



FEMA E-Grants Program An initiative toward E-Government



In response to the Federal E-Government initiative, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), now under the Emergency Preparedness and Response Directorate (EP&R) of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), has deployed Internet-based systems that support state and local end users, internal financial management, and the program offices responsible for managing grants throughout their life-cycle. Separation of the "Front Office" (applicant/grantee) and "Back Office" (internal agency) system components enables easy integration with the Federal E-Grants initiative. REI Systems, Inc., has been a key contributor in the implementation of FEMA's E-Grants Program. Systems developed by REI have cumulatively supported more than 40,000 electronic applications in FYs 2002 and 2003 and are currently being used by both grantees and FEMA staff for pre-award, award, and post-award processes.

*"Implementation of E-Government is important in making Government more responsive and cost-effective."
- President George W. Bush, July 10, 2002*

APPROACH

In implementing the E-Grants Program, FEMA focused on automating the paper-based non-disaster grant business processes, improving the automated support for disaster grant processing, and initiating the standardization of financial grants procedures across the agency. Developing a total comprehensive grants solution was the key. FEMA organized its assistance programs into groups according to their similarities. The Assistance to Firefighters Grant, Pre-Disaster Mitigation, and Flood Mitigation Assistance were selected as the first non-disaster grant programs for the development of a full life-cycle system. This end-to-end support included pre-award, application, review, award, reporting and administration, and closeout processes.

REI Systems, Inc. (REI), in conjunction with the Information Technology department of FEMA and the Fire Grant and Mitigation Grant Program Offices, developed a solution to satisfy the diverse business needs of each grant program. REI developed the E-Grants system to electronically accept applications from fire departments throughout the country. An external component was provided for applicants to review the status of their application and upon award perform all required award and post-award processes. The review, selection, and award process was supported by an internal component with role-based functionality for FEMA program, grants, financial management, and Congressional liaison offices. REI also developed the web-based application module that allows state applicants (grantees) and local applicants (subgrantees) from different states to create their applications and submit them to FEMA for Mitigation programs. These applications are then further processed by the internal system component developed by Anteon Corporation. All financial transactions are processed through a Generic Financial System (GFS) interface to the Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS).

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

REI's experience and knowledge in Internet-based technologies have resulted in a system that is user-friendly, reliable, and secure. In 2002 and 2003, the system cumulatively supported more than 40,000 Assistance to Firefighters Grant applications and has been used to award 5,316 applications worth \$334 million. REI's philosophy of looking at systems from an end-user's perspective has resulted in accolades from applicants and FEMA users for the ease and intuitiveness of the system. The system allows internal FEMA users to find applications and check application status and allows users to self-assign tasks, with an over-riding functionality available for managers.

The AFG E-Grants Module provides financial reports in a quick snapshot, for different roles within the system. This facilitates better financial tracking and control.

REI has developed the Mitigation component that assists FEMA interaction with the widespread network of local applicants for Mitigation programs by allowing grant and subgrant applicants to submit applications to FEMA. It supports the Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) and Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) grant programs, and will allow PDM competitive grants submission this summer. Security and privacy controls within the system allow appropriate handling of applications between grantees and subgrantees.

The system's Mitigation E-Grants component integrates with the Community Information System (CIS) to provide users with accurate community information. It also integrates with the National Emergency Management Information System (NEMIS) for FIPS place codes or Public Entities. The system allows the users to send FIRM Maps and Benefit Cost Analysis documents as attachments to FEMA.

SCALABLE AND FLEXIBLE

REI leverages our system development experience with the E-Grants projects at four other Federal agencies, making the system scalable and flexible. The system is flexible to incorporate different grant program processing and is currently used for electronic awards processing for the Fire Prevention and Safety Grant Program. This was developed quickly as the system architecture is designed to support new programs with minimal changes.

Future Plans

- Integrate with grants.gov storefront
- Enhance system for processing of all current and future grants
- Continuously improve the grants lifecycle processes

Thanks, Steve. Hey, I've started work on that electronic application and it is cool! Very user friendly, with lots of extra help links. Whoever designed it should talk to other Federal agencies about their electronic applications because yours is extremely user friendly. Thanks again.

-Lin Wilson, Grant Administrator, Allen County Auditor's Office (from 03/12/2003 email)

System Functions

The system supports the following grants management processes:

- Application submission
- Automatic generation of standard forms SF 424 and SF LLL, and FEMA forms 20-20, 20-16A, 20-16B and 20-16C
- Award processing and award packages
- Award notifications to Congressional offices and applicants
- Direct deposit (SF-1199A)
- Payments (SF-270)
- Grant revisions and amendments
- Performance and financial reports
- Grant closeout

Benefits

- Real-time tracking of processes
- Increased program effectiveness
- Data analysis and reporting capabilities
- Compliance with requirements of new legislation
- Time and cost savings
- Increased data quality and accuracy
- Enhanced communication and collaboration
- Reduced time from application to payment for grantees
- Single portal for all grant activities

Technology

- Uses CIO Council-endorsed J2EE framework
- Compliant with FEMA Internet architecture
- Secure multi-tiered Extranet with automatic fail-over for high availability
- Oracle 9i application server
- Oracle OC4J application server
- Apache web server
- J2EE Model-View-Controller (MVC) implementation
- Extensible Markup Language (XML)

Point of Contact:
Pradeep Kamath
(703) 256-5321
pkamath@reisys.com

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REI Systems, Inc. • 7620 Little River Turnpike, Suite 500 Annandale, VA 22003-2620 • Tel: (703) 256-2245 Fax: (703) 256-9372

www.reisys.com