



DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

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April 3, 2009

To: All Interested Vendors

Re: Request for Information (RFI) for a web based Grant Application and/or Management Solution

The State of Montana, Department of Commerce is requesting information regarding a commercially off the shelf (COTS) software package and/or hosted service to provide a web based Grant Application and/or Grant Management System. The State of Montana invites all interested parties to submit a written response to this Request for Information (RFI).

This RFI is being sought strictly for the purpose of gaining knowledge of services and supplies available with an estimate of their corresponding costs and should not be construed as intent, commitment, or promise to acquire services, supplies, or solutions offered. No contract will result from any response to this RFI.

Information submitted in response to this RFI will become the property of the State of Montana.

The State of Montana will not pay for any information herein requested nor is it liable for any cost incurred by the vendor.

RFI responses must be received prior to **5:00 p.m., May 1, 2009**. Provide one copy of your response on CD/DVD, through the state's File Transfer Service at <https://transfer.mt.gov/> (maximum file size of 2 Gig), or by email (as long as the attached files do not exceed 4 Mb) in Microsoft Office or PDF format to the following address:

Sue Leferink
State of Montana
Department of Commerce, Management Services
P.O. Box 200501
301 S Park
Helena, MT 59620-0501
Email: sleferink@mt.gov

Questions may also be directed to the contact listed above.

We appreciate your response to this request. This RFI will provide us with information for planning and budgeting purposes and may result in a future request to purchase a COTS solution in accordance with the State of Montana procurement process (<http://gsd.mt.gov>).

1.0 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

- 1.1 The purpose of this RFI is to determine the availability of a COTS solution that would provide the Montana Department of Commerce and possibly other state agencies (grantors) with the ability to post grant applications via the Internet for qualifying applicants (grantees) to complete and submit. The objective is to determine if this type of solution would be feasible and if so, to obtain costs for budget estimation purposes, view potential product demonstrations and develop a procurement and implementation plan/timeline. The Federal government has a similar solution (<http://grants.gov/>). It requires software plug-ins and full versions of Adobe Acrobat to utilize this portal.
- 1.2 The objectives of a web based grant application and management solution include the following:
 - 1.2.1 Offer an efficient, cost effective, web based service providing access to State of Montana government program grant applications and allow grantees to submit grant applications via the Internet.
 - 1.2.2 Guide the grantee through the grant application process by providing automatic on-screen procedural prompts and help.
 - 1.2.3 Provide a scalable and flexible solution that will allow other interested State of Montana government entities to participate in the future.
 - 1.2.4 Offer an additional software module/solution that would provide on-going grant management, tracking and reporting for state program grants that are awarded.

2.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1 Current Environment

- 2.1.1 Currently the Montana Department of Commerce has three divisions that offer various grants to qualifying applicants.
 - 2.1.1.1 Business Resource Division has the Big Sky Trust Fund Program which offers planning grants - http://businessresources.mt.gov/BRD_Trustfund.asp.
 - 2.1.1.2 The Montana Promotions Division has tourism, marketing and special event grants available - <http://travelmontana.mt.gov/forms/> , <http://travelmontana.mt.gov/OURPROGRAMS/TourismDevEd.asp> and <http://travelmontana.mt.gov/marketingplan/>
 - 2.1.1.3 The Community Development Division provides grants for Community Development - http://comdev.mt.gov/CDD_cdbg.asp, Treasure State Endowment - http://comdev.mt.gov/CDD_TSEP.asp and Montana Coal Board - http://comdev.mt.gov/CDD_CB_Grants.asp#projects
- 2.1.2 The Montana Department of Agriculture has two divisions that offer grants and loans.
 - 2.1.2.1 Agriculture Development Division offers several grant and loan opportunities for the agriculture industry - <http://agr.mt.gov/business/finance.asp>

- 2.1.2.2 Agriculture Sciences Division Noxious Weed Trust Fund (NWTF) provides cost-share funding for the development and implementation of weed management programs - <http://agr.mt.gov/weedpest/noxiousweeds.asp>
- 2.1.3 Other State of Montana agencies also have grant application and management processes and may be interested in participating in a COTS solution in the future - <http://mt.gov/govt/agencylisting.asp>
- 2.1.4 At this time, all programs offering grants have an electronic copy of the grant application in Microsoft Office format. Recipients can download the form and either email it or mail it in (depending on the signature requirements for each program).
- 2.1.5 Each application has different time periods, requirements and approval processes. Application forms need to be periodically updated for the next grant cycle.
- 2.1.6 The State of Montana has a central e-governement services portal that allows the public to have one login id and password (ePass) to access all web based services at <http://mt.gov/services/allservices.asp>. Information about integrating ePass into third party applications is available at <http://app.mt.gov/toolkit/>
- 2.2 *Project Requirements for a Web based Grant Application Process (see [Appendix A](#) for a summary table of these features) – The proposed solution would need to meet these requirements:***
- 2.2.1 Provide a web portal or web site address where potential grantees could prescreen themselves to verify they qualify for the appropriate grant, self register and apply via the Internet for available grants over time periods specified by the various grantors. The grantees would have the ability to enter information, update the application, run spell check, add/remove attachments or withdraw until the deadline occurs or application is submitted. At this time, the application is time/date stamped and can no longer be altered. At anytime during the process, the grantee would have the ability to review and print the information submitted to date. Any changes in application status would be communicated to the appropriate party (grantee/grantor) through automatic notifications.
- 2.2.2 The desired product should not be limited by grantee operating system or browser type/version. If the application has specific limitations on operating system, browser type or browser version, these limitations must be clearly delineated.
- 2.2.3 Allow multiple grantors to use the same solution and customize it for each grant application. Each grantor needs to set eligibility requirements for the grant qualification, as well as develop and alter the application form before each application period.

Each grantor would have the ability to upload attachments, specify field formats, validate data entered, provide web based help and link to program requirements. Grantor must also be able to set the time frames for grant submission.

- 2.2.4 Meet state and federal security requirements for protecting sensitive and confidential data. The State of Montana policies are posted on this website - <http://itsd.mt.gov/policy/policies/default.mcp> and the State of Montana abides by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) guidelines - <http://csrc.nist.gov/publications/>. All system users must be granted login credentials. The portal or URL must be secure, block spam, obfuscate sensitive information and provide a way to manage security roles and views for multiple entities.
- 2.2.5 Meet state and federal 508 compliant regulations for accessibility - <http://mt.gov/discover/disclaimer.asp#accessibility>
- 2.2.6 Must meet the state's requirement for obtaining an electronic signature (MCA 30-18-102 - <http://data.opi.mt.gov/bills/mca/30/18/30-18-102.htm> and MCA 30-18-108 - <http://data.opi.mt.gov/bills/mca/30/18/30-18-108.htm>)
- 2.2.7 Be compatible with Microsoft Office 2007 and Adobe Acrobat files.
- 2.2.8 Provide a way to export data from grant applications by either party in an open document format (XML, CSV, TXT, etc.).
- 2.2.9 Provide adequate backup and redundancy. Provide record retention for at least 10 years.

2.3 *Project Requirements for an Web based Grant Review Process & Ongoing Grant Management Activities (see [Appendix A](#) for a summary table of these features) – It would be ideal if the proposed solution could also allow web based grant application scoring, awards and management. The proposed solution would need to meet these minimum requirements in addition to the project requirements listed in section 2.2:*

- 2.3.1 Grantors could assign weights and ratings for evaluating applications via the Internet. Paper applications could be imported for scoring. The committee could review the information and score applications and then flow through an electronic approval process.
- 2.3.2 Ability for grantors to set up alerts and reminders for due dates, changes, and submission completion time frames.
- 2.3.3 Ability for grantors to create compliance checklists and indicate to grantee any outstanding items that still need to be accomplished to obtain the grant funding as well as create status (activity) reporting templates for the grantee to complete via the Internet. The completed reports could then be reviewed and denied or

approved by the grantor. If denied, the grantee could make the appropriate changes and resubmit the report.

- 2.3.4 Ability for grantees to securely upload attachments (supporting documentation) to submit requests for payment electronically. The system would allow both parties to view the payment history. The state's secure file transfer service at <https://transfer.mt.gov/> can also be utilized for this functionality. For more information on this service can be integrated into third party products visit <https://transfer.mt.gov/api/filetransferservice.asmx>.
- 2.3.5 Ability to close out grants electronically with the appropriate approvals on both sides and post completed project information (stripped of any identifiable/sensitive data) as samples for other entities interested in seeing past projects.
- 2.3.6 Ability to query and search fields in the system for information as needed. Allow grantors to run either standard reports or build "ad hoc" reports that can be exported in an open document format to other software applications, web pages or databases.

2.4 *Project Optional Features – The features listed below would improve efficiency, streamline the process and in some cases would fulfill a special need for one or more of the individual programs:*

- 2.4.1 Provide help and hints for grantors using the system to build custom application forms or manage grants.
- 2.4.2 Allow grantors to publish announcements on the grant application portal page about grants (changes in the grants available, funding changes, deadlines, etc).
- 2.4.3 Allow grantors to make real time changes to the eligibility screening criteria.
- 2.4.4 Allow grantors to prepare applications in advance and specify start and end dates for when the application will appear and be removed from the portal.
- 2.4.5 Allow a front end password interface so that the State of Montana's ePass system could be used to access the grant application portal to allow the public to have a single sign on login id and password - <https://app.mt.gov/epass/epass> for all State of Montana eGovernment services using the instructions provided on the <http://app.mt.gov/toolkit/> web site.
- 2.4.6 Allow grantees to complete applications entirely through the web browser without downloading any special software.
- 2.4.7 Allow grantees to view the history of previous applications submitted and reuse data from a previous application to complete future applications.
- 2.4.8 Ability to set an automatic delete of records older than 10 years.

3.0 TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- 3.1 The State of Montana will not become obligated as a result of this RFI.
- 3.2 Information submitted in response to this RFI will become the property of the State of Montana.
- 3.3 The State of Montana will not pay for any information herein requested nor is it liable for any cost incurred by the vendor.
- 3.4 Economy of presentation: Special binders, colored displays, promotional materials, and the like are not required.
- 3.5 Vendors may be asked to meet at the vendor's expense, for the purpose of explaining and/or demonstrating responses. Any meetings will be held in Helena, Montana or through a web based conferencing tool such as GoToMeeting. Vendors should provide a contact person and phone number so the Montana Department of Commerce can contact the vendor to schedule a meeting time and location should one be needed.
- 3.6 This RFI is being submitted strictly for the purpose of gaining knowledge of the products and services available with an estimate of their corresponding costs and recommended implementation strategy.
- 3.7 Compliance with State of Montana IT Standards
- 3.7.1 Potential vendors are expected to be familiar with the State of Montana Information Technology (IT) environment. All services and products offered must comply with all applicable State of Montana IT policies and standards in effect at the time the RFI is issued. Vendors are expected to provide potential solutions that conform to State IT policies and standards.
- 3.7.2 The links below provide information on State of Montana IT strategic plans, current environment, policies, and standards.
- State of Montana Information Technology Strategic Plan
<http://www.mt.gov/itsd/stratplan/statewideplan.asp>
 - Montana Government Agencies Strategic Plans
<http://itsd.mt.gov/stratplan/agencyplans/default.mcpx>
 - State of Montana Information Technology Environment
<http://itsd.mt.gov/techmt/compenviron.mcpx>
 - State of Montana IT Policies
<http://itsd.mt.gov/policy/policies/default.mcpx>
 - State of Montana Software Standards
<http://www.mt.gov/itsd/policy/software.asp>

4.0 VENDOR RESPONSE REQUIRED

- 4.1 The Montana Department of Commerce is asking all interested parties to submit a response containing the following information:
- 4.1.1 An explanation of how the products and services your organization offers would meet or exceed the needs described in section 2.2. – 2.4 and listed in [Appendix A](#). Include supporting information and requirements (architectural environment, hardware, software, partner products, etc) needed to implement the proposed solution as well as information pertaining to the product lifecycle (ongoing maintenance and support).
 - 4.1.2 Additional information, advice or suggestions that would be useful in preparing to implement a web based grant application and/or grant management solution.
 - 4.1.3 Proposed project estimated start up cost, ongoing support costs and timelines for implementing and maintaining a web based grant management solution to meet the needs described in section 2.2. – 2.4 and listed in [Appendix A](#).
 - 4.1.4 A description of any potential problems/risks that the Montana Department of Commerce may encounter when implementing a web based grant application and management solution. Based on your previous experiences, please provide any ideas or suggestions about how such problems/risks should be addressed in a solicitation and project implementation.

Appendix A – Summary Table of Features

	Features	RFI Section
Web based Grant Application Features	Allows Grantee to determine if they qualify	2.2.1
	Allows Grantee to self register	2.2.1
	Allows each Grantor to set up business rules, regulations, procedures	2.2.3
	Allows Grantee and Grantor to add attachments	2.2.1 & 2.2.3
	Allows Grantee to withdrawal	2.2.1
	Allows Grantee reuse application/data each time	2.4.7
	Allows Grantee to completed application over a period of time	2.2.1
	Allows Grantee or Grantor to print application	2.2.1
	Grantee and Grantor can receive automatic notifications (changes in status)	2.2.1
	Text entered can be spell checked	2.2.1
IT Features (Requirements for Implementation)	Allows Grantee to view history/status of grant	2.4.7
	Compatible with multiple web browsers (IE, Firefox, Safari, Chrome)	2.2.2
	No Plug-in or add in software download required	2.4.6
	Secure Forms - meets minimum Federal Information Processing Standards (FIPS)	2.2.4
	Spam Blocker - prevents spammers from auto completing forms	2.2.4
	Compatible with MS Office (2003 and 2007)	2.2.7
	XML compatible (allows data to be imported and exported) Open Document format	2.2.8
	Ability to meet electronic signature rules for Montana	2.2.6
	508 Compliant - Accessibility	2.2.5
	Data Redundancy - backup and recovery	2.2.9
	Allow ePass to pass through password from MT portal to the web based grant system	2.4.5
	Obfuscate Tax ID numbers and other sensitive information	2.2.4
	Manage security roles and views	2.2.4
Web based Grant Form Development	Multiple grants can be maintained through one portal but have own link also	2.2.1 & 2.2.3
	Grantor can create customized grant forms for multiple applications	2.2.3
	Grantor can set up the type of data for each field on the form (text, number, etc)	2.2.3
	All forms are Date/Time Stamped upon submittal	2.2.1
	Forms can be customized with Program logos and colors (Branding)	2.2.3
	Grantor can set up alerts for submittal dates, etc.	2.3.2
	Allows Grantor to set up custom help & hints for completing forms	2.2.3
	System provides web based help for developing forms	2.4.1
	Allows Grantor to publish announcements	2.4.2
	Allows Grantor to set automatic eligibility screening criteria	2.4.3
Grant Management Features	Set start and end dates for form submittal period	2.4.4
	Grantor can rank and score web based and allow committee scoring	2.3.1
	Paper applications can be imported into the system for scoring	2.3.1
	Grantor can set up electronic approval	2.3.1
	Grantors can set up timelines for submitting status reports, etc.	2.3.2
	Grantor can provide web based compliance checklists and show outstanding items	2.3.3
	Allow the Grantor to build reports (criteria) for Grantee to complete	2.3.3
	Ability for Grantor to receive, approve, disapprove activity reports	2.3.3
	Grantee submit status reports web based with the ability to edit and resubmit	2.3.3
	Ability for Grantee to submit requests for draws web based with attachments	2.3.4
	Grantor can set up access so payment information can be viewed by both parties	2.3.4
	Grantor can set up closeout process web based and it can be signed electronically	2.3.5
	Grantor can search database for information with simple query tools	2.3.6
	Grantor can select canned reports or build ad hoc reports	2.3.6
	Grantor can export the data in an open document format (CSV, TXT, XML, etc.)	2.3.6
	Record keeping/Archiving (10 years)	2.2.9
	Ability to auto delete records older than 10 year	2.4.8
	Ability to post completed grant information web based	2.3.5