

Wednesday May 6 2009

Leading grant writer shares tips for successful ARRA applications

Don't apply for stimulus! [until you see these warnings]

Don't wait too long to apply for the DOE's stimulus funds because the website is not stable and may suffer added outages as the July 29 deadline approaches, warned a grant-writing professional. The website for applications, www.grants.gov, has seen repeated crashes. Kim Fontenot, founder and president of Texas-based [Stellar Grants](#), told us. "The grants.gov portal is an unstable at best. You have a bunch of people putting in a lot of data," she added.

"We are making all our clients get their grants into us by July 10. We will probably be making submissions by July 20.

"It's not a stable portal, so waiting until the July 29 will leave your proposal at risk for being rejected or lost," warned Fontenot.

The DOE last month issued guidance for an application and evaluation process for two programs through the [ARRA](#) of 2009: A draft Notice of Intent (NOI) for \$3.3 billion in funding for the Smart Grid Investment Program and a draft Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) for \$615 million in regional smart grid demonstration projects.

Pending its review of the public comment, DOE expected to issue FOAs for the Smart Grid Investment Program on June 17. Intergraph Corp and Stellar Grants last week co-sponsored "Applying for Funding for Your Smart Grid Initiative," a webinar meant to raise awareness and offer instruction and services for the filing process. "The \$787 billion stimulus program has seen a lot of play in the media, yet many stakeholders don't understand the timelines and deadlines," said Intergraph, a Huntsville, Ala.-based software provider.

A three-stage process -- of grant writing, submission and follow-up -- for smart grid funding applications was outlined by Fontenot. Stage one includes registering and building a textual and financial business model. Stage two would include grant preparation with draft coordination and review and Stage three would include application, submission and follow-up.

Is it 1304 or 1306?

The first Smart Grid Investment Program -- or 1306 -- is funded at \$3.375 billion and was written to gain improvements in cost and performance from the deployment of smart grid

technology. It would provide federal assistance to cover up to 50% of investments by electric utilities and other entities for projects promoting deployment and development of component technologies.

The other -- 1304 -- is funded at \$615 million and was designed to include "regionally unique demonstrations to verify smart grid technology viability, quantify smart grid costs and benefits and validate new smart grid business models at a scale that can be readily adapted and replicated around the US," said Fontenot.

In both cases, the awards are to ensure that any funded technologies will be widely available throughout the country.

"The majority of applications will be for the 1306, which is what most of the utility customers are going for," said Fontenot, who described 1304 as for larger, collaborative efforts.

"Make certain [to specify whether] you want the 1306 or 1304," she warned, "as there is a restriction against applying for both."

As stipulated, DOE anticipates giving funds worth up to 50% of qualified

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Law firm publishes report on applying for stimulus cash

A business law firm that put together answers to clients' many questions about the ARRA released the answers yesterday as a report for the general public. "[Show Me the Money](#)," can be accessed free of charge and is meant to help firms get their applications in for ARRA cash.

That money "has to go out rapidly to inject stimulus and get things moving," Janet Jacobs, a corporate lawyer in the Seattle office of Stoel Rives, told us yesterday.

"So many people were interested" in details about ARRA funding -- in part since application guidance is in many cases pending -- that "we decided to put it on the web," Jacobs said.

The report has lots of chapters, mostly about "clean energy" and only Chapter 5 is all about smart grid funding.

ARRA creates a new 30% tax credit

for "investment in property used in a 'qualified advanced energy manufacturing project,'" such as fuel cell or solar panel factories, Jacobs noted, although the government is still working on creating final guidelines based on comments from stakeholders, due today.

The Treasury Dept is set to announce by Aug 16 application requirements for this Advanced Energy Facilities Investment Credit, said the report. A total of \$2.3 billion is available and applications will be vetted by DOE and Treasury, the firm noted.

Federal loan guarantees of \$6 billion are planned to cover as much as 80% of the cost of electric power transmission systems as long as the building begins before October, Stoel Rives wrote.

DOE is in charge. While Jacobs believes it's possible to get a \$500 million

loan guarantee, project costs have to be above \$150 million before it's worth spending the time and money it will take to apply.

The initial funding opportunity announced under ARPA-E (Advanced Research Projects Agency -- Energy) is for a pie of \$150 million.

To get a piece of that, firms need to focus on projects with "a well-formed R&D plan and that can make a significant contribution toward enhancing the economic and energy security of the US by reducing imported energy, reducing energy-related gases... and improving energy efficiency," the law firm wrote.

The report points to a weeding-out process with the first step being to submit a tech concept paper to ARPA-E between May 12 and June 2, Jacobs noted.

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investments in the range of \$500,000 to \$20 million for smart grid technology deployment grants and \$100,000 to \$5 million for project-management unit (PMU) deployment grants.

Stellar Grants expects certain utilities to submit applications for the higher amounts.

“Under the 1304 -- not the 1306 -- they can ask for a higher amount,” said Fontenot. Not only that, but “utility companies under the 1306 can ask for funds for more than just one [project]. As long as it does not combine the smart grid and PMU together, they can ask for multiple projects, allotting them additional funds past the \$20 million-per-project limit.”

Don't forget your DUNS

While applicants should review the DOE draft in detail, said Stellar, registrations need to include Data Universal Numbering System (Dun & Bradstreet, or DUNS); Central Contractor Registration (CCR) at www.ccr.gov/Default.aspx, with North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) and Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) criteria; www.grants.gov agency of record (AOR)/point of contact (POC) -- which can take up to two weeks, Online Representations & Certifications Application (ORCA) at orca.bpn.gov, and a Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR)/General Services Administration (GSA) schedule entry.

All but the FAR are mandatory in applying for a government grants.

The above steps were described as how the federal government tracks its users and allocates funding for approved applicants. The CCR has to have a checking account number and routing number in case an applicant gets a grant award or RFP bid procurement. The database was designed to better classify, verify and work with the applicant as a vendor.

Be original, stand out

For each application, applicants are required to provide a detailed business model and project plan, an explanation of how and to what extent the project advances smart grid functions, an estimate for job creation and retention and a description of how results will be evaluated.

“You have to show them why you are different from the next innovative guy,” Fontenot told us, adding that applicants have to include a competitive, merit-based approach to advance smart grid functions and allocate an apportionment of funds including PMU technology plus infrastructure costs.

Specificity is important, stressed Fontenot. “Without it, you won't get sufficient points and won't be awarded.” She added that jobs creation and retention is “a big mandate and a chance for major points.”

Applicants were encouraged to review their full grants for specifics

toward cyber-security, NIST standards, interoperability and research approach.

DOE's “criteria is very well laid out,” said Fontenot. “It's not the permanent draft but it will have a lot of those criteria. Each component carries weighted points in the application review process.”

Through DOE's final analysis, according to Stellar, each application will be evaluated by project approach and feasibility; potential impact; job creation and retention, and the extent of cost-sharing.

Don't shoot the moon

“DOE is notorious for wanting to come in below the maximum,” said Fontenot. “Unless you can offer something really unique, be sure to stay below the maximum cost.”

The DOE's scheduled release of its FOA is June 17 with the application deadline set for July 29. While today's deadline was described as “definitely hard and fast,” the June 17 deadline was considered by Stellar to be more flexible and the July 29 deadline, too, could be delayed depending on requests from the comment filers but Stellar doesn't expect that.

While details could change pending review of the comments, “the NOI has been very clear about what they're looking for,” she added.

“It's been a shorter process than we thought it might be,” she added, “but they want to be sure all the grant applications are in and being processed by the third quarter. The actual ARRA is basically done by September 2010, so they want to have this money out and to the vendors well before that date.”

While the DOE's schedule outlines other phases through December, said Fontenot, “there is a codicil that says that they guarantee no phase deployment” after the opening round.

“If they have enough quality vendors with enough grand ideas, they won't reserve any monies. That's not unusual,” said Fontenot, adding that the stimulus funding has proven to be particularly attractive. “We've had a really, really, really good response,” she reported. “We are working with Landis+Gyr and they have had a great response. This thing is very, very well received.”

For more information about the application process, including a package, forms and instructions, visit www.grants.gov or call 1-800-518-4726.

Visit www.recovery.gov for more information.

[\[Comments\]](#)

Thailand buys CalAmp 2-way radio gear for grid

The government-owned, rural electricity provider in Thailand settled on the CalAmp Dataradio Integra-TR wireless radio modem for nationwide distribution automation.

The Provincial Electric Authority (PEA) in Bangkok signed up for 5,000 units to be deployed within 18 months, Rick Nozel, senior vice president of sales and marketing for wireless networks business at CalAmp, told us yesterday.

The 5,000 units will be installed at substations, creating a two-way radio system for “near-real-time, remote control of distribution assets,” Nozel said. PEA's intelligent infrastructure is “moving out another layer,” he added.

While developing nations' smart grid efforts tend to be slow-moving,

“PEA has taken a few large steps toward automating and ensuring that there's efficiency in the way they deliver power,” Nozel said.

Quality and reliability of service will certainly be affected, Nozel said, in part since Dataradio Integra-TR “overcomes limitations of traditional, non-licensed spectrum radios” such as limited range or susceptibility to interference.

In part due to its acquisition of Dataradio, Oxnard, Calif.-based CalAmp has a “footprint of customers throughout the Asia-Pacific region.” But, Nozel said, the PEA contract is “probably the largest scale automation deployment we've been engaged in in recent times” in the region.

[\[Comments\]](#)

ESCO sales rise 15%, earnings-per-share soar 60%

ESCO is making lots of money and the smart grid boom is helping. The Q2 (ended Mar 31) results for utility technology firm [ESCO Technologies](#) in St Louis, Mo were heartening as the firm's net sales grew 14.7% to \$154.2 million for the quarter and earnings-per-share jumped 60% to 40¢/share from 25¢/share in the same quarter last year.

Net debt outstanding was \$181.7 million reflecting a leverage ratio of 1.99x, well below the credit facility covenant of 3.5x, said the firm in its quarterly financial report released yesterday.

Entered orders were \$156.7 million with a book-to-bill ratio of 102%.

Firm orders of Aclara RF AMI products with PG&E Gas were approximately \$25 million, bringing total gas product orders to over 3 million units to date -- and with New York City Water

were approximately \$16 million.

"I am very pleased with the significant growth reflected in our second quarter operating results, especially in this challenging global economy," said Vic Richey, chairman and CEO. "I remain cautiously optimistic about the balance of the year.

"Through regular and detailed planning meetings with our management teams, we continue to maintain a high degree of visibility and confidence surrounding the balance of the fiscal year. But given the uncertainties of today's macro environment, we are taking a more conservative posture as we address our expected outlook for 2009," he explained.

"As a result of the current cycle, we are adjusting our total year expectations to reflect a modest level of uncertainty which I would characterize as a reflection

of our conservative planning approach.

"In spite of today's economy, we continue to see meaningful opportunities developing across the businesses which we believe can help shield our downside risks," said Richey.

"To help weather this storm, we will adhere to our strict cost management disciplines as we work our way through this cycle and demonstrate our resiliency.

"To ensure future growth, we have maintained our R&D and engineering expenditures, primarily directed toward new product development initiatives in the AMI and smart grid area, along with a significant amount of new space program opportunities," he added.

The firm is making progress at the PG&E and New York deployments plus one at Idaho Power, said Richey.

[\[Comments\]](#)

3 stories in 1 minute

Bonneville Power

publishes job offer: [A job listing](#) for a power system control

craftsman at Bonneville Power Administration was published yesterday on RenewableEnergyWorld.com. The ad describes the duties as preventive, corrective and emergency maintenance on various types of power system control equipment such as 900 mhz fixed, mobile and portable radio stations used for voice, control and telemetering circuits plus PLC and Microwave radio gear. Utility gear managed includes SCADA, microwave and network alarm reporting systems, digital/analog telemetering systems, central time system, transfer trip used

for line protection and remedial action schemes as used in power utilities industry, data circuits and general purpose modems. Lots more details were published.

Georgia Tech to install

Ethernet for grid: Georgia Tech will use an Ethernet-based network to link a new substation for "easy interconnection to the SCADA system," reported *Utility Automation & Engineering T&D* magazine's website. The [story](#) ran in the May 2009 issue of the magazine and is fairly detailed. Ethernet to extend the network to the substation allowed the substation and all its devices to be integrated into Georgia Tech's existing

network and power management systems, said [the report](#).

Powerit Solutions

wins \$6 million: Siemens Venture capital, ArcelorMittal's Clean Technology Fund, @Ventures and Expansion Capital Partners are investing US\$6 million in Powerit Solutions, the provider of intelligent energy management and efficiency systems told the press yesterday. Powerit, based in Seattle, said it will use the money in part to continue growing into new industrial and commercial markets. It also plans to expand and intensify global sales efforts.

[\[Comments\]](#)

Tell us what you think. We want to hear from you. Send your comments, questions and suggestions about this issue of *Smart Grid Today* to news@smartgridtoday.com.

Abbreviations: To see a glossary of *Smart Grid Today's* abbreviations, go to www.smartgridtoday.com/glossary.

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support@smartgridtoday.com

www.smartgridtoday.com