



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 1 (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.