THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION  
WASHINGTON, DC 20202

April 27, 2017

MEMORANDUM FOR:  Senior Department Officials  
                   Executive Officers

FROM:  Betsy DeVos  /s/ 
       Secretary of Education

SUBJECT:  Policy Regarding Mandatory Formatting Requirements 
           for Grant Competitions

PURPOSE

This memorandum directs the rescission of the Department’s policy permitting offices to impose 
mandatory page limit and formatting requirements for grant applications.

BACKGROUND

The Department has established procedural requirements regarding the content and format of 
grant applications. Currently, Department offices are not required to establish either mandatory 
or voluntary page limit and formatting requirements. The Department’s Regulatory Quality 
Manual provides instructions for drafting a notice inviting grant applications. Those instructions 
provide language for an office to use if it wishes either to require applicants to meet page limit 
and formatting requirements or to establish voluntary page limit and formatting requirements that 
an applicant can choose whether or not to follow. Several offices choose to specify that 
compliance with the page limit and formatting requirements is optional; other offices choose to 
impose mandatory requirements. Those offices that choose mandatory requirements have 
rejected applications that do not meet those mandatory page limit and formatting requirements.

NEW POLICY

Effective immediately, program offices may only establish voluntary page limit and formatting 
requirements for grant applications and may not reject grant applications that do not meet those 
voluntary requirements. Program offices may suggest page limits and formatting standards (such 
as font size, line spacing, and the like) but may not use ignoring these suggestions as a basis to 
reject grant applications.

The Administrative Communications System (ACS) Handbook for the Discretionary Grant 
Process, Handbook ODS I (08-08-2015), and Chapter J of the Regulatory Quality Manual will 
be revised to reflect this new policy.
This policy takes effect immediately for any application notice that announces a competition that would use funds made available for obligation in FY 2018, as well as FY 2017 notices that have not been published. Program offices are directed to draft notices inviting applications in accord with this memorandum.

Please transmit this memorandum to all appropriate staff in your Principal Office. If you have any questions, please contact Ebony Lee, Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy.