

General Information/Guidance/Suggestions for Writing Final Performance Reports

Finishing project activities by the end of the performance period is only half the story of a grant project. A grantee should put as much care into timely, accurate, and comprehensive reporting of activities undertaken as was put into planning those same activities when writing the application. Reporting, in turn, becomes the basis for the program staff's assessment of the effectiveness of its programs, as well as its own reporting to Congress, the General Accountability Office, and the public.

Grantees are responsible for preparing a final performance report after the project has ended (cooperative agreements might require additional items). The Department of **Education requires that all grantees send this final report to the program contact within 90 days after the end of the project period.**

Performance reports will contain, for each grant, brief information on the following:

- A comparison of actual accomplishments to the objectives established for the period. Where the output of the project can be quantified, a computation of the cost per unit of output may be required if that information will be useful.
- Reasons why established goals were not met, if appropriate.
- Additional pertinent information including, when appropriate, analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit costs.

The final performance report is documented on the Grant Performance Report, ED Form 524B, or other form (e.g., e-Reports within GAPS) required by a Department of Education program office. The reporting period for the final performance report covers the entire final budget period of the project, except for the information in the Executive Summary of the Cover Sheet and Section C of the Project Status Chart, which covers the entire project period (performance period) of the project.

The Department of Education uses the information in final performance reports to determine the success of individual projects and the grant program as a whole. Generally, information from each project is analyzed to determine whether the goals of the project were accomplished. Then, the data is generally combined with information from the other projects and analyzed to understand the extent to which the program had an impact on the issues that the program was authorized to address.

The Department of Education also uses the information contained in final performance reports to identify projects that contributed significantly to furthering the goals of a particular program and that have national significance.

When writing reports, as always, be sure to have someone edit them. Have them check for spelling, well-written sentences, and clear writing. The format of the form may not always be a "good fit" for the type of data that parent centers must report; therefore, be sure to use the narrative section at the bottom of each page to clarify and explain the data. Be sure that you report the outcomes for each goal and objective in your original grant application. If there are goals for which you did not meet the target, use the narrative section to explain why. Similarly, if you exceeded your goals or have

accomplishments about which you are especially proud, use the narrative section to highlight those. There is a possibility that decision-makers will read final reports when funding questions arise. Therefore, your report should be clear, well-written, and professional looking.

Please contact your project officer if you have any general questions about the form, content, reporting period, format (pages, type (e.g., e-Reports within GAPS)), and submittal date.

The Department of Education has a number of websites to help grantees and applicants understand the grantmaking process. Three that you may find most useful as a grantee are:

Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR)
<http://www.ed.gov/policy/fund/reg/edgarReg/edgar.html>

Grantmaking at ED
<http://www.ed.gov/fund/grant/about/grantmaking/index.html>

Online Grantee Training
<http://www.humtech.com/DOED/Grants/>

Please go through the *Online Grantee Training* be sure to read both *EDGAR* and *Grantmaking at ED* for helpful information. Refer back to them regularly.

Grantmaking at ED

This section answers some frequently asked questions about required reports and points you toward staff members in the Department who can help you complete them.

What happens after the project has ended?

When you have reached the end of your performance period, program staff will begin to officially close out your grant. During ***grant closeout***, the Department makes sure that all applicable administrative actions, as well as the required work of a grant project, have been completed and that you have properly accounted for all federal funds that have been made available under the grant.

What responsibilities do I have after the project has ended?

Grantees are responsible for preparing a final performance report after the project has ended (Cooperative agreements might require additional items). The Department requires that all grantees send this final report within 90 days after the end of the project period. The Attachment B that is sent along with the GAN provides information on when and where the report must be sent for a particular program. Be sure that you always provide complete and accurate information in the report and include the PR/Award

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number of your project. Your program office will notify you if you have the option to use e-Reports to submit your final report electronically via the Web.

What does the Department do with the information in my final performance report?

The Department uses the information in final performance reports to evaluate the success of individual projects and the grant program as a whole. Generally, information from each project is analyzed to determine whether the goals of the project were accomplished. Then, the data is generally combined with information from the other projects and evaluated to understand the extent to which the program had an impact on the issues, usually national in scope, that the program was funded to address.

The Department also uses the information contained in final performance reports to identify projects that contributed significantly to furthering the goals of a particular program and that have national significance. This information is shared with grantees, potential grantees, and the general public using a variety of methods. The Education Resource Information Center (ERIC) and national centers and clearinghouses make information available to the public. The Department may also disseminate information to the educational community through its Web site, training, technical assistance, and conferences. In addition, the Department uses this information to report to Congress annually on the results being obtained by its various programs. To a large degree, the success of a discretionary grant program is dependent upon complete and accurate information received from grant recipients. The Department uses the information to decide if modifications should be made to programs to enhance their effectiveness and to justify to Congress, and ultimately the taxpayer, that a program is worthy of continued funding.

Lastly, information that grantees provide in their final reports is used to continually improve program activities and in providing technical assistance to future grantees on ways to enhance their performance and project outcomes.

What happens if I cannot send my final report by the due date because I have not finished the work of the project?

Generally, if you have not completed the work of your project, you may extend the project period one time for up to 12 months by notifying your program staff person of the need for an extension. Grantees must notify their program staff person at least 10 days before the end date of the project period specified on the GAN. While extending your grant does not require prior approval, you must still clearly justify your reason(s) for extending the project period. Time extensions are allowed if: 1) a statute, regulation, or other condition of the award does not prohibit the extension; 2) the extension does not require the Department to obligate supplemental funds in order to finish grant activities; 3) the extension is to carry out the activities in the approved application; and 4) the extension is NOT for the purpose of spending unexpended funds. If these conditions are not met, the Department will not release the remaining funds that are available to the grantee up to the end of the project period. The final reports must be submitted within 90 days after the end of the newly specified grant expiration date.

What happens if I have completed the work of the project but cannot send my final report by the due date for some other valid reason?

The Department may grant an extension for you to send your final report or other required documents if you send a request in writing with a justification for the extension and the time needed to submit the final report.

How do I get help completing my final report?

Parent Training and Information Centers and Community Parent Resource Centers can call the Parent Technical Assistance Center for their region. The program staff responsible for the administration of your grant can also give you guidance on the content and format for the performance report(s) you are required to submit to the Department.

Where do I send my report and how many copies do I need to send?

Grantees should send one original and one copy of the final performance report to the Department unless told otherwise by program staff. Refer to the attachments and enclosures with your GAN for the address where you must send your report (or other required documents). **Always write your PR/Award number on all documents.** If your program office provides the option to use e-Reports, and you submit your report electronically via e-Reports, you do not need to provide additional copies to the Department.

What happens if I do not send the Department required reports?

Not sending reports or other required documents generally would place your organization in noncompliance with the terms and conditions of the grant award. If you fail to submit your reports, you cannot receive a continuation award and the Department considers this fact in deciding whether to make new awards to your organization. Therefore, it is critical that you send all your reports to the proper persons by the due dates.

Do I have to keep any records related to my grant project after the Department closes out my grant?

Yes. Almost all of the Department's programs fall under the record retention provisions of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA). The provisions require grantees to maintain grant records **for three years after the submission of all required reports.** This time period is extended if audit or legal matters take longer than three years to resolve. Your program staff can answer any questions you have about record retention.

What kinds of records do I need to keep?

You need to keep records regarding use of grant funds, compliance with program requirements, and records demonstrating the effectiveness of the grant in meeting its objectives. The financial records need to show the amount and source of all funds used to run the grant, including any matching funds that were promised in the initial

application. The records also must document how those funds were used. These records are used to demonstrate to program staff and independent auditors that all funds have been used for allowable costs.