



March 17, 2009

The Honorable Peter R. Orszag, Ph.D.
Director, Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Association of
American Medical Colleges
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Darrell G. Kirch, M.D.
President and Chief Executive Officer

Dear Dr. Orszag:

I write to register the increasing concern of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) about operational problems with Grants.gov, the central portal for the Federal Government's competitive grants programs. The AAMC has received messages of grave concern from our constituents about major service and operational deficiencies in the program and fear that increased deterioration in this essential service as volume increases may hamper efforts to implement the Recovery Act.

The Association of American Medical Colleges is a not-for-profit association representing all 130 accredited U.S. medical schools and nearly 400 major teaching hospitals and health systems, including 68 Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers; and nearly 90 academic and scientific societies. The AAMC member medical schools and teaching hospitals collectively perform about 60 percent of all extramural research sponsored by the NIH, and a significant portion of research supported by other agencies.

We urge that you and your colleagues work to ensure that adequate resources are allocated to solve the short- and long-term operational problems with Grants.gov. In addition, we ask that you authorize the agencies managing the competitive grant programs functioning within the system to provide applicants with appropriate flexibility to compensate for the performance flaws currently in evidence with the system. No applicant should be disadvantaged by an inadequate or malfunctioning application submission portal. Our constituents have been vigilant in trying to work with Grants.gov and have provided routine feedback on the system's problems and inadequacies. It appears that much of this feedback has been ignored.

We understand that the new management team operating Grants.gov has been much more responsive to the applicant community and agencies' concerns. Your ongoing oversight of the Grants.gov system to ensure it is adequately resourced and staffed is requested.

If I or my staff can be of assistance in your effort to provide quality service to the applicant community and the research agencies, please do not hesitate to contact me or my colleague Tony Mazzaschi, AAMC Interim Chief Scientific Officer (202-828-0059 or tmazzaschi@aamc.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Darrell G. Kirch". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Darrell G. Kirch, M.D.