JustGrants Explained: What Every DOJ Grant Applicant Needs to Know

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Presented by Ashley Schultz and Shannon Day, Grants Office, LLC

Welcome and Introductions

Ashley Schultz:

Hello everyone, and welcome to our event. My name is Ashley Schultz. I'm the Manager of Community Engagement here at Grants Office, and today we're going to be discussing the US federal government's platform JustGrants. This session is most appropriate for those folks in the audience who are either setting up their organization in this platform for the very first time, or for those of you who are maybe on a team that has already been set up inside JustGrants, but you're joining them inside that platform for the first time. Lots of our content today is going to show you how to get your organization registered inside of the website and then how to start using its tools for submitting grant applications.

I am joined today by Shannon Day, who is our Senior Grants Development Consultant for local government and public safety organizations. If you have worked with our team and you needed help getting across the finish line for public safety or law enforcement or fire safety grants, Shannon was probably the one who got you there. She has worked with hundreds of organizations just like yourself who are out there searching through Grants.gov or searching through the Department of Justice's websites for grants, just trying to keep track of all the state and local public safety funding that's out there, and then also submitting polished grant proposals. So, in short, Shannon has a wealth of expertise on the US Department of Justice and grants in general, and I think you'll hear a lot from her today.

Here's a quick run-through of our agenda over the next 30 to 40 minutes. Once I pass things over to Shannon, she's going to run through the basics of JustGrants. What is it? What can you do on the site? And, critically, how do you get your organization registered there? Next, Shannon's going to take us through the step-by-step process of how to find the correct funding opportunity inside the portal and then start the application process. Now, notably — and Shannon's going to talk about this in much greater detail shortly — JustGrants is not the place where you search for and find grants for the Department of Justice, or DOJ. That pleasure is still held fully by the other US federal platform, Grants.gov. So we're going to take a meander over to that platform in the middle of our agenda to show you that process as well.

Last but certainly not least, Shannon's going to draw not only from her own experience with JustGrants, but also that of the broader team here at Grants Office, to share some common pitfalls and show you how to avoid them inside that platform. We'll end with a description of Grants Office services and a Q&A session from the audience, so feel free to drop any questions that you have in the chat in the bottom right-hand corner of your screen as they come up during our presentation today. So with that, I'm going to pass things over to the very capable hands of Shannon to get us started. Shannon, take it away.

What is JustGrants?

The Federal Funding Landscape

Shannon Day:

Thank you, Ashley, and hello, everyone. Thank you for taking the time to join us today for our dive into JustGrants. Whether you're just getting started with DOJ grants or you're a veteran user, I really hope you leave today's session with something learned. So when you start looking at the landscape of federal grants, it can really feel like you're staring at an alphabet soup of agencies. On your screen, you see some of the heaviest hitters in federal funding. It does not include all of them, but you'll see funders like the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy, the Department of Homeland Security, and, of course, today our focal point is the Department of Justice.

While nearly all of these agencies utilize the standard Grants.gov system to some extent, the Department of Justice does something unique. Once you move past that initial phase of finding and starting your application in Grants.gov, you transition into DOJ's proprietary end-to-end grant management system, known as JustGrants, which was created back in late 2020 for the 2021 grant season. It saw some growing pains in the beginning, but I think it's pretty much established at this point. So our goal today is to demystify this workflow. If you've ever felt intimidated by the application process, you are not alone. By the time we finish today's session, you'll know exactly what to look for, how the systems talk to each other, and how to successfully navigate the platform without losing your sanity or, very importantly, your data.

So today I'm going to talk a little bit about Grants.gov to cover the basics, but if you want a more comprehensive session, Sandy did an excellent webinar covering all things Grants.gov a few weeks ago. You can visit our website or scan the QR code on the right side of your screen and bookmark that to watch it later.

The JustGrants Resources Site

Also, if there is one website you should bookmark immediately after this webinar — besides ours, of course — it's the one shown here, the JustGrants resources site. I want to make a crucial distinction here. This is not the portal where you actually write and submit your application. This is the public-facing training and resource hub. The Department of Justice has done a phenomenal job building out this site over the years. As I said, they had some growing pains, but since JustGrants was born, they've packed this resource with step-by-step PDF guides, video tutorials, status updates — pretty much anything you need is going to be here. Right at the top of the home page, you'll see that yellow warning banner. It talks about the SAM.gov entity registration and renewal requirements. This is the first big speed bump for many applicants. The DOJ explicitly warns you here to begin your SAM.gov registration or renewal at least 30 days prior to any grant deadline. Heed their advice. I'm going to talk about that step in a little bit.

DOJ's Funding Offices

But first, I want to talk about the DOJ's funding offices, so if you're newer to the Department of Justice, you don't get confused by all the acronyms. We all speak in acronyms, so if I happen to use one that I don't define, or if I use some other words or phrases you're unfamiliar with, please let us know in the Q&A so I can address it. While the DOJ does plan to consolidate all these offices into one huge office called the Bureau of Justice Grants later this year, until then, we have separate offices. The largest one by far is the Office of Justice Programs, or OJP. This program operates through six specialized bureaus and program offices, including the Bureau of Justice Assistance — that's kind of the big one — the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Office for Victims of Crime, and the SMART Office, which handles sex offender sentencing, monitoring, et cetera.

Next, we have the Office on Violence Against Women, or OVW. This office focuses on implementing the Violence Against Women Act. They provide both formula and competitive grants designed to support victim services, domestic violence prevention, sexual assault response teams, and offender accountability programs, equipping law enforcement, prosecutors, and courts with the training and specialized tools necessary to investigate these crimes and hold offenders accountable. And finally, we have the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, or the COPS Office. If your project involves building community trust, school safety measures, hiring local law enforcement officers, or advancing any other community policing strategy, the COPS Office is probably going to be your target agency.

But what is the common denominator, the through line that connects all of these disparate offices? No matter if you're applying through OJP, OVW, or COPS, all of the agencies manage their award

applications and post-award administrative tasks through the exact same system, which is JustGrants — the reason we are all here today.

First Things First...Registrations

Three Registrations, in Order

But before we dive into JustGrants, let's pause to address some actions that are good to get out of the way sooner rather than later when looking to apply to federal grants — namely, registrations. So if your organization plans to apply for a DOJ grant, it must be registered with SAM.gov, Grants.gov, and JustGrants, in that order. The System for Award Management, or SAM, is the government-wide registry for organizations doing business with the federal government. Anyone applying for federal grants is going to start in SAM.gov. It's through registering here that organizations are assigned a Unique Entity Identifier, or UEI. Sometimes you'll hear these interchanged — you'll hear UEI, you'll hear SAM number — they're the same thing. This is just a twelve-character alphanumeric identifier assigned to all entities doing business with the federal government. This number is then required when registering in Grants.gov, and it's what JustGrants uses to establish organizational authority for its users.

So in terms of order, as I mentioned, you must register first in SAM.gov; then, using your UEI, you register in Grants.gov; and then finally JustGrants. Information across these systems must match exactly. For example, the organizational point of contact, or E-Biz POC, and their email address used to register in SAM.gov must be the same as that used to register in Grants.gov. So before going any further, I strongly recommend just checking in with your fiscal office or your organizational leadership to see if your institution has already been assigned a UEI number. You can also check this yourself, which I'm going to go over in a minute. Also see if your registration is current, because it does need to be renewed every year, and ask if your organization has already registered with Grants.gov. Your organization may be large enough to have multiple UEI numbers, so you want to make sure you're using the correct one. And if the answer is no, we don't have a UEI number, then you start the process.

It can take several weeks, as I mentioned, so give yourself plenty of time. You don't have to wait until a grant opens to register with SAM.gov. You can do it anytime, so I recommend doing it, like, now. Also, if you're registered already, it doesn't mean you're totally off the hook. As I mentioned, you have to renew every year. You also want to make sure that your E-Biz POC is still active and with the company, because staff turnover happens. This brings me to my final point: assigning roles. Later I'm going to talk about all the roles that are required for JustGrants, but the initial role is your E-Biz POC. They must match, as I said — they have to match across all systems. So if they don't match, you'll need to make sure that you have an active person in SAM.gov who is your active E-Biz POC.

And I just want to flag as well, because this question comes up often: there is no fee attached to any of these registrations. There are nefarious actors out there who pretend, or tell you, that they will register you for a fee. It does not cost you anything if you go to the legitimate official government sites. You're good to go.

Checking Your SAM.gov Registration

So on the SAM.gov home page, click on the Get Started button to get started with the registration process. And if it rings a bell, or if it looks familiar, or you think your organization might already be registered but you're not sure, you can just go search and then do some investigating. This is what we did for our organization. So we entered the name of our organization into the search bar, and then you'll see that we have an active SAM registration. I'm also able to see our UEI number there and then click into my organization to see more information. So if you have more than one option that pops up here, you really want to make sure you're connecting with your organizational leadership to, again, confirm that you are using the correct UEI.

So when you click on that UEI, this is what you will see. You will see your primary E-Biz point of contact associated with your organization, and for Grants Office, we have two. So I can see here, I know who I need to contact with any questions regarding my SAM registration or regarding Grants.gov registrations. And ideally, you will have an alternate point of contact because of that potential staff turnover, so you have kind of a safety net there. If this search comes up empty, then my next step would be to check with my fiscal office or my leadership to ask the appropriate party to register in both accounts.

JustGrants User Roles

As I mentioned, I would talk about user roles, so let's dig in. The Department of Justice utilizes six foundational roles within JustGrants to maintain clear separation of duties and information security. Multiple roles can be assigned to a single person, depending on the size of your organization and the size of your team. And as you just saw, some of these roles will be assigned in SAM, some will be assigned in Grants.gov, and some in JustGrants. Each Department of Justice grant program may have varying JustGrants role requirements. They may not require all six roles, so you want to make sure you read and understand that grant's application guidance.

Let's break these down, starting with the pre-award roles in the top row. First, we have the Entity Administrator. I've already talked about this role a bit. Think of this person as your organization's ultimate gatekeeper. This role is automatically assigned to the E-Biz POC pulled from SAM.gov during registration. They are the only user who can add other team members to your JustGrants profile. They can assign roles, and they can allocate specific grant applications to writers. Next is the Application Submitter. This is your primary grant writer, project director, or consultant who's kind of leading the

charge. They are responsible for directly drafting, inputting, and compiling the narrative sections and the detailed budget — that we'll look at in a few minutes — in the JustGrants portal. Then we have the Authorized Representative.

This is the highest-ranking legal signatory for your organization. It could be your mayor, it could be your police chief, it could be your executive director, your school board director. Anyway, they must be designated in the system, because they're the only ones with the legal authority to enter into formal agreements and to sign acceptance on behalf of your organization.

Now, we will look at the bottom row, which focuses on the post-award roles. The Financial Manager is your financial point of contact in your organization, or at the city or county level. Once an award is active, they're responsible for certifying and submitting mandatory quarterly financial reports. And finally, we have the Grant Award Administrator and their alternate. This is your programmatic lead who manages daily compliance, submits programmatic progress reports, handles grant award modifications, and leads the final closeout steps. My best advice here is don't overlap these roles unnecessarily. You don't want to put so much work on one person's plate, but one person can hold multiple roles in JustGrants. You want to make sure you're following the grant guidance, and set these roles up early. Document who's assigned to what, who's responsible for what. Make sure your Entity Administrator assigns these roles on week one to avoid any unnecessary headaches.

Starting in Grants.gov

Two Deadlines, Two Systems

Once your registrations are clean and active, it's time to take your first physical step in the grant application process. And as I mentioned earlier, that step always begins in Grants.gov. So let's look at how we navigate the start of a DOJ application. As I said, this is a very high-level, getting-you-started step. For a deeper dive, definitely check out Sandy's Grantscast. So when you look at the deadline for a DOJ grant, you may be confused, because you will see two deadlines. This reflects the two-step submission process. The first deadline is for the Grants.gov submission. You cannot submit your full application without finishing this step first, so make sure you don't miss that first deadline.

Finding the Opportunity and Creating a Workspace

The first image you'll see, on the top left, is what you'll see when you first get to Grants.gov. You'll click Search Grants, and that page will look like the image in the top center. Not shown, because of space constraints, are a bunch of different filters down the side that you can use to narrow your search. But if you know the opportunity number or the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance, or CFDA, number, you can just type it right into that field and it will bring up your opportunity.

So Grants.gov uses a collaborative portal called Workspace, which you can see in the center of your screen. This allows multiple team members to work on form fields simultaneously. On this screen, you'll verify the funding opportunity number and select your active organizational profile from the dropdown menu. You'll also give your application a name here, under the Application Filing Name field. We recommend using something descriptive, especially if you apply for multiple grants, so you can keep them kind of organized. It also helps the funders. So, something like, if you're applying for the School Violence Prevention Program, or SVPP, you would just put "SVPP School Violence Prevention 2026," for example. Once you click Create Workspace, your collaborative space is live, and then you can click Apply, which you see on your upper right.

The SF-424

Historically, DOJ grants have required both the SF-424 and an SF-LLL, which is a lobbying form, but I've noticed this year they've removed that second requirement, so most grants will only require the SF-424, which is an application for federal assistance. This is a pretty simple form. It includes your organization details, like your legal name, your address, your Employer Identification Number, or EIN, and organizational type — like whether you're a nonprofit, a university, et cetera. A project overview, which is just your title, proposed start and end dates — usually this will be your period of performance — and a summary of what the funds will support, a quick abstract. And a budget summary. Very importantly — I'm going to talk about this later — but this is going to be a high-level estimate of the federal funds requested and your matching funds, if required. Like I said, I'm going to talk about this later, but it needs to match JustGrants exactly.

But in this space, if you don't have your exact budget yet, estimate. I'll cover that later. And then finally, compliances and assurances. These are disclosures just regarding federal debt, lobbying, certifications, et cetera — basically saying that you will comply with federal laws.

From Grants.gov to JustGrants

And once you submit in Grants.gov, it triggers an automatic data sync, opening up the full application profile within JustGrants for your team. So, like I said, once that submit button is clicked, your E-Biz POC will receive an email from DIAMD-NoReply@usdoj.gov. This email will contain registration instructions to create an account in DOJ's user management system. If you already have an account, obviously you won't need to create an account, but it does invite you to apply. So DIAMD is the Digital Identity and Access Management Directory. You don't need to know what that means. You just need to know that you'll get an email from that address. Once entity users confirm their identity in DIAMD — it's multi-factor authentication, or MFA — their accounts will be created, and then they'll be ready to go into JustGrants.

You can't just enter JustGrants to poke around. You have to be invited to register and enter JustGrants. Those users can then be assigned work and can reassign roles if necessary, et cetera. And as I mentioned earlier, you may have multiple JustGrants users. You may have your fiscal officer doing the budget work in there while your grant writer is entering the narrative. So that is perfectly allowable and recommended.

JustGrants Application

The My Worklist Table

So now that we got all the important but kind of boring preliminary information out of the way, let's get to the fun stuff and look at the JustGrants application. Truthfully, it's pretty straightforward. When you first go in there, it may be overwhelming, but it's really not. So, the heart of JustGrants is your My Worklist table, which you can see on your left. Any application you initiated in Grants.gov will automatically populate here as pending drafts. You'll see the unique case ID — that's in the yellow rectangle there with the arrow. This is your internal tracking number for the application. You can also see the due date and the office managing the grant — those offices I mentioned earlier, like COPS or OVW. If you're a member of a large organization, like this person is, your worklist might have dozens of active cases. You can filter through and sort to find which one you're looking for. If you're only working on one application, that's the one that's going to show. So you need to find the specific grant that you need to work on, and you want to make sure that you're keeping them organized.

The Interactive Application Checklist

The right side of the slide shows what you'll see when you click on one of those individual case IDs. This is where you open up your grant to actually start the application. This is really where the magic happens. The standard applicant information is auto-populated from your SF-424 that you entered in Grants.gov. On the right-hand side of your screen, you see your interactive application checklist. This is wonderful. As you complete each section — verifying your legal name, whatever the case may be — the system will display a little green check mark next to it saying, yep, you did it. This means you can work out of order. I love this. It keeps you kind of organized with those little green checks. So if your program director is still tweaking a proposal narrative, you can skip ahead and verify your entity information, you can work on budget sections, you can enter things in any order you like.

Save Early, Save Often

But the most important thing — and I'm going to say this probably a million times today — is make sure you are clicking save. Click save before you navigate away from a section. Click save kind of obsessively,

because JustGrants does not autosave, and it also times out after 15 minutes of inactivity. So if you are like many folks who wear many hats, you are applying for a grant while you're doing 15 other tasks during your job day, you may get pulled away, and it may time out. So make sure you're clicking save. Save your work. You go to get a cup of coffee, save your work. I'm going to say it over and over again. It's highlighted there with a big purple arrow for a reason.

Application Components

So while each grant program may have individual application requirements, these are really kind of the main components, things that are pretty universal. So let's walk through this in sequence, from left to right of our little arc. First, we have the cover page. In JustGrants, this is captured under that standard applicant information section. So as I mentioned, most of it's pulled directly from your SF-424 that you submitted in Grants.gov, but you definitely want to review it, make sure that everything is correct, verify your legal address, et cetera.

Second is your proposal abstract. This is what will be made publicly available if your project is awarded. So it's a short description — I think it's 2,000 characters in JustGrants. This is a short overview of what your proposal is going to be. Usually we write these after we write our full narrative. You don't want to base your narrative on your abstract; you want to base your abstract on your narrative. In many systems you upload a PDF. You don't do this in JustGrants. It is a direct web-based text box. You enter this project summary directly into the portal, and this is the one that is very strict on character limits. So they recommend that if you write your abstract in another system, like in a Word document, make sure you remove all the formatting before pasting it into JustGrants, because it will still contain some weird formatting that may mess with your character count. I'll talk about that a little later as well.

Third on our rainbow is the heavyweight. This is the project narrative. This is really the heart of your proposal, where you explain your program design, your goals, your objectives, your capabilities. Depending on the specific solicitation, it will have different headers. You'll either enter it into the text boxes in JustGrants, or some programs have you upload a single PDF. They want clearly defined headers, and again, make sure you're reading your application guidance so you can find out what your word count is, what your margins are, other features that you want to make sure you're using. What is your font size? What is your font type? Are you using Times New Roman, et cetera? Make sure you're following those very easy-to-follow instructions, because you don't want to give yourself an unnecessary ding.

Moving along, our fourth component is data surveys. Many DOJ solicitations, especially those under OJP, require you to complete programmatic web-based questionnaires. These are just logistical information. It's quantitative baseline metrics about your organization, your service area, your community. Do not overlook these. They're built directly into the portal and must be completed before you can submit, if

they are required. Fifth is the budget and the budget narrative. This is a major departure from the old way of doing things. Instead of uploading your budget as an Excel sheet, you actually use an integrated web-based grid to build your line-item budget, and we'll zoom in on that in the next slide. And finally, we have supporting documents. These can be varied. They can include memoranda of understanding, letters of support, resumes, indirect cost rate agreements. They're usually uploaded as attachments.

The golden rule here is to use the interactive checklist on your JustGrants sidebar to keep yourself in order. Tackle the pieces methodically. Again, they don't have to be in order, but they do have to be tackled eventually. So some things you may put off until the very end, but you want to make sure that you're doing it. And remember, if you're waiting for one piece of material — if you're waiting for one letter of support — get everything else done, and then you can easily upload that letter of support, or whatever piece you're missing, when you finally get it. And again, save your progress. Save, save, save.

The Budget and Budget Narrative

So here we have a sample budget page. In most cases, the budget worksheet and the budget narrative are completed directly in JustGrants. Individual budget categories vary by grant program. Some grants will allow for equipment; some grants won't. So you see in the yellow rectangle on the right of your screen those budget categories. This budget is an area that may catch many first-time applicants off guard. But again, if you follow it systematically, it's fine. You will be fine. Again, like I said, in the past, you would normally upload an Excel spreadsheet or a PDF of your budget narrative. This is nice because it's a structured web-based grid for each budget category, so it doesn't let you forget anything. As you can see on your right, you see personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, construction, and subawards, and then other costs, indirect costs.

So in this screenshot, we're looking at the travel category. You have to break down every single expense, item by item. So what is the purpose of travel? Where are they going? Who is going? How did you estimate that cost? Was it by mileage? Was it per diem? How many people are going? So below each category table, you see the narrative section. This is where you explain what the numbers mean. So you have your hard numbers; now you want to say how you got them and why you need them. This is your budget justification. You must explain why these costs are necessary and how you calculated them. Once you complete a category, the system will calculate your totals automatically. This is wonderful. So it is very structured. It leaves very little room for mathematical errors, which we all love, because if you're a few cents off, that sometimes is terrible. This is a great, great benefit of this system.

So remember, we talked a while ago, when you entered your total budget back in Grants.gov, and I said you can kind of give a round number. After you've entered all your budget details in JustGrants, that final total has to match the number you submitted on the SF-424 exactly. But, like I said, if you didn't have your full budget when you submitted your SF-424, there is no reason to panic. You can correct it in

JustGrants. I think I explain later where you go to correct that, but if you submit $500,000 in your SF-424 and it's only $450,000 in JustGrants, you need to correct it so they align exactly.

Common JustGrants Pitfalls and How to Avoid Them

Before we pretend to submit, I want to take some time to address some common pitfalls we've seen over the years and how to avoid or address them. I've previewed a lot of these already, but they are worth repeating over and over.

Missing Deadlines

Our first pitfall is missing deadlines. Many applicants think of their deadline as a single date, but again, remember, JustGrants is unique: we have two deadlines for all DOJ grants. So if you don't submit your SF-424 on Grants.gov on time, the system will prevent your application from ever even appearing in JustGrants. There is no manual override for this. If you missed that first window, your application is dead on arrival. So if you only want to keep one deadline on your calendar, make sure it's that first deadline, because if you miss it, the second deadline is moot.

Unassigned Roles

The second pitfall is unassigned roles. We see this constantly. The writer finishes the proposal, logs in at 4:30 p.m. on deadline day to submit, and realizes they can't click submit because they're only assigned as the Application Submitter and the Authorized Representative hasn't accepted their account invitation. So get your team registered and assigned to their roles during week one. Don't leave this until submission week.

Losing Unsaved Information

The third pitfall we see here is losing unsaved information. I told you I was going to talk about it a lot. Because JustGrants is web-based, it's subject to session timeouts. It will log you out after 15 minutes of inactivity. If you're typing your narrative directly into the portal and you get pulled away and your session times out and you didn't click save, your narrative is gone. So, A, the solution is to — you guessed it — save often, but also, B, write everything in a separate document. Save it locally, so if you do lose your progress in JustGrants, you're not having to start from scratch. You can just go to your locally saved document and say, okay, here we go.

Incorrect Formatting

Next is incorrect formatting. Copying and pasting that text that you did save locally can bring along hidden formatting codes, like special bullet points or smart quotes or whatever other formatting Word

decides it likes that day. So it can distort your text inside those web forms that have character limits. Copy your text from Word, paste it into a plain text editor like Notepad to strip out all that formatting, and then paste it into JustGrants. Or, if you really feel like it, just type directly into JustGrants. But this simple step will save you a lot of hassle in the long run.

Misaligned Budgets

Next, misaligned budgets. I've also talked about this. The dollar amount you entered in the SF-424 in Grants.gov must match exactly, to the penny, your final calculated budget in JustGrants. So again, if you estimated — I don't know, I think it'll be $450,000 — in the SF-424, but you're still waiting for some quotes, but then you got all your quotes, you have your itemized budget, and JustGrants totals it to $449,950, the system will trigger a validation warning. So again, fortunately, you can update your SF-424 amount inside the Project Information section of JustGrants to align those numbers.

Budget and Narrative Discrepancies

And finally, discrepancies between your budget request and your project narrative. Reviewers will cross-reference your proposal. If you request $50,000 worth of cameras but make absolutely no mention of cameras in your narrative, it will immediately raise red flags. Ensure that every resource you mention in your project plan is accounted for in your budget narrative.

The Last-Minute Scramble

And finally, that last-minute scramble. We know it happens, but try to avoid it if you can. Don't wait until the final hours, because JustGrants is processing hundreds of submissions simultaneously on deadline days, so it could get bogged down. Server lag is real. Give yourself a 24-hour buffer to deal with those tech issues, and truthfully, give yourself even longer to deal with the human issues.

Final Steps: Checking for Errors and Submitting

So now we get back to the good stuff, back to our application. The great thing, like I said, is JustGrants requires that you check for errors. It does not let you make unforced errors, so it will not allow you to submit without addressing those errors. When you finish all the sections of your application, you will click Check for Errors at the bottom of the screen, and then you will very likely see that pink box pop up. I don't think I've ever seen an application submission with zero errors on the first try. We're always going to come across something that we missed, something we forgot, something that just looks hinky. So don't fret if you see this box. It tells you exactly where the error is and what you need to do to correct it. So, for example, it reminds you to acknowledge your lobbying certification form, or it points out that your Authorized Representative hasn't been confirmed yet. So you resolve every item on this

list. Once that pink banner disappears — and it may take you a few tries; patience and persistence are key — you can officially click the blue Submit button down at the bottom.

This will complete and submit your application. I will tell you from experience that this is both terrifying and exhilarating. I think probably most seasoned grant pros will tell you the same thing: no matter how many times we do this, we still get the yips. So it is normal, and it is expected. But once you click submit, you will get verification that you have submitted. Congratulations! Now it is the waiting game. Now you wait for them to review all the proposals, and hopefully you are awarded. And the nice thing about JustGrants is that you can then use it to administer your grants. So it really is the one-stop shop from start to finish for your DOJ grants.

A Free Guide to JustGrants

Before I turn things back to Ashley, I do want to mention that we also have a free guide available for download that drills even more into detail on all things JustGrants. So if you tuned me out, or if I didn't cover something, or if you forgot about something, you can refer to this guide in your own time. I definitely recommend making use of it as you're working through your JustGrants journey. So with that, I will turn things back over to Ashley to share some additional tools and resources available here at Grants Office.

Grants Office Services and How to Engage

On the Federal Funding Landscape

Ashley Schultz:

Thank you so very much, Shannon. Thanks for all that excellent information. I'm just going to give you a couple of seconds to grab a glass of water before we start our Q&A. Again, if you have any questions, look at that bottom right-hand corner of your screen to drop them in. So first, as we talk about federal funding, we'll just acknowledge that we've had a lot of folks ask us about finding and applying for funding, particularly in the last few months, with what's happening in the US federal budget — right? — what's happening with the budget in the first place. State budgets, foundation budgets — they've remained relatively stable and reliable forms of funding, but we are seeing quite a bit of discourse surrounding how and when the US federal government provides their grants.

So if you haven't already done so, I would encourage you to check on our website, under the Guidance for Grantseekers tab, where we have a series of five-minute videos on the US federal budget. What has passed, what has not passed, how much funding is available, what changes are we seeing in the grant

funding landscape — all those videos are available for you on demand and are completely free on our website right now.

Grant Writing and Editing Services

I will also call your attention to our grant writing and editing services that are also available to you. Our team here is filled with folks just like Shannon. We have more than 25 years of experience across both the US and Canada in proposal development work. So we help organizations just like yourself to plan out and then articulate your projects in a way that's going to speak to the funder's goals and objectives. So not only can we help you with the technical components of how to get that grant submitted, but we can also help make sure that your budget, your proposal narrative, your project abstract, all those other moving pieces are as polished as possible, making sure you put your best foot forward. So I definitely encourage you to reach out if you have anything like that.

Other Grants Office Services

If one of these services is not of interest to you — if you're still kind of trying to figure out what your grant pathway is — I will also call attention to the other services we have here on this next slide. We have a research and consultation service that allows you to sit down with a consultant, again, just like Shannon, discuss your upcoming projects, and then find out what state, federal, and foundation grants would best support those initiatives. Our team is also available to help you with project building — again, sitting down with you and building out a competitive application to a state or a foundation or a federal grant, if you're choosing. And then, last but certainly not least, we have our subscription service, Grants Office Communities, which gives you access to our database of more than 26,000 state, federal, and foundation grants, so that you can do all that research, all that project building, all on your own inside a platform that was designed by our team. Grants Office Communities — we always have a free two-week membership if you want to try it out. So if you have not gone over to check that out yet, I definitely encourage you to do so.

Guidance for Grantseekers

And then last, if you're really just here to get some education around grantseeking more generally, I would pull your attention towards the Grants Office website, where we have really two decades of grants content waiting to be read and watched and enjoyed. Our Guidance for Grantseekers page that we have up right here is my favorite. It's got a series of videos that take you through the entire application process, from finding the right grant to building your team to polishing off that draft before you click submit. Everything on that site is totally free and, again, is powered by the folks here at Grants Office.

Q&A Session

Ashley Schultz:

So I have, at this point in time, five questions for you, Shannon. I'll let you know if more pop up as we go along.

Audience Questions

Q1: How long does it take for an application to show up in JustGrants after we submit the SF-424 in Grants.gov?

Ashley Schultz:

The first has to do with the two-part submission process that you mentioned — submitting on Grants.gov and then submitting in JustGrants. How long does it take for an application to show up in JustGrants after we click submit on the SF-424 form in Grants.gov?

Shannon Day:

Good question. So typically — and I emphasize typically — once you submit your SF-424 in Grants.gov, it takes between 24 to 48 hours for that data to bridge over to JustGrants. I've seen it be almost instantaneous. I've also seen it take several days. So again, start as early as possible. So, if you wait to submit Grants.gov on a Friday night, and your application doesn't appear until Monday afternoon, and your JustGrants deadline is Tuesday, then you've now only given yourself 24 hours to get everything done. JustGrants gives a buffer. Again, that buffer is different depending on the grants, so your Grants.gov deadline could be Friday, and your JustGrants deadline may be the following Friday. It could be even shorter than that. So give yourself plenty of time, but definitely give yourself at least 48 hours.

Q2: Our Entity Administrator left our organization. How do we regain administrative control?

Ashley Schultz:

Thank you. As long as we're just talking kind of brass tacks about these sorts of things, this person says: Our Entity Administrator left our organization. How do we regain that administrative control if we can't log in using their credentials?

Shannon Day:

This unfortunately happens more often than you would think — again, because of staff turnover. Your Entity Administrator may have left six months ago and you haven't looked at it since then, or they may leave in the middle of a proposal, which has happened. So when that happens, you want to log into SAM.gov and update your organization's points of contact list to designate a new E-Biz POC. So it's going to be, basically, whoever replaced that person who left. Once SAM.gov validates that change, which can

take a few days, then that new E-Biz POC can go log into JustGrants and kind of take control. Hopefully the person who left takes care of that before they leave, but things happen. We know that's why, when I shared the one slide, we have our alternate POC. So if our main POC does leave, or is on vacation, or whatever, we have an alternate. So ideally, you do have an alternate in there as well.

Q3: Who requests that a collaborator get access to a workspace?

Ashley Schultz:

I have another question about access and kind of those sorts of roles, and I'm very sorry to this person — I think you asked this while Shannon was talking about Grants.gov. So Shannon, if you could answer this in the form of Grants.gov, that would be perfect, but if there is something different for JustGrants — because a lot of these words end up not being the same — could you also answer for that? So the question is: Who requests a collaborator get access to a workspace? This is why I'm thinking it's Grants.gov. Is it that new person, or the person who created the workspace?

Shannon Day:

This can be very confusing. It can be either your E-Biz POC, that we talked about in SAM.gov and Grants.gov, or your Entity Administrator, which is the term for it in JustGrants. They are often the same person, or they can be two different people. But think of your E-Biz POC as the ultimate gatekeeper. They are the decider, and they are the ones assigning your Entity Administrator — or they are your Entity Administrator — and then that Entity Administrator is the one who assigns all those other roles. So it's a multi-level project that starts in SAM, continues in Grants.gov, and is finalized in JustGrants. I hope that answered the question.

Q4: Does JustGrants offer CPE trainings?

Ashley Schultz:

Thank you. And yes, to the person who asked that question, if we missed that or you were asking something different, please chime in. So, because of all these kind of backs and forths, Shannon, does JustGrants give CPE trainings for these sorts of things?

Shannon Day:

I don't know if they're certified. I will not speak for JustGrants, but if you go to that website that I shared at the very beginning — the JustGrants user website — for real, they have so many resources for you. So you can poke around in there. There is also contact information in there, so they can tell you for sure if they offer certifications or not.

Q5: What if the funding we requested doesn't match actual prices when it comes time for procurement?

Ashley Schultz:

And then I have one last question, and that is: this person was listening when you were talking about how everything had to match across all of the platforms. They said, what if the funding we requested doesn't match what we actually pay when it comes time for procurement? So, five to seven months after you've learned that you won. They say, our vendor told us that prices were going to go up on July 1, but we're submitting our proposal this week.

Shannon Day:

Again, this happens probably all the time. The quotes that we get in June are not going to be the same prices, probably, that we have in October, especially over the last couple of years. Last year there was chaos with the tariffs, and this year, with the war and the strait being shut down, prices are changing dramatically and quickly. Unfortunately, grant funders know this. They know that the numbers that you put into your proposal in June are not going to be exact to the penny when you actually put it out for bid and put it out for procurement. They are your best prices that you had at the time. These are the quotes that you get from your vendors, and your vendors are going to try to give you the most accurate price. So if that vendor you talked about — their prices are going up July 1 — they probably have an idea of what those prices are going to be, so they will be able to give you, hopefully, as close as they can get to that. But again, grant funders know that the prices are going to be different come October.

Ashley Schultz:

And I will editorialize here with Shannon and say, while grant funders are very understanding about those circumstances that are out of your control, they are less understanding about you guessing and not confirming the prices to begin with. So do try to make a good-faith effort to get those prices as close as possible, assuming no changes, and know that they'll be understanding should that change down the road outside of your control.

Shannon Day:

Yes.

Closing

Ashley Schultz:

Well, thank you again, Shannon, for all of this really excellent information. I know JustGrants inside and out, and I learned stuff today, so I'm really always happy to sit here and listen and learn from you. And thank you to everyone else here for joining us today on this session. We hope you found this to be an

excellent use of your time, and we look forward to seeing you on future Grantscasts here with Grants Office. Have a great day.

— End of Transcript —

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