Licenses, sale documents, leases, and special use permits are covered by this issuance only when issued for the purpose of public support or stimulation.

2.5 **Definitions.**

A. Financial Assistance - The transfer of a thing of value from a Federal agency to an eligible recipient to carry out a public purpose of support or stimulation as authorized by a law of the United States. An agency may provide financial assistance through various types of transactions including grants, cooperative agreements, loans, loan guarantees, interest subsidies, insurance, food commodities, direct appropriations, and transfers of property in place of money.

B. Discretionary Grant - A grant program that permits the Federal Government, according to specific authorizing legislation, to exercise judgment in selecting the project, grantee/recipient organization, and/or the amount of the award through a competitive grant process.

C. Mandatory Grant - A grant program in which the Federal agency is required to make an award based on prerequisites specified by statute or implementing program regulations, e.g., an entity submits an acceptable State Plan or application that meets the eligibility and compliance requirements of the statutory and regulatory provisions of the grant program. There is generally no competition for funds among eligible entities in mandatory grants.

D. Single Source - A funding opportunity specifically directed to a known recipient, e.g., a friends' group, fundraising partner, non-governmental organization, landowner or geographically positioned entity, either statutorily designated or determined by a bureau or office to be an appropriate partner based on demonstrable criteria, such as unique expertise or capacity.

2.6 **Policy**. Consistent with the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act and the guidance provided in this DM chapter, bureaus and offices will determine and use the appropriate instrument (i.e., procurement contract, grant agreement, or cooperative agreement) when acquiring property and services or in providing financial assistance. Files should be documented, with justification of the appropriate financial assistance instruments. Bureaus are encouraged to seek advice from the Office of the Solicitor on the selection of an award instrument, as needed. Bureaus will conduct periodic reviews to ensure compliance with this policy and will use the following criteria when determining to use a procurement contract, grant agreement or cooperative agreement:

A. Procurement contracts will be used as legal instruments reflecting a relationship between the bureau or office and a State, local government, or other awardee when the principal purpose of the instrument is to acquire (by purchase, lease, or barter) property or services for the direct benefit or use of the Government or when the head of the agency determines, in a specific instance, that the use of a procurement contract is appropriate.

B. Grant agreements will be used as legal instruments when the relationship between the bureau or office and a State, local government, or other recipient has as its principal purpose the transfer of a thing of value to the recipient in order to carry out a public purpose of support or stimulation authorized by a law of the United States and substantial involvement is not expected between the bureau or office and the State, local government, or other recipient when carrying out the activity contemplated in the agreement.

C. Cooperative agreements will be used as legal instruments when the relationship between the bureau or office and a State, local government, or other recipient has as its principal purpose the transfer of a thing of value to State or local government or other recipient to carry out a public purpose of support or stimulation authorized by a law of the United States and substantial involvement is expected between the bureau or office and the State, local government, or other recipient when carrying out the activity contemplated in the agreement.

2.7 **Exemptions.**

A. The Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act provides for the Director of the OMB to exempt individual transactions or programs from the Act.

B. Requests for exemptions to the Act will be submitted by heads of bureaus and offices through the appropriate program Assistant Secretary and the Director, Office of Acquisition and Property Management (PAM)) to the Assistant Secretary, Policy, Management and Budget (AS/PMB). PAM will review and coordinate such requests, on behalf of the AS/PMB, prior to forwarding to OMB. Requests for exemptions will be coordinated with the Office of the Solicitor prior to forwarding requests to the appropriate program Assistant Secretary.

2.8 **Responsibilities.**

A. Assistant Secretary - Policy, Management and Budget. The AS/PMB is the Secretarial officer responsible for implementing the Act and the supplemental guidance issued by OMB.

B. Office of Acquisition and Property Management. On behalf of the AS/PMB, PAM is responsible for providing Departmental oversight, implementing the Act, and serving as the DOI representative to OMB, with final decision making by the AS/PMB. PAM is also responsible for coordinating with the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization on all matters involving business development programs which relate to the requirements of the Act (i.e. procurement contracts).

C. Program Assistant Secretaries. Each Program Assistant Secretary is responsible for ensuring that bureaus and offices under their jurisdiction implement and comply with the Act and requirements of this chapter. Assistant Secretaries must also review, reject or recommend approval of all requests prepared by bureaus and offices under their jurisdiction for exemptions to the Act in accordance with the provisions of 505 DM 2.7.

D. Office of the Solicitor. The Office of the Solicitor (SOL) will assist bureaus and offices with legal questions which may arise as the result of implementing the Act, the OMB guidance, and the provisions of this issuance, normally within seven (7) workdays. Cooperative agreements and grant awards, issued under well-established programs, do not require SOL review, unless requested. However, SOL will assist bureaus in review or development of new programs or policies affecting future allocations of financial assistance awards, including grants and cooperative agreements. SOL will review and advise the bureau or office, upon request, if a proposed cooperative agreement or grant is of such complexity or novelty or exhibits intellectual property issues or potential conflicts of interest, or other such concerns to warrant legal review.

E. Bureaus and Offices. Heads of bureaus and offices will identify the actions required to carry out the policies, procedures, and guidelines established in this issuance and designate those officials responsible for them. Necessary actions include, but are not limited to:

(1) Establishing procedures for determining proper selection of award instruments to be used for supporting bureau or office programs. These procedures may include official determinations that instruments to be used in making awards within a specific program are contracts, grant agreements, or cooperative agreements in keeping with 505 DM 2.6. Procedures must also be established for the conduct of reviews at an organization level separate from the level where the determinations are made to ensure objectivity in the decision-making process and to ensure that assistance instruments are not being used to circumvent applicable Federal procurement laws or regulations. Written determinations regarding selection of award instruments must contain complete information on the nature of the relationship between the bureau or office and the recipient to justify the use of the instrument selected. For competitive grant awards, it is sufficient to provide the written justification at the program level, e.g., not for each individual recipient of a competitive grant under the grant program. Public notices, solicitations, or requests for applications should indicate the type of relationship contemplated (procurement or assistance), the instrument to be used, and for cooperative agreements, an explicit statement of Federal programmatic involvement.

(2) Assuring that recipients of Federal funds are required to maintain adequate records to permit review by the Secretary, the Inspector General, the Comptroller General of the United States, or their authorized representatives.

(3) Preparing for each cooperative agreement an explicit statement of substantial Federal programmatic involvement which includes the nature, character, and extent of the anticipated Federal involvement. This statement is to be part of the official agreement and file.

(4) Establishing oversight and review procedures to ensure compliance with the Act, the OMB final guidance, and this issuance.

(5) Obtaining review by SOL of proposed cooperative agreements and grants, regardless of dollar amount, when review is advisable because of complexity, novelty, intellectual property issues, potential conflicts of interest, or other such concerns to warrant legal review. Cooperative agreements and grant awards issued under well-established programs do not require SOL review, unless requested. However, bureaus will seek legal advice from SOL in the review or development of new programs or policies affecting future allocations of financial assistance awards, including grants and cooperative agreements.

(6) Periodically conducting compliance reviews on competitive grant and cooperative agreement criteria, procedures and awards and meeting internal control review requirements for financial assistance programs under OMB Circular A-123, Management's Responsibility for Internal Controls and Appendix A, Internal Control over Financial Reporting. These reviews of all financial assistance awards, conducted on a 4-year cycle, will highlight any program changes and improvements, implemented or proposed.

2.9 **Selection of an Award Instrument.**

A. Procurement Contract. The basic criterion for selection of a procurement contract is that the relationship between the bureau or office and the awardee is for the principal purpose of acquiring (by purchase, lease, or barter) property or services for the direct benefit or use of the Federal Government.

B. Grant Agreement and Cooperative Agreement.

(1) The basic criterion for selection of a grant agreement or cooperative agreement is that its primary function is to carry out a public purpose of support or stimulation, and for the cooperative agreement, substantial involvement is expected between the bureau or office and the recipient when carrying out the activity contemplated in the agreement.

(2) Anticipated substantial Federal involvement is a relative rather than an absolute concept. In general, when the terms of an assistance instrument indicate the recipient can expect to perform the project without bureau or office collaboration, participation, or intervention (as long as performance is in accordance with the terms of the assistance instrument) substantial involvement is not anticipated. When the assistance instrument indicates the recipient can expect bureau or office collaboration or participation in the management or performance of the project, substantial Federal involvement is anticipated.

(3) The following examples are not meant to be a checklist or to be considered as individual determinants, but as a basic guide to selecting the proper assistance instrument:

(a) A bureau, office or organizational unit may anticipate substantial involvement when it: (i) participates and collaborates jointly with the recipient partner, volunteer, scientist, technician or other personnel, in carrying out the scope of work, trains recipient personnel, or details Federal personnel to work on the project effort; (ii) reviews and approves one stage of work before the next stage can begin; (iii) reviews and approves proposed

modifications or sub-grants, prior to the award; (iv) helps select project staff or trainees; (v) directs or redirects the work because of interrelationships with other projects; (vi) has power to halt immediately an activity if detailed performance specifications are not met; and (vii) limits recipient discretion with respect to scope of work, organizational structure, staffing, mode of operations and other management processes, coupled with close monitoring or operational involvement during performance.

(b) Anticipated substantial involvement during performance does not include: (i) Government approval of recipient plans prior to award; (ii) normal exercise of Federal stewardship responsibilities during the project period such as site visits, performance reporting, financial reporting, and review to insure that the objectives, terms and conditions of the award are accomplished; (iii) unanticipated Government involvement to correct deficiencies in project or financial performance from the terms of the assistance instrument; (iv) general statutory requirements understood in advance of the award such as civil rights, environmental protection, and provisions for the handicapped; (v) Government review of performance after completion of the assisted activity; and (vi) general administrative requirements, such as those included in OMB Circulars A-21, A-87, A-102, A-110, A-133, and applicable implementing regulations.

(4) The determination to use a cooperative agreement will in all cases be based on the need for substantial Federal involvement in the assisted activity after considering a variety of factors including the management, financial, and technical needs of the recipient.

(5) Federal involvement in cooperative agreements will be limited to the minimum required consistent with program requirements. Nothing in the Act should be construed as allowing the Government to increase its involvement beyond that which is authorized by applicable laws and OMB requirements.

(6) Should bureau or office programs now using grant agreements require in the future the award of cooperative agreements exclusively for particular activities, this determination should be based on statutory requirements or policy level determinations of the need for substantial Federal involvement in the performance of an assisted project.

2.10 **Grant Agreement and Cooperative Agreement Structure and Contents.**

A. The grant agreement or cooperative agreement will be structured in a manner which:

(1) Adequately describes the relationship based upon the degree of involvement of the parties; and

(2) Defines and allocates respective responsibilities, obligations, rights, and accountability as appropriate to the particular project. Requirements contained in statutes and implementing regulations will govern.

B. The grant agreement or cooperative agreement will set forth the respective rights and obligations of the parties in such areas as project performance and management, partial or total

termination of the work, changes in the scope of work, period of performance, application of funding and resources, title to property, records maintenance and access, liability, etc. Each agreement will be clear and concise and will include terms agreed upon between the parties. A grant agreement or cooperative agreement will include, as a minimum, the following provisions or items:

(1) Notification of Award will:

(a) Identify the agreement by entering thereon a document number which will be compatible with the Federal Assistance Award Data System;

(b) Provide the name and address of the recipient in the award agreement and, the names, titles, office address, and telephone numbers for the respective bureau/office and recipient project managers;

(c) Identify the project by program code (e.g., CFDA number) and a brief summary of the purpose of the project;

(d) Identify basic funding information (e.g., the total amount of funds initially obligated by the grant agreement or cooperative agreement);

(e) Specify the project period;

(f) Identify the bureau or program office which has been assigned responsibility for execution and administration of the agreement; and,

(g) Provide unique Identifier of Entity and Parent Entity, if applicable.

(2) U.S. Code citation(s) to the statutory authorization and/or appropriation permitting expenditure of the identified funds for an authorized purpose. If the authority is not codified, then the citation(s) will identify the Public Law by name and year and provide the specific section and, as appropriate, title or subtitle containing the authority. The Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act will not be cited as authority.

(3) A statement of joint objectives, schedule, if applicable, project management plan, general terms and conditions (e.g., OMB Circulars, property management and disposal, payment methods) or a referenced Departmental Internet site where general terms and conditions may be found, and special conditions (e.g., technical requirements, special reporting/legislative requirements), if required.

2.11 Administrative Requirements for Grant Agreements and Cooperative Agreements.

A. The basic administrative requirements applicable to an individual grant agreement or cooperative agreement will be determined by the type of recipient.

B. For recipients covered by OMB Circular A-102, "Grants and Cooperative Agreements with State and Local Governments," and implementing regulations at 43 CFR Part 12, Subpart C or OMB Circular A-110, "Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Nonprofit Organizations," and implementing regulations at 43 CFR Part 12, Subpart F, the administrative requirements specified in these circulars and regulations will apply unless a waiver has been obtained from OMB (see 505 DM 3.5 or 505 DM 5.5).

C. The administrative requirements will always reflect the cooperative effort and the respective interests, investments and rights of the parties to the agreement.

D. The Federal Audit Clearinghouse operates on behalf of OMB and maintains a database of completed audits, provides appropriate information to agencies, and is responsible for following up with known auditees that have not submitted the data collection forms and reporting packages.

E. Bureau/office programs are responsible for accessing the Federal Audit Clearinghouse website (http://harvester.census.gov/sac/) to determine when audit reports have been submitted. If reports have not been submitted, bureau/office programs will request follow-up action by the Clearinghouse. At their discretion, and in accordance with guidance at 43 CFR 12, programs may consider the imposition of sanctions, e.g., award no new grants, in cases of continued inability or unwillingness of applicable financial assistance awardees to have audits conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Single Audit Act of 1984, as amended, and OMB Circular A-133.

2.12 **Posting Grant and Cooperative Agreement Funding Opportunities**. In order to provide the public opportunity to view potential funding opportunities (as recipients and possible sub-grantees) thereby maintaining transparency consistent with the customer service mandates prescribed in P.L. 106-107, synopses of all cooperative agreement and discretionary grant funding opportunities must be posted to Grants.gov (www.grants.gov). Exceptions include:

A. Programs that only publish funding opportunities in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA);

B. Announcements of funding opportunities for awards less than $25,000 for which 100 percent of eligible applicants live outside of the United States;

C. Single source announcements of funding opportunities issued by an agency which are specifically directed to a known recipient;

D. The exception cited at 505 DM 2.4A;

E. An award for which there is insufficient time available (due to a compelling and unusual urgency, or substantial danger to health or safety) for adequate competitive procedures to be followed;

2.13 **Competition for Federal Financial Assistance Awards.** Competition in making awards through cooperative agreements is strongly encouraged and is expected in awarding discretionary grants, unless otherwise directed by Congress. In all cases, bureaus and offices are required to make awards based on the merits in accordance with the law.

2.14 **Single Source Determinations.** The Department recognizes that there are circumstances where an organization or an individual may be determined to be an appropriate partner based on demonstrable criteria such as unique expertise or capacity to receive an award through a cooperative agreement without competition. Applying the criteria set forth in this section, bureaus and offices must consider the totality of circumstances in determining whether to authorize a single-source award. Decisions to transfer funds under a cooperative agreement to a single source without engaging in competition must be able to withstand scrutiny, should protect the public interest, and should comport with management priorities, objectives and statutory requirements.

A. When anticipating a single-source award for $25,000 and above, the bureau or office must, prior to issuance:

(1) Publish a notice of its intent to make the award either in the Federal Register or on Grants.gov, in order to provide for transparency; and,

(2) Prepare a written justification and document the file to explain why competition is not practicable, including a statement of which criteria described below justify the action and why. The justification will include a discussion of the program legislative history, unique capabilities of the proposed recipient, and cost-sharing contribution offered by the proposed recipient, as applicable.

B. Criteria for Justifying Award Without Competition. In order for an assistance award to be made without competition, the award must satisfy one or more of the following criteria:

(1) Unsolicited proposal - The proposed award is the result of an unsolicited assistance application which represents a unique or innovative idea, method or approach which is not the subject of a current or planned contract or assistance award, but which is deemed advantageous to the program objectives;

(2) Continuation - The activity to be funded is necessary to the satisfactory completion of, or is a continuation of an activity presently being funded, and for which competition would have a significant adverse effect on the continuity or completion of the activity.

(3) Legislative intent - The language in the applicable authorizing legislation or legislative history clearly indicates Congress' intent to restrict award to a particular recipient or purpose.

(4) Unique Qualifications - The applicant is uniquely qualified to perform the activity based upon a variety of demonstrable factors such as location, property ownership,

voluntary support capacity, cost-sharing ability, if applicable, technical expertise, or other such unique qualifications;

(5) Emergencies - Program/award where there is insufficient time available (due to a compelling and unusual urgency, or substantial danger to health or safety) for adequate competitive procedures to be followed.

2.15 **Posting Grant Agreement and Cooperative Agreement Applications.** Bureaus and offices will make every effort to meet annual goals assigned to the Department of the Interior in support of the standardization and streamlining requirements of P.L. 106-107 and government-wide E-Gov initiatives, by posting grant and cooperative agreement application packages using the appropriate Standard Form 424 on Grants.gov. Additionally, bureaus will strongly encourage potential applicants to use Grants.gov when submitting responses to posted applications.

2.16 **Awarding Discretionary Grant Agreements and Cooperative Agreements**

A. Independent Objective Evaluation of Grant Agreement and Cooperative Agreement Applications. If consistent with the statute authorizing the program, bureaus and offices will develop procedures which provide for an independent objective evaluation of the applications prior to award. In developing the procedures, consideration will be given to ensuring that applications are reviewed and evaluated by qualified reviewers; applications are scored on the basis of announced criteria; applications are ranked; and funding determinations made. Submissions from debarred or suspended applicants may be considered and reviewed because the applicant's debarred or suspended status may change between proposal submission and actual award. However, awards may not be made to applicants who remain debarred or suspended at the time the award would be made.

B. Notification to Unsuccessful Applicants. Unsuccessful applicants include both those whose applications were disapproved and those whose applications were approved but not funded. Both types of unsuccessful applicants should be promptly notified of the actions taken on their request and given an explanation of the reasons why their applications were unsuccessful.

2.17 **Authority to Vest Title in Tangible Personal Property for Research.** The Act provides for the head of an executive agency to vest title in tangible personal property in a nonprofit institution of higher education or in a nonprofit organization whose primary purpose is conducting scientific research when the property is bought with amounts provided under a procurement contract, grant agreement, or cooperative agreement with the institution or organization to conduct basic or applied scientific research. This authority may be exercised when the head of the agency decides the vesting of title furthers the objectives of the agency, there is no further obligation to the United States Government, and other conditions, if any, the head of the agency considers appropriate are met. Requests to use this authority will be coordinated with the Office of the Solicitor.

2.18 **Use of Multiple Relationships for Different Parts of Jointly Financed Projects.** The Act does not require an executive agency to establish only one relationship between the United States Government and a State, local government, or other recipient on a jointly financed project involving amounts from more than one program or appropriation when different relationships would otherwise be appropriate and beneficial for different parts of the project.