



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
Economic Development Administration
Philadelphia Regional Office
The Curtis Center, Suite 140 South
601 Walnut Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106-3323

Dear EDA Partners:

On August 1, 2010, EDA will be modifying its processes for application submittal and application review systems. These improvements are designed to create systems that are more transparent, better organized and will expedite the review and design regarding individual applications.

Attached, you will find more specific information regarding the modifications that we will be putting in place. The improvements will require all applications to be submitted through Grants.gov, will establish set quarterly deadlines for the submittal of applications, will establish a quarterly cycle for application review, will establish a transparent system for the ranking of applications during each quarter, and will allow EDA to respond to each applicant relative to the status of its application in thirty days of the end of each quarterly cycle.

We view these improvements as one important step in modernizing EDA's systems and in heightening EDA's commitment to customer service. We are confident that you will agree with us that these modifications will make your experiences in applying to EDA more positive and client friendly.

We will be providing more information on our process improvements through various electronic and in-person meetings that will be announced in the upcoming weeks. The next meeting to inform you of these modifications is scheduled for July 16, 2010 from 10am-11am. Please call 877-467-3014 and use the participant code 8753601. We hope that you will make every effort to participate in this meeting.

Respectfully,

Willie C. Taylor

Regional Director



Improving EDA's Approval Process

The Economic Development Administration's (EDA) mission is **"To lead the federal economic development agenda by promoting innovation and competitiveness, preparing American regions for growth and success in the worldwide economy."** It fulfills this mission by making grants to distressed areas to carry out locally- and regionally-developed economic development and revitalization strategies. Within the parameters of a competitive grant process, all projects are evaluated to determine if they advance global competitiveness, create jobs, leverage public and private resources, can demonstrate readiness and ability to use funds quickly and effectively and link to specific and measureable outcomes. To facilitate evaluation EDA has established the following investment priorities:

- Collaborative Regional Innovation: Initiatives that support the development and growth of innovation clusters based on existing regional competitive strengths.
- Public/Private Partnerships: Investments that use both public and private sector resources and leverage complementary investments by other government/public entities and/or non-profits.
- National Strategic Priorities: Initiatives that encourage job growth and business expansion in industries identified as strategic priorities by the Administration.
- Global Competitiveness: Investments that support high-growth businesses and innovation-based entrepreneurs to expand and compete in global markets.
- Environmentally-Sustainable Development: Investments that encompass best practices in "environmentally sustainable development."
- Economically Distressed and Underserved Communities: Investments that strengthen diverse communities that have suffered disproportionate economic and job losses and/or are rebuilding to become more competitive in the global economy.

In order to promote accessibility, transparency, and efficiency EDA is making changes to the way it reviews and awards grant funds. These improvements will create a more competitive process that provides applicants with faster responses to requests for funding. Upcoming changes include:

- Beginning in FY 2011, EDA will move to four cycles of funding with set deadlines for applications. Applications will be due in the regional offices on October 1, January 1, April 1, and July 1.
- Applications will only be accepted through grants.gov.
- EDA staff will provide regular training sessions and technical assistance to potential applicants prior to the deadline, in addition to creating an FAQ for EDA's website.
- EDA's annual appropriation will be split among the cycles as follows: #1 – 20%, #2 – 30%, #3 – 30%, #4 – 20%.
- All applicants will be evaluated against EDA's funding priorities using a standardized, data-driven worksheet and receive a score of highly competitive, competitive, or non-competitive.
- The Merits Further Consideration letter will be replaced by a Non-Binding Commitment Letter for applicants selected through the competitive process.
- Applications will be processed and approved, and funds obligated, within 90 days of the award deadline.