

Tips for On-Line Applications

By: Cheryl Kester

It's certainly not news to most of us that more funders are requiring applications or Letters of Inquiry to be submitted on-line. The complexity of these on-line methods ranges from simple e-mail forms with a few checkboxes and a "send" button to the ever-favorite Grants.gov.

Here are a few tips that can help make your transition into the world of on-line grant seeking a little easier.

Work Off-Line, not "Live." Compose responses in a word processor and paste them into the web form.

For many reasons, if you are responding to a question with more than a sentence or two, it makes sense to compose your response in a word processor where you can save it, edit it, think it over, count the words, run spell check, and treat it as carefully as you would a traditional print application.

Print Everything. Print a copy of any form before you submit it. Before you click "submit," print off a copy of the form you've just filled out. You may not find out until after you've submitted that you get no other chance to keep a record of your application. While some sites offer you a printer-friendly version at the end, some don't. Assume the one you're working on won't.

Use Word Count.

Some web forms may say "Describe Project Objectives," and then state that you must answer within 250 words, or even scarier, 3200

characters. Before you try to start counting letters on your screen, be assured that word processors provide an automatic word or character counting feature.

But, did you know that there are two ways computers count characters? One counts just letters and numbers, but one includes the spaces between characters in its total. Which method does your funder use? If you make sure your text does not exceed the maximum number of characters by asking your computer to count "characters with spaces," you won't have your prose truncated by a computer that counts differently than you do.

Other Tips for Using Word Count:

- using your mouse, select only the text you want counted before clicking "word count," or it will count all of the text of your entire document
- if you're handy with techie features, add a "word count" button to your toolbar
- always come in under the maximum word or character limit

Get the WHOLE Application Before Starting.

Some web sites require you to complete one page before you can even see what questions appear on the next page. You want to find a way to see all of the application questions before you begin filling out the form. You can do this by entering some placeholder text into any required fields so that you can proceed to the next page. Print out the pages or paste them into your word processor so that you have the entire

application in one place. At the final page, click "cancel" or "back" to avoid submitting the application.

What you don't want is to waste your maximum number of words or your time answering a question on Page 2 that you would have answered differently if you had known about the questions on Page 3. Also, if you don't have all of the questions when you begin writing, you may have to stop in the middle to get additional information before you can proceed.

If the web site provides no way to save a partially-completed application in process, you will have lost all of your work up until that point.

Don't Be Afraid of Grants.Gov. If you can follow directions and give yourself enough time, Grants.gov is not as scary as it may sound.

There is a lot we could say about Grants.gov, but here are few highlights. The most complicated and time consuming part is registering with the Central Contractor Registry (CCR). While this is required before you can submit an application, you only have to do this once.

TIP: If your organization is a university or hospital, some or all of the CCR process may have already been completed. Don't start from scratch unless you determine that you must.

Don't wait for the registration process to be complete before beginning work on your application. Anyone can access Grants.gov, download applications and compile an

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SAS #112: It's a Whole New Ball Game

by Cindy Bergvall, CPA

This past year some significant changes have taken place in the audit industry. As a result of the issues with companies such as Enron, Tyco, Worldcom, etc., the industry has instituted numerous changes for publicly held companies. Those changes are now filtering down to the privately held companies, municipal and non profit sector.

As you know, the auditing industry is governed by "Statements of Auditing Standards" or "SAS's". Earlier in 2006, SAS #102 to #112 were issued. SAS #102, #103, and #112 were effective for years ending 12/31/06. The others will be effective for the year ending 12/31/07.

SAS #112 provides guidance to auditors in communicating internal control issues identified in the audit. It establishes new definitions for audit findings, now referred to as deficiencies, and provides guidance on what would be considered deficiencies and therefore must be reported. This is the SAS that you will find has the greatest impact on your audit.

Whenever a new standard is issued, questions arise and implementation guidance is issued. Implementation guidance was issued for SAS #112 in late fall and questions continue on some of the matters. In the coming year, as more accountants put this SAS into practice, some of the guidance may change.

Brief overview:

- You will need to be more actively involved in the preparation of the financial statements and adjusting entries
- Audit findings will most likely increase because they are now more defined
- The date of the audit report will be very close to the report release date
- For the year end 12/31/07 and going forward, the audit procedures that your auditor performs will most likely change

Increasing standards and regulations in all areas of your organization can be burdensome. Hopefully the additional knowledge that you gain about your financial statements will be beneficial.

At this point we have implemented the effective SAS's with our clients with December 31, 2006, year ends. Although it has been a bit more time consuming for the clients to review the schedules and in some cases, prepare more information and entries for the audit, we have seen benefits in these circumstances:

- Clients have gained additional knowledge about necessary disclosures
- Clients are more informed of the day to day details than we are, and in the process of reviewing things from this angle have brought some items to light, that have added to the information in the financial statements
- Clients have taken more ownership of the statements and feel more prepared for Board or citizen questions

SAS #112 FACT SHEET

Redefines the terms used to communicate findings and expands the ways findings need to be categorized and reported. The result is that most entities will receive more comments and the comments will be categorized with stronger terminology. The following chart compares the terminology and category of findings before and after SAS #112.

Prior to SAS #112	SAS #112
Verbal Comment	Control Deficiency
Management Letter Comment	Significant Deficiency
Reportable conditions	Significant Deficiency, that is a material weakness
Reportable condition that was a material weakness	Significant Deficiency, that is a material weakness

The auditor can no longer rely on the use of their judgment alone to draw certain conclusions. Documentation and proof of the conclusion need to be obtained and maintained in the audit workpapers.

SAS #112 continued:

Management needs to evidence their understanding of not just the accounting process but the reporting process as well. This includes the:

- Financial statements and footnotes
- Adjusting journal entries
- Accruals

At this point, management is still permitted to outsource preparation of the financial statements and adjusting journal entries to the outside auditor. However, management needs to review and approve the financial statements and adjustments prepared by the auditor and evidence that approval to demonstrate responsibility and understanding of the financial preparation process.

Management needs to have internal controls over the reporting process. This can be accomplished as follows:

- Review the supporting documentation and explanations for journal entries we propose and approve those entries
- Review the adequacy of financial statement disclosures by completing a disclosure checklist or reviewing and approving the completed disclosure checklist we will provide to you
- Review and approve schedules and calculations supporting amounts included in the notes to financial statements
- Review and approve the cash flow worksheet used in preparing the statement of cash flows
- Review the financial statement compared to the prior year and compared to budget
- Review the fixed asset register and approve additions, deletions, and the depreciation calculation
- Perform other procedures as deemed necessary

You may decide from a cost-benefit standpoint to accept a significant deficiency. Preliminary conversations with clients and other CPA firms indicate that a number of entities will be going this route.

Online Applications, continued:

application without registering (you do have to download their free software to use their documents). The only thing you cannot do is submit an application via Grants.gov until your organization is properly set up with the CCR. This means that you can be working on the application while the CCR process is taking place.

Grants.gov provides very clear checklists under the “Get Registered” link. Print them off, and follow them carefully, and the registration process will actually proceed pretty smoothly.

Then, submit early. Grants.gov will notify you within 48 hours if it detects technical problems with your application. Leave yourself time to make corrections and re-submit by the deadline so that you’re not disqualified.

Pay Attention to What Happens After You Submit. The job isn’t necessarily done after you click “submit.” Does the funder request that you send your 501(c)(3) letter? Do they just say, “application received; don’t call us; we’ll call you”? Does the federal agency require you to fax a form to them?

Even though Grants.gov is supposed make submitting grant proposals to all federal agencies the same, it hasn’t. Read the RFP very carefully to find out what is required by the agency after you receive submission confirmation from Grants.gov. You may not find these instructions anywhere else but in the funding announcement. Different agencies require different post-submittal actions, and failure to complete these makes your application incomplete.

Sometimes e-mail or a web application may tempt us to treat that process as less formal or requiring less attention to detail than a traditional written proposal would. If you can avoid this pitfall, treat your electronic submissions with the same care as your other proposals, and leave yourself time to understand the technology, you will be less frustrated and will experience more success. Go forth and click “submit!”

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2007 Program Series

All seminars are held at the Health & Wellness Center in Warrington, PA from 8:30-12:00 pm unless otherwise noted. Registration is \$35. Please contact Liz Vibber for more information: 215-343-2727.

May 24, 2007

Meet the Foundations

Representatives from local Foundations will discuss the Dos and Don'ts of grant applications for their foundations.

June 14, 2007

You Have a Strategic Plan--Now What?

This session is designed to assist nonprofits move their strategic plans from the shelf to reality. We will discuss basic techniques such as project execution, resource management, goal setting and milestones.

For more information or to be put directly on our e-mailing list, contact Liz Vibber at 215-343-2727, lvibber@bbco-cpa.com

BBCo Community Bulletin Board

We are pleased to accept your submissions of jobs and special announcements. E-mail directly to: Liz Vibber, lvibber@bbco-cpa.com.

Congratulations to **Special Equestrians** who recently won the 2007 Forbes Enterprise Award. Competing against thousands of other small businesses in the area of marketing, customer service, employee relations, community service and service offerings, Special Equestrians is being recognized as an outstanding business that demonstrates visionary practices, unique ideas and innovations in business.

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A Woman's Place, Bucks County's domestic violence agency is recruiting new board members with the following interests and experience: business, IT, strategic planning or fundraising. Please contact Donna Byrne, Executive Director, 215-343-9241 ext. 104

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Development Office Assistant: 17 hrs. wk. for fund raising data entry & filing. \$10/hr. + exp. Resume & references to G. Heim, **Tabor Children's Services**, 601 New Britain Road, Doylestown, PA 18901. FAX: 215-348-9261. EOE

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Kitten season is here and **Cat Tales, Inc.** is looking for volunteers. Visit www.cattalesinc.org for more information.

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The **International Institute for Restorative Practices** is offering a new fast-track Master's Degree program. Visit www.iirp.org or call the Registrar, Celeste Langen at 610-807-9745

Congratulations to **Community Conservatory** who was chosen from among thousands of applicants as one of about 140 finalists for the 2007 Forbes Enterprise Award. The judges focused on uniqueness, creativity, and use of best practices which may be common in large companies but not frequently found in small businesses. The Conservatory was honored in the category that includes nonprofits.

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The **Hepatitis B Foundation**, an international leader in medical research, advocacy and education, seeks an experienced development professional to build its base of philanthropic support. The Director of Development will be responsible for all fundraising activities, including annual fund, corporate and foundation grants, special events and individual major gifts.

Please send resume and cover letter to the address below or via email to jobs@hepb.org.

Molli Conti
Executive Director
Hepatitis B Foundation
3805 Old Easton Road
Doylestown, PA 18901

Spring, 2007