**Slide 1:**

Welcome to **“Grant Applications 101:  A Plain English Guide to Competitive Grants.”**

This session is designed to:

* Provide you with information about the Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration’s grant application and evaluation process; and
* Help you understand how to ensure that your applications for grant funding are responsive.

The U.S. DOL Employment and Training Administration (or ETA) is committed to ensuring that as many entities as possible - in particular, smaller entities such as community-based and faith-based groups, as well as those entities that have not previously managed Federal grant programs - are aware of competitive grant application opportunities. ETA does not encourage the submission of concept papers, or other unsolicited proposals, since the vast majority of the discretionary grant opportunities to date are conducted through a competitive process. Recognizing that smaller community organizations and entities that are "new" to the Federal grant-making process may be unfamiliar with ETA’s Funding Opportunity Announcements (or FOAs) and ETA's process for evaluating grant applications, ETA has developed several tools to help new organizations craft competitive applications.

**Slide 2:**

After completing this session, you will be able to:

* Understand DOL’s mission and its competitive Federal awards;
* Understanding the difference between grants and cooperative agreements
* Locate open competitions for Federal award funding;
* Understand ETA’s funding opportunity and evaluation processes;
* Understand key elements of comprehensive, responsive, and competitive applications for financial assistance awards; and,
* Locate additional resources that may be helpful in the award application development process.

**Slide 3:**

The session covers information about the various stages of the Federal award application process, as noted on this slide. Though we will talk about each of these stages, we will focus most on the actual development of your application.

**Slide 4:**

As you prepare to apply for ETA competitive award funding, it’s important to first understand DOL’s mission statement and its award-making activities and priorities.

DOL’s mission is to foster, promote, and develop the welfare of the wage earners, job seekers, and retirees of the United States; improve working conditions; advance opportunities for profitable employment; and assure work-related benefits and rights.

DOL is charged with overseeing the nation’s workforce development programs and services, such as job training programs, labor market information services, and other employment-related services. However, some awards are international labor awards to reduce/eliminate child labor, forced labor, human trafficking, and to improve working conditions in other countries.

DOL awards a portion of its funding by formula, usually to states. Funding also comes through open award competitions. Unlike a competitive award, formula awards are awarded to recipients who are predetermined, and the term “formula” refers to the way the award funding is allocated to recipients. Formula awards, are non-competitive.

Competitive awards are typically awarded to organizations to create or expand promising programs for workers and employers. Competitive awardees may include community organizations, faith-based organizations, local workforce development boards, community colleges and other training providers, labor-management organizations, workforce intermediaries, and others, depending upon the requirements of the particular competition. Our goal is to provide funding that is fair, transparent, and accessible to all communities. Such goals support equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives.

**Slide 5:**

In the 1970's, Congress was concerned over the perceived misuse of assistance agreements - using assistance agreements to circumvent competition and procurement rules. To address these problems, and to ensure uniform agency practices, Congress passed the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977.

The Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act set out to guide government agencies in their use of Federal funds – particularly by distinguishing between contracts, cooperative agreements and grants.

Contracts, the law states, are awarded when a Federal agency is acquiring something – a service, for example. Both grants and cooperative agreements are awarded when a Federal agency is providing assistance – the latter occurring when substantial involvement by the agency is anticipated. The FOA will identify if the application is for either a grant or cooperative agreement application.

**Slide 6:**

A grant or grant agreement means a legal instrument of financial assistance between a Federal awarding agency and a non-Federal entity that, consistent with 31 U.S.C. 6302, 6304:

* Is used to enter into a relationship the principal purpose of which is to transfer anything of value from the Federal awarding agency to carry out a public purpose authorized by a law of the United States (see 31 U.S.C. 6101(3)); and not to acquire property or services for the Federal awarding agency's direct benefit or use;
* Is distinguished from a cooperative agreement in that it does not provide for substantial involvement between the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity and the non-Federal entity in carrying out the activity contemplated by the Federal award.
* A Grant agreement does not include an agreement that provides only:
	+ Direct United States Government cash assistance to an individual;
	+ A subsidy;
	+ A loan;
	+ A loan guarantee; or
	+ Insurance.

One of the key differences between a grant and a cooperative agreement is the involvement in which the Federal awarding agency has in carrying out the award.

**Slide 7:**

Cooperative agreement means a legal instrument of financial assistance between a Federal awarding agency and a recipient or a pass-through entity and a sub-recipient that, consistent with 31 U.S.C. 6302-6305:

* Is used to enter into a relationship the principal purpose of which is to transfer anything of value to carry out a public purpose authorized by a law of the United States (see 31 U.S.C. 6101(3)); and not to acquire property or services for the Federal Government or pass-through entity's direct benefit or use;
* Is distinguished from a grant ***in that it provides for substantial involvement*** of the Federal awarding agency in carrying out the activity contemplated by the Federal award.
* This funding instrument does not include:
	+ A cooperative research and development agreement as defined in 15 U.S.C. 3710a; or
	+ An agreement that provides only:
		- Direct United States Government cash assistance to an individual;
		- A subsidy; A loan; A loan guarantee; or Insurance.

**Slide 8:**

ETA announces grant competitions through Funding Opportunity Announcements, or FOAs. You can find FOAs online in a number of places, including the Grants.gov website, and DOL’s ETA website.

As you no doubt can imagine, preparing a grant application can be a time-consuming process, especially when you have to balance writing your application with the demands of your day-to-day operations. Because of this, it’s a good idea to implement an ongoing, year-round planning, research, and data-gathering approach to better position you to apply for funding when FOAs are published. Organizations that have been successful in receiving ETA grants often note that if they keep up-to-date around certain workforce development issues, target populations, and data in a consistent and ongoing way, it makes it easier for them to determine which grant competitions are appropriate for them to pursue and to then convene their partners to develop their applications. This advice might help you target funding opportunities that are the best fit for your organization and facilitate the process of developing your application while also maintaining your regular operations and activities.

Applicants who are interested in being notified when new grant opportunities become available will need to sign up for Grants.gov notification services. This service in only available in Grants.gov. In order to subscribe to this service, applicants will need to have a Grants.gov account.

**Slide 9:**

The next section, we will discuss the elements of a FOA whether it is for a grant or cooperative agreement

**Slide 10:**

The most important step in beginning your grant application process is reading the FOA thoroughly and ensuring that you understand all of its requirements. The FOA is the most important tool, because it describes all of the requirements for projects to be funded, and also offers the structure to be used for your application. If you don’t follow the application structure outlined in the FOA, or if you don’t meet all of the FOA requirements in your application, your application could be deemed “non-responsive.” Non-responsive applications will not be reviewed or considered for funding. Most FOAs contain a checklist outlining specific screening requirements, and failure to meet these requirements will result in your application not moving forward in the merit review process.

Please note that this guide focuses on some of the key components of an FOA. For more detail on all aspects of an FOA, as well as comprehensive guidance on how to respond to an FOA, please view the Grant Application Community of Practice on WorkforceGPS.

Next, we’ll walk through some critical components of the FOA that you should review early on in the application process to determine your ability to apply for grant funding.

**Slide 11:**

Though all areas of the FOA are important, here are a few things to consider right at the outset.

First, make sure you understand the application submission process, and, in particular, the closing date and time of the FOA. You want to be sure that you have sufficient time to develop a quality application prior to the closing date. Developing a grant application can be a labor-intensive and time-consuming process, particularly for smaller organizations that have to balance day-to-day service delivery with grant-writing and that may not have dedicated grant-writing staff.

Second, review the areas of the FOA that discusses the purpose, award information and the outcomes of the projects to be funded. Assess whether your organization is positioned to implement the types of projects described in the FOA. Particular areas to consider here include whether you are able to engage the targeted populations discussed in the FOA, and whether the project activities required by the FOA are those that your organization has the experience and capacity to deliver, among others.

Third, the FOA will clearly state which types of organizations are eligible to receive grant funding. Be sure to confirm that you meet not only the criteria for eligible applicants and other requirements in the FOA but also if your organization has the capacity to carry out a project this size and meet the goals.

Investing time at the beginning of your process to consider these questions will help you determine whether responding to a particular FOA is worth your time and effort.

**Slide 12:**

This slide shows other key components that you might typically see in an ETA FOA. Review these early on in your process to confirm that your organization can meet all stated requirements. We will go over these components in greater detail later in the session, when we discuss the development of your grant application.

**Slide 13:**

In addition to reviewing the FOA, you should also take advantage of any information-sharing events ETA may offer about the grant competition. Attending these events is a crucial part of your grant application development process, as they will cover the unique components and requirements of particular grant competition. Events may take the form of webinars or other virtual sessions and will be noted clearly in the FOA. By viewing these webinars, you may gain additional insight into the funding opportunity, which may help inform the development of your application and potentially enable you to be more responsive. Frequently Asked Questions and Answers is another source of information to also take advantage of about the grant competition.

If you have remaining questions after reading the FOA and viewing the webinar, you may contact the ETA Grants Management Specialist noted in the FOA. The FOA will provide an email address for this individual.

**Slide 14:**

A standard FOA has nine major sections.

* FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION
* AWARD INFORMATION
* ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION
* APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION
* APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION
* AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION
* AGENCY CONTACTS
* OTHER INFORMATION
* OMB INFORMATION COLLECTION

**Slide 15:**

Next, let’s go over ETA’s process for evaluating the grant applications it receives.

**Slide 16:**

Before you begin to develop your application, you should understand how ETA evaluates grant applications. This may help you craft a quality application that meets all of the requirements of the FOA.

Each application is reviewed and scored by a merit review panel that may include ETA staff, workforce development professionals and other subject matter professionals.

Reviewers score applications based upon the evaluation criteria in the FOA to determine the merit of the applications.

ETA will also complete a risk assessment to evaluate the risks posed by applicants before they receive a Federal award. For the risk review process, ETA will review information available through various sources, including its own records and any OMB-designated repository of government-wide financial integrity information, such as Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (or FAPIIS).

**Slide 17:**

To increase the chances of your application being considered for funding, be sure to respond as comprehensively as possible to all evaluation criteria.

This sample evaluation criteria and their associated weights came from a published FOA. Please note that the associated points may vary based on the FOA. It is typical for there to be several “sub-criteria” under each main evaluation criterion. So, as you develop your application, be sure to address all of the required components under each evaluation criterion. Applications that do not provide detailed responses to the evaluation criteria may not receive the maximum amount of points available.

Now let’s take a look at reviewing the Risk Assessment.

**Slide 18:**

During the Evaluation Phase, ETA will assess risks by looking at a variety of items, including the applicant’s:

1. Financial Stability
2. Quality of management systems and ability to meet the management standards prescribed in the Uniform Guidance
3. History of Performance
4. Reports and findings from Single Audits or the findings of other audit reports; and
5. Ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-federal entities

Please NOTE: As part of ETA’s Risk Review process, ETA will also determine the following:

* If the applicant had any restriction on spending for any ETA grant due to adverse monitoring findings; or
* If the applicant received a High Risk determination

Depending on the severity of the findings and whether the findings were resolved, ETA may, at their discretion, elect not to fund the applicant for a grant award, regardless of the applicant’s score in the competition.

After the panels conclude their reviews, ranked application scores (which may include mathematical normalization) serve as the primary basis for ETA’s funding decisions but there may be other factors listed in the FOA, like geographic or organizational diversity.

**Slide 19:**

Now that we’ve talked about the FOA, and about how ETA evaluates grant applications, let’s talk about the process for outlining your application and creating the plan for its development.

**Slide 20:**

Perhaps the best piece of advice here is “start early” and create an outline! ETA will not review applications that are submitted late, so engage your project partners at the outset and give yourself plenty of time to develop a quality application.

All applicants must register in the System for Award Management found at SAM.gov before submitting an application. You will need an Employer Identification Number, (or EIN) to complete this registration. Starting in April 2022, all applicants were required to have a Unique Entity Identifier (or UEI) Number. Please note that a data universal number system number (or DUNS) will no longer be accepted and has been phased out.

Your application should be structured according to the evaluation criteria framework in the FOA. This enables reviewers to focus on the content of your application, rather than having to spend time looking for required information.

Applicants should develop and use a project plan to guide you throughout the application development process. This plan should detail tasks and roles for you and your partners; application development timelines and deadlines; and a checklist for ensuring completion of all required application elements. Err on the side of planning for every task and detail – this will go a long way toward helping you create a thorough and responsive application package!

Once registered in SAM.gov all applicants will need to register in Grants.gov to actually submit their application.

When finally submitting your application, we also strongly encourage you to submit your application at least three days before the FOA closing date.

**Slide 21:**

Note that when submitting your application electronically through Grants.gov, you should register on the site as early as possible. Registration can often take longer than expected, and we STRONGLY encourage you to get registered as soon as you can.

The System for Award Management (or SAM) is a government-wide registry for vendors doing business with the Federal government, and SAM registration requires annual renewal. SAM centralizes information about grant recipients and also provides a central location for grant recipients to change organizational information.

Once the SAM Registration is complete, you must return to Grants.gov to continue registration.

**How to Register with SAM**

Visit the System for Award Management website at [www.sam.gov](http://www.sam.gov/).

Follow SAM's online instructions in their Help tab to create a user account and register or update your entity’s SAM account.

**Note**: Once your SAM registration is active, **you can return to Grants.gov and complete registration**. It takes seven to ten business days for SAM Registration to activate after SAM has received all required information from registrants. If you are updating or renewing your registration, it takes approximately 24 hours to activate.

Please remember that through the life of at the award you must maintain an active profile on SAM.gov. You will need the UEI during closeout and for federal reporting purposes.

**Slide 22:**

The required application structure presented here is common in many FOAs. It includes:

* Your Application for Federal Assistance (or SF-424), Project Budget (SF-424A), Budget Narrative and in some cases where the FOA requires match, a Match Narrative is also required in addition to the above.
* Your Project Narrative, structured according to the FOA evaluation criteria framework, which describes your proposed project and your capacity; and
* Attachments to your Project Narrative , which may include things like a commitment letter from partners and a project Abstract, depending upon the FOA.

As you plan out the components of your application, there are several important things to keep in mind:

* Ensure that a completed Financial System Risk Assessment (FSRA) is attached, if required.
* Adhere to the format requirements and page limitations stated in the FOA throughout ALL components of your application. Applications that fail to meet requirements for formatting, such as margin requirements, may not move forward through the merit review process or may result in their scores being impacted. Application pages beyond the stated page limits may not be read by reviewers.
* Budget inconsistencies are troubling for application reviewers. Make sure that requested budget amount on all documentation (SF-424, SF-424A, Budget Narrative, and any other documents) are consistent.
* If the FOA calls for a letter of commitment form partners, keep in mind that a letter detailing the level of commitment by each partner is preferred over generic form letters. Letters of commitment should be detailed in terms of partners’ roles, responsibilities, and contributions.
* Finally, only include letters of commitment from required or essential project partners, as specified in the FOA. Reviewers will not consider letters of support from individuals and organizations that are not project partners, such as Mayors or Members of Congress, and you should not delay the submission of your application in order to wait for letters of support not required in the FOA.

**Slide 23:**

Now we’ll dive into the Application!

**Slide 24:**

It can’t be stressed enough: every component of your grant application should be clear, comprehensive, easy for reviewers to follow, and, of course, responsive to all areas and requirements of the FOA. You want not only to tell reviewers what you plan to do, but also to show them how you will accomplish your project activities. Provide persuasive evidence of the strength of your previous experience, capacity, and plans, and demonstrate the value and benefits of your proposed project.

As you craft your application, don’t forget the importance of aligning your proposed activities with the parameters described in the FOA, such as required and allowable activities and eligible grant program participants. A common pitfall here is proposing activities or target populations that are not called for in the FOA. Your proposed project may be compelling, but if it doesn’t meet the specific requirements described in the FOA, your application will not be competitive.

Often, FOAs call for you to leverage proven, existing models, and to build upon them in order, for example, to reach new populations or expand implementation of a successful approach. If the FOA does call for the creation of new and innovative training models, you should be sure to use research and data to justify the effectiveness of any new approaches you propose.

Avoid the pitfall of “recycling” language from the FOA in your application, and steer clear of using jargon and unfamiliar acronyms. Keeping your reviewers in mind as you write may help you develop an application that is clear and responsive.

**Slide 25:**

The FOA will provide you with background and context on the funding effort and will clearly state the types of projects to be funded. Be sure that your proposed project and project activities are aligned with the guidance given in the FOA. Often, FOAs call for you to leverage proven, existing models, and to build upon them, in order, for example, to reach new populations or expand implementation of a successful approach. If the FOA does call for the creation of new and innovative training models, you should be sure to use research and data to justify the effectiveness of any new approaches you propose. In any case, know that you should not ask for grant funding to supplement your organization’s day-to-day operational costs, or to make up for budget cuts from other funding sources.

There are several good sources of information about existing workforce development programs and strategies. One is ETA’s Grants Web page to learn more about the competitive grant projects that ETA has funded in the past. Doing so may help you better understand ETA’s potential areas of funding interest. You should also visit WorkforceGPS, ETA’s knowledge-sharing and technical assistance website, which catalogues hundreds of existing workforce solutions.

Finally, it may be helpful to connect with your peers and with relevant associations to learn more about related existing projects they may be pursuing or may be aware of.

**Slide 26:**

Your application will include a statement of need, in which you are expected to describe and document a clear and specific need for grant funding. In your discussion of need, you must use data from authoritative sources that explains the workforce and economic challenges and barriers that your project seeks to address. Reviewers will be looking for you to “make the case” that your community is deserving of Federal investment. Potential data sources include:

* the Bureau of Labor Statistics
* the Census Bureau’s site.
* The WIOA Performance Data Tool which helps to better understand the workforce system’s performance data. Users can view national and state trends through maps, state comparisons, and data tables.
* State and local workforce system partners, such as state labor market information offices, state and local Workforce Development Boards, and American Job Centers, may also be able to assist you in locating relevant data for your application. Connecting with workforce system partners early on may also help you find ways to link your proposed project to their existing programs and efforts.

Other data you might want to use include industry data; data from trade associations; regional economic data; and transactional data, such as job vacancy data.

**Slide 27:**

The National Center for Education Statistics (or NCES), within the U.S. Department of Education is a great source as well. They collect, collate, analyze, and report complete statistics on the condition of American education, conduct and publish reports, and review and report on education activities internationally.

The Digest of Education Statistics, found under U.S. Ed, has a selection of data from many sources, both government and private, and draws especially on the results of surveys and activities carried out by the National Center for Education Statistics.

**Slide 28:**

In this section of your application, you want to provide reviewers with evidence of your ability to successfully manage a Federal award and implement a high-performing Federal award program. If you have not managed a Federal award in the past, don’t be discouraged. Previous Federal award management experience is not required, but you must write persuasively about your ability to leverage other grant experience and expertise you may have and bring it to scale for a Federally-funded effort. Be sure to describe outcomes and results from other grant programs you have implemented, and if any of your project partners have Federal grant management experience, be sure to describe how you will leverage that experience to ensure a successful project. Some FOAs require a past performance chart where applicants give information on outcomes in a past Federal award. The FOA will tell applicants what specific past performance information they will need to provide.

Now, we will turn to the importance of demonstrated partnerships in your grant application.

**Slide 29:**

Generally, strong strategic partnerships are a requirement of most FOAs. One of the most common weaknesses in unsuccessful grant applications is a failure throughout the application to provide meaningful and detailed evidence of partnerships and discuss how those partnerships will support the proposed project. You should discuss the relationships among your partners; each partner’s role; the specific resource commitments that partners will bring to the project; and how you will coordinate your partnerships for the project. Avoid the pitfall of merely listing a long string of organizations you hope to engage, and don’t include generic letters of commitment from organizations with whom you are not meaningfully connected.

**Slide 30:**

The FOA may ask you to describe how you and your partners will support your proposed project by using your own resources to support project activities. Match or cost-sharing may be a mandatory requirement in which you will have to identify the resources which you will use to further support the project. It is imperative as a grant applicant that you are on solid ground when identifying those sources, because if selected and awarded, match is non-negotiable and cannot be adjusted or reduced during the life of the grant. It is possible that at the end of the period of performance, grant funds may be taken back if the match amount specified in the grant agreement is not met.

Leveraging resources for your project may help you show reviewers that you want to expand the impact of ETA’s funding and position yourself to keep the project going even after grant funding ends. In any discussion of leveraged resources, be specific. Quantify leveraged resource commitments and talk about where they will come from and how they will be used to benefit your project. If the FOA requires you to provide a letter or letters of commitment from partners, be sure that those letters describe and quantify the resources your partners will bring to the project.

**Slide 31:**

Match or (cost sharing) requirements apply when a financial match is either required by statute or is contained in the FOA. It must be from a non-Federal source, allowable under the statute, and pertinent to regulations (program regulations and the Uniform Guidance) and other Federal guidance. Additional information on match requirements, including definitions, inclusions, and methods of valuation, are addressed in 2 CFR 200.306 and 2 CFR 2900.8.

**Slide 32:**

Leveraged resources is a category of expenditures that benefit the Federal project but are not charged to the ETA grant. For ETA programs, the term “leveraged resources” refers to all resources used by the grant recipient to support grant activity and outcomes, whether or not those resources meet the standards required for match.

Match needs to be included on the SF-424 and SF-424A and budget/match narrative. Leverage Resources must not be included on the SF-424 and SF-424A and should be explained in a separate section of the budget narrative.

**Slide 33:**

The FOA may ask you to demonstrate in your application how you will connect your project activities to other ETA-funded workforce development programs and projects. If so, you will want to provide evidence of your relationships and activities with workforce system partners, such as state or local Workforce Development Boards and local American Job Centers. If you don’t already have relationships with these partners, now is the time to begin cultivating them. The Web links on this slide will help you find and reach out to workforce system leaders and service providers at the state, regional, and local levels.

**Slide 34:**

When you discuss your proposed project outcomes and deliverables in your application, you want to demonstrate a positive return on ETA’s investment. Don’t “over-promise” or “under-promise” in your discussions of project outcomes and deliverables. Your proposed outcomes should be appropriately ambitious, but must also be specific, attainable, and measureable.

Keep in mind that application reviewers are able to assess the quality of your proposed outcomes and deliverables in relation to your need statement, project plan, and requested funding level. Use your previous project experience, as well as information from your research on other workforce development projects, to propose reasonable and attainable outcomes and deliverables. If, for example, you operate in a rural area with low population density, your participant outreach and engagement goals would likely and appropriately be lower than those of an organization operating a project in a large metropolitan area. Clearly align your proposed outcomes and deliverables to the documented needs of your community.

Also, be sure to specifically address all performance measures mentioned in the FOA. Applications that do not include targets for mandatory measures—or that include targets for measures not mentioned in the FOA—may receive lower scores.

Finally, as you develop your application, be aware that the strategies, budget, outcomes, and deliverables you propose will be incorporated into your formal grant agreement with ETA, if your application is funded.

**Slide 35:**

Be sure that grant funding is reasonable, necessary and allocable to your statement of need and proportionate to the level of effort, project activities and outcomes. Don’t request more resources than are required or more than your organization has the capacity to manage. Make sure that any funding you request has a specific purpose;

Your budget should not include any “contingency funding.” as it is an unallowable costs under ETA grants.

The Budget Narrative must have a clear delineation description of costs associated with each line item on the SF-424A in narrative format. The subtotals and totals provided in the narrative must align with the totals indicated on the SF-424A. The amounts noted in your budget and budget narrative should be the same. In your budget narrative, clearly discuss and justify budget line item amounts. Your narrative should discuss how each requested budget line item will be used to benefit your project.

**Slide 36:**

Now it’s time to finalize and submit your application.

**Slide 37:**

Before submitting your application, complete a comprehensive final review of your entire application, your project plan, and your application checklist. Confirm that you have met all of the FOA requirements, including formatting requirements such as margins, fonts, line spacing, and page limits. Reviewers will not read or consider any materials beyond the specified page limit in the application review process.

Applicants should use the checklist provided in the FOA (only as a desk-aid) when preparing the application package to ensure that the application has met all of the screening criteria to ensure that the application contains all required items. If an application does not meet all of the screening criteria, it will not move forward through the merit review process.

**Slide 38:**

Be sure to submit your application on time and through acceptable submission methods described in the FOA. Unless specified otherwise in the FOA, all applications must be submitted electronically through Grants.gov - submit it early to avoid any last minute technical issues. Applications that are submitted via any method not described in the FOA are not considered for funding. When submitting an application through Grants.gov on the FOA closing date, you take a risk that it might not reach ETA on time. Submission errors can often be fixed if you don’t wait until the last minute.

Please note that Grants.gov does not check an application for required forms, narratives etc.; hence, an application can be "successfully" submitted or "validated" through Grants.gov, but may still lack one or more responsive items that will result in the application being determined to be non-responsive. Applicants are strongly urged to double- check their application before submission.

If your application is not selected for funding, it is always a good idea to find out why, as this may help you develop a more competitive application in the future. The letter you receive from ETA notifying you that you were not selected for funding will provide you with instructions on requesting the merit review panel’s feedback on your application’s weaknesses. Consider this feedback, as well as your own reflections on the strengths and weaknesses of your application development process and put those lessons to use in your future Federal award application efforts. Don’t be discouraged – persistence in applying under later FOAs may pay off!

**Slide 39:**

Here are a few Common Errors

* Not submitting required documents.  Incomplete applications are not considered for the merit review.
* Incorrectly completing the SF424 and SF424A. Specifically, the applicant does not include the correct federal request amount or the amounts on the SF424 do not align with the SF424A.
* Waiting until the last week or day to register with SAM.gov and submit the application.  Late applications are not accepted. The SAM registration process can take multiple weeks so start early.

**Slide 40:**

Now that we’ve covered the critical elements of preparing your grant application, let’s spend a few moments reviewing some highlights from this guide. On this slide and on the one that follows, we offer you key pieces of advice on developing your application. These tips are based on the most common gaps or weaknesses seen in unsuccessful applications for ETA grant funding. Keep these tips in mind as you develop your application to help you avoid common pitfalls:

* First, make sure that your organization is among those eligible to apply for grant funding.
* Start the process of outlining and developing your grant application early.
* Be aware that the registration process in Grants.gov can take some time, so register early. All applications must be submitted through Grants.gov.
* As you develop your application, be sure to meet all FOA requirements related to application content, structure, and format.
* Use data from authoritative sources to demonstrate your need for grant funding.
* Provide evidence of your organization’s previous project management experience and capacity.
* Make sure that your proposed project activities and grant program participants are in line with FOA requirements.
* Clearly describe your partnerships, and the roles and commitments of your partners in project activities.
* Make sure your outcomes are appropriately challenging, but reasonable and attainable.
* Align your budget request to your proposed project activities and level of effort.
* Don’t exceed page limits in any section of your application.
* Finally, submit your application through Grants.gov at least three days before the FOA closing date.

**Slide 41:**

Now here is a list of what to DO and What not to DO when completing the application.

* **DO** register on Grants.gov early and ensure SAM and UEI registration is current. Note that ETA is not directly connected to grants.gov. For any technical issues, please contact The Grants.gov Contact Center which is open 24/7 except on holidays.
* **DO** read the FOA in its entirety before deciding to apply. Estimate and base the project on realistic and current labor, overhead costs, recognized credentials and performance milestones or goals
* **DO** email the agency contact if you need clarification on FOA requirements (after reading the FOA). ETA will not accept any technical question phone calls from potential applicants during the open period. Email the contact in the FOA.
* **Don’t** submit a vague, incomplete proposal with unrealistic goals
* **Don’t** send general letters of support from anyone, they will not be considered.
* **Don’t** wait until the last day to submit your application
* **Don’t forget to** double check application before submission

**Slide 42:**

Now, lets review the various resources for applicants

**Slide 43:**

As mentioned earlier, this module is one of several tools that ETA has developed to support you in applying for competitive grants. The Competitive Grant Application Tips includes several frequently asked questions relating to submission and responsiveness requirements. The DOL.gov ETA Grants Resources and WorkforceGPS Grants Application and Management webpages have additional resources for applicants.

Let’s take a closer look at the resources available.

**Slide 44:**

The “How to Apply” and “Resource” pages on the Employment and Training Administration portion of dol.gov links to SAM.gov, Grants.gov, FAQs and tips for competitive Grant Applications.

One can also find a quick link to the OBM Uniform Guidance which captures two new requirements which took effect on August 13, 2020 and on November 12, 2020.

**Slide 45:**

Another great resource is the Grant Application and Management Community of Practice on Workforce GPS. On this website you can find information on how to apply for a grant, and how to manage your grant once awarded.

**Slide 46:**

Thank you for viewing this webcast. We hope it will assist you in preparing your Federal grant applications, and we wish you the best of luck in future competitions for funding!