COMPLETING THE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE – SF424
LEARN AND SERVE AMERICA

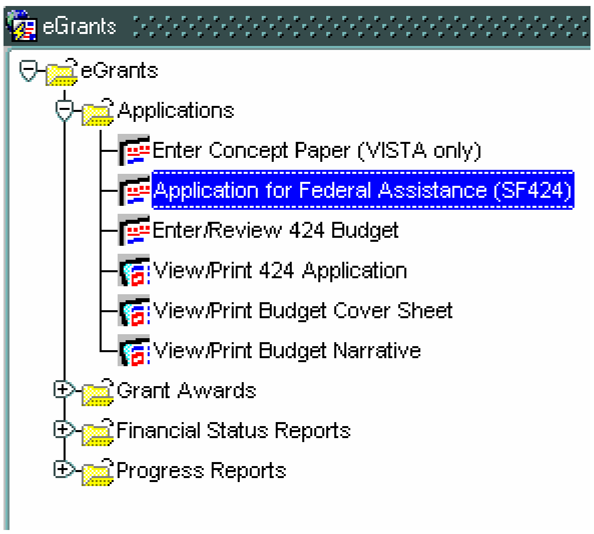
3.1 Overview

All organizations requesting funds from the Corporation for National and Community Service must complete the **Application for Federal Assistance (SF424**). The program to which you apply will determine the application requirements and deadline. Refer to the program guidelines for specific application instructions and deadlines.

To access the **Application for Federal Assistance (SF424**):

1. Log into *eGrants.*
2. From the *eGrants* menu tree, click on the **Applications** node (plus sign next to the folder).

3. Open the **Application for Federal Assistance (SF424)** (double click).



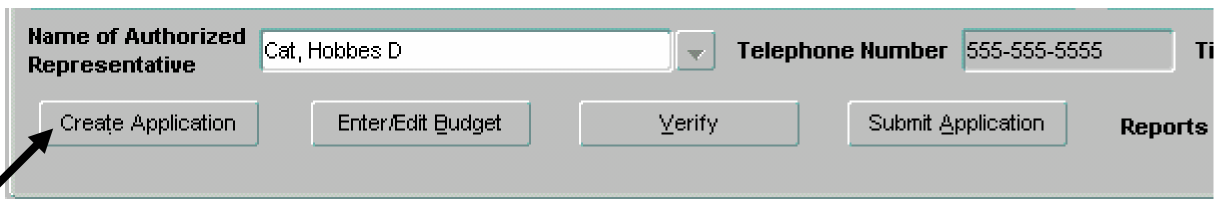
There are several tabs within the Application for Federal Assistance (e.g., Applicant, Application, Assurances and Certification, Narrative, Performance Measures and Documents). Clicking on each of these tabs will provide you with a screen for completing each portion of the Application.

3.2 Starting an Application

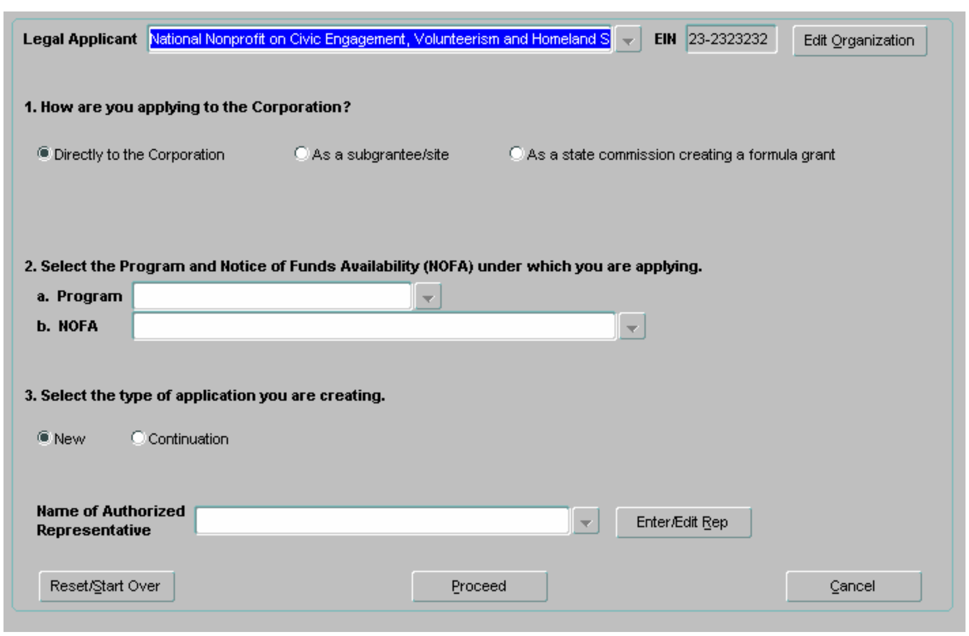
When the **Application for Federal Assistance (424)** screen opens, there may or may not be data in the fields. The Corporation has moved information about current and former grantees from its databases into *eGrants*. As a result, when you look at your own data from prior years, you might see words like “Conversion” or “Conversion Data” in text boxes, incorrect addresses or missing budget information. There is no need for you to go back and correct this information.

If your organization has had a previous grant with the Corporation, the information from the old grant may have been pre-loaded into *eGrants*. If this is the case, check the project information displayed on the screen to make sure it is yours. If another project’s information from your organization is displayed, use the blue arrows on the tool bar to scroll through the records to find your project information.

To begin your new application, press the **Create Application** button at the bottom left corner of the screen.



A pop-up window is displayed with your organization name already filled in.



The pop-up window will ask for **four pieces of information**.

1. ***Are you applying directly to the Corporation or are you applying for a subgrant to another organization?***

You have three options. All Learn and Serve applicants should select "Directly to the Corporation."

a) **Directly to the Corporation –** If you are applying directly to the Corporation, select this option.

(the other two deal with AmeriCorps applicants)

b) **As a subgrantee/site –** If you are applying as a subgrantee or site (e.g., applying to a state commission or under an AmeriCorps*National grant), select this option.

c) **As a state commission creating a formula grant –** If you are a state commission creating a formula application, select this option.

2. ***Select the Program under which you are applying.***

   To select the Program click on the down arrow and select Learn and Serve America. To select the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) click on the down arrow and select the NOFA to which you are applying.

   The NOFA is the grant or funding to which you are applying. It is critical that you select the appropriate NOFA, otherwise you will have to begin your application again. Consult the application guidelines for which NOFA to select.

   Click on the down arrow (pull-down menu) to find the correct NOFA for your current program and grant cycle. If you have a question on which NOFA to select, please contact Learn and Serve America.

3. ***Select the type of application you are creating.***
   a. **New –** Since you are applying for a new grant in 2003, select this option.

4. ***Name of Authorized Representative.*** The authorized representative is the person from your organization who will electronically sign the assurances for your grant application. This person along with others completing the grant application in *eGrants* will be required to obtain an account and access *eGrants*. If the authorized representative already has an eGrants account, click on the down arrow (pull-down menu) and select the appropriate person. If the person is not listed, click on the "Enter/Edit Rep" button to enter the person's name.

To continue with your application, press the **Proceed** button on the bottom of the pop-up window. You will receive an alert notifying you that your application has been saved, and providing you with your **Application ID number**. You may continue completing your application or return to it later.

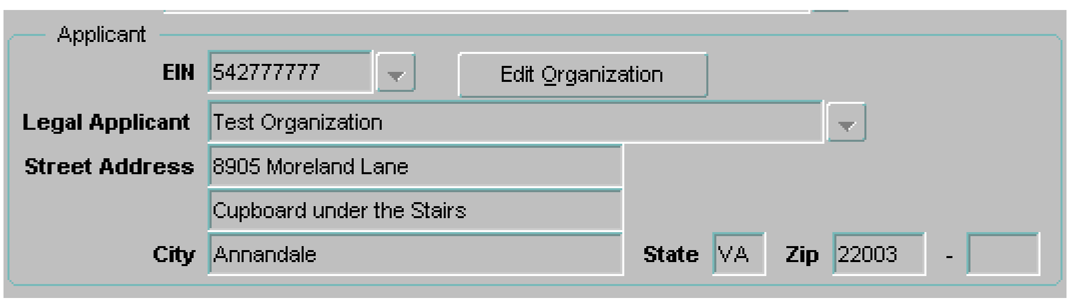
Make a note of your Application ID number (also found in the top left of your screen). This is a unique identifier that is helpful when retrieving your application later or when contacting Corporation or other support staff about your application.

3.3 Applicant Tab

The first section (tab) of the **Application for Federal Assistance (SF424)** is the **Applicant Tab**. Some of the information in this tab is completed when you press the **Create Application** button on the bottom of screen and provide the requested information (see Section 3.2). This section details how you complete the remainder of this tab.

3.3.1 Applicant (Organization Information)

This section will already be completed with your organization's EIN and address. If you need to make changes to the information, press the "Edit Organization" button and make the necessary changes. Once the changes are made, save your information before you proceed.

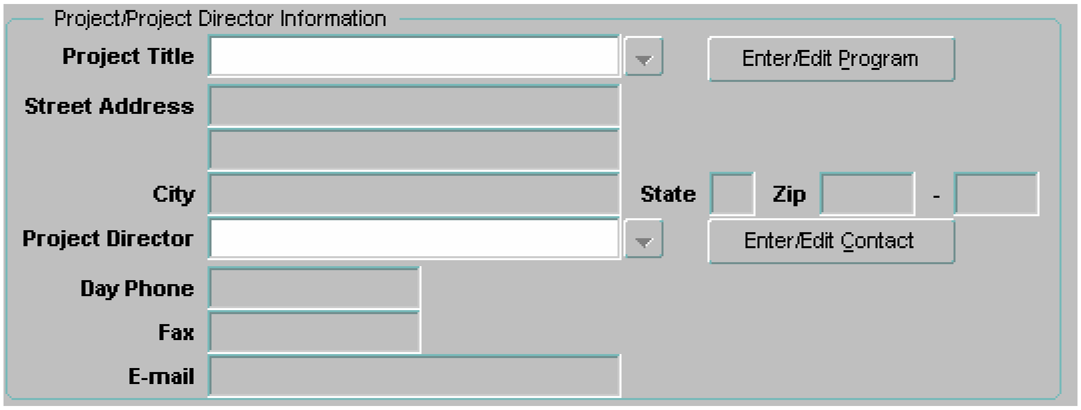


3.3.2 Project/Project Director Information

This section is used to identify the specific project title and information for the particular grant.

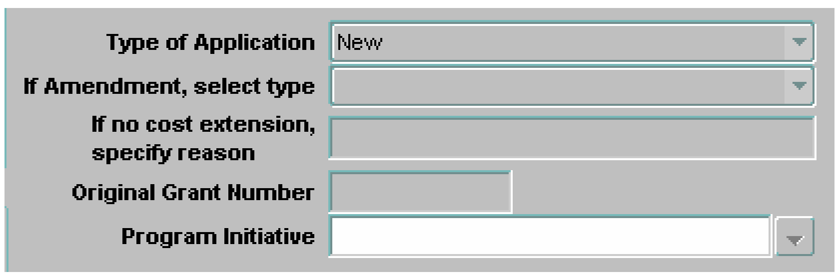
3.3.2.1 Project Title – If you have prior grant applications on file with the Corporation under the current EIN, you may select the project name from those on file. To do this, click on the arrow and select the project from the pull-down menu. If the project title is not listed or it is a new project, press the "Enter/Edit Program" button. Enter the project information and save.

3.3.2.2 Project Director – If the project director is on file under the current EIN, you may select the project director's name from those on file. To do this, click on the arrow and select the project from the pull-down menu. If the project director is not listed or it is a new project director, press the "Enter/Edit Contact" button. Enter the project director's information and save.

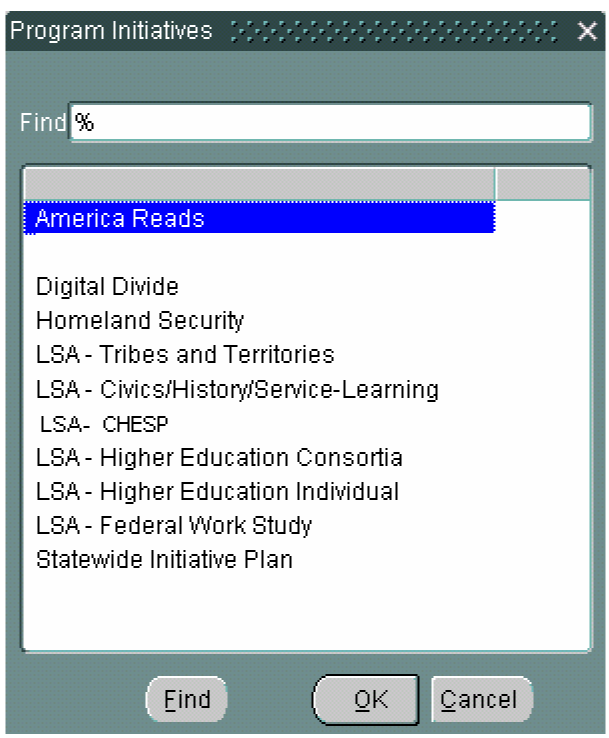


3.3.3 Program Initiative

This field is located to the right of the screen in the center and is a drop-down list. If you are applying for either a higher education grant, or a school-based competitive



grant, you must select the program initiative that applies to the competition within that major group of funding. See below:



3.3.4 Action Buttons

There are 5 action buttons on the applicant tab. Each is used at various points in the application process to begin or complete an action.

3.3.4.1 Create Application – Click on this button to begin a new application. See Section 3.2 "Starting an Application" for more details.

3.3.4.2 Enter/Edit Budget – Click on this button to begin entering or editing your budget. See Section 3.9 "Budget" for details on completing your application budget.

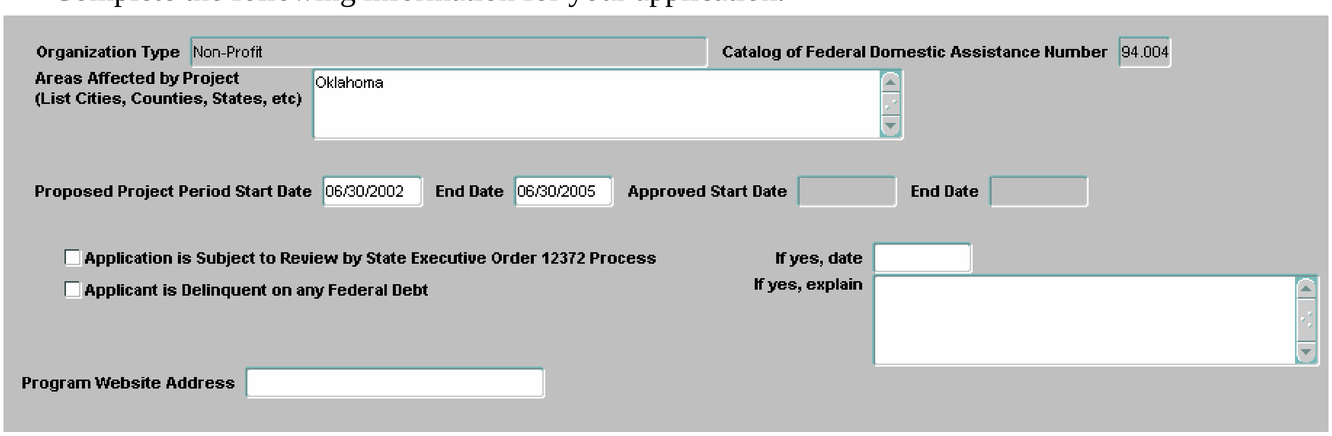
3.3.4.3 Verify – This allows you to verify that your application has been completed correctly. See Section 3.10 "Submitting Your Application" for more details.

3.3.4.4 Submit Application – Click on this button to submit your application to the Corporation. See Section 3.10 "Submitting Your Application" for more details.

3.3.4.5 Run Report – This button allows you to view your application in its entirety. See Section 3.10 "Submitting Your Application" for more details.

3.4 Application Tab

The **Application Tab** is the second tab of the Application for Federal Assistance (SF424). Complete the following information for your application.



3.4.1 Areas Affected by Project – List all the geographic areas that your project will serve, using cities, counties, and/or states.

3.4.2 Proposed Project Period Start and End Dates – Enter the proposed start and end dates for your project. Refer to the guidelines.

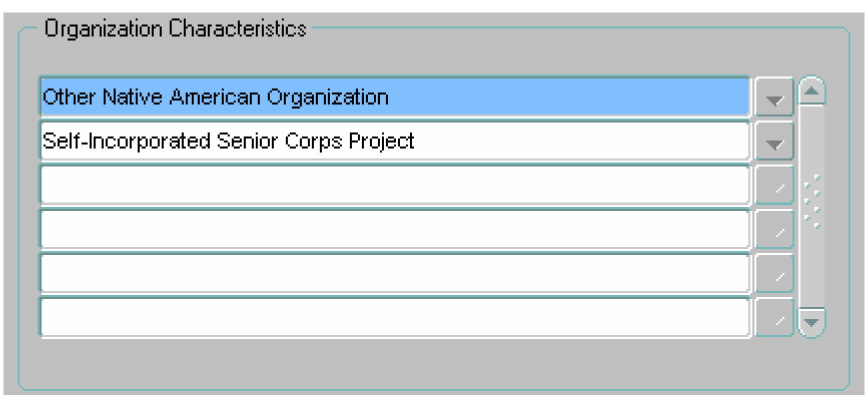
3.4.3 Whether your application is subject to review by State Executive Order 12372 Process – Indicate if this application is subject to review by the state Executive Order 12372 Process. Executive Order 12372, “Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs,” was issued with the desire to foster the intergovernmental partnership and strengthen federalism by relying on state and local processes for the coordination and review of proposed federal financial assistance and direct Federal development. The Order allows each state to designate an entity to perform this function. A list of these “Single Point of contact” entities can be found at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html. Contact the Single Point of Contact to determine whether your application is subject to the state intergovernmental review process.

If you indicate yes, you must enter the date a copy of your application was submitted to the state for review under the 12372 Process.

3.4.4 Whether your organization is delinquent on any Federal debt – Indicate whether your organization is delinquent on any Federal debt including federal tax or non-tax debts. If you indicate yes, you must enter an explanation.

3.4.5 Program Website Address – Enter your project’s website address, if applicable.

3.4.6 Organization Characteristics – Enter one or more characteristics of your organization by clicking on the arrow and selecting from the list of values. Organization characteristics that have previously been entered will already be displayed. If you have more than 6 characteristics, be sure the cursor is on the last line in the list you are asked to fill in. Click on the “Insert Record” option on Commands pull-down menu, or hit the toolbar button below. This will allow you to add as many lines as you need.



Repeat until all characteristics for your organization are listed.

All other fields in this section are automatically completed during the application process.

3.4.7 Estimated Funding

The Estimated Funding fields will remain blank until you have completed your budget. Once the budget is final, come back to the Application Tab. You will see that the Federal Funds and Applicant Share have automatically been totaled for you.

3.5 Assurances and Certifications Tab

The **Assurances and Certifications Tab** allows applicants to agree to perform all actions and support all intentions in the Assurances and Certifications Documents. Your authorizing and certifying official(s) must view and electronically sign the assurances and certifications in this tab ***before the application can be submitted***.

The person logged into eGrants at the time of the assurances and certification must be the authorizing official.

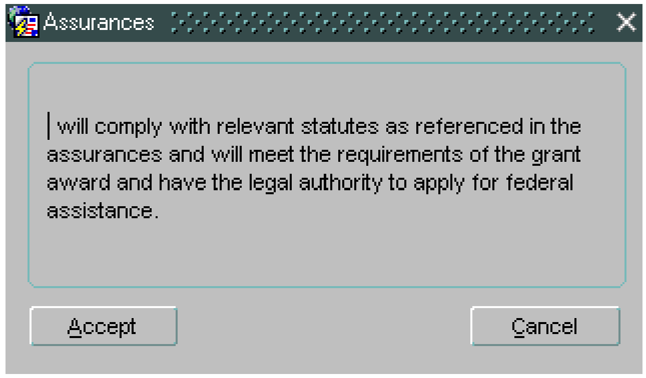
3.5.1 Assurances

The name of the authorized certifying official for the Assurances is automatically copied from the Applicant Tab to this tab when you first start the application. It cannot be changed here. If you need to update the certifying official, go back to the Applicant Tab and make the appropriate change.

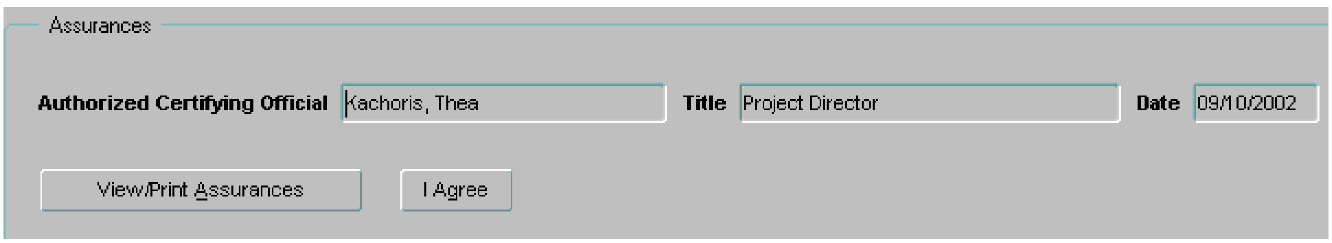
To sign off on the Assurances, complete the following steps:

1. The authorized certifying official must log onto *eGrants* and access the application.
2. In this tab, press the "**View/Print Assurances**" button. This will bring up a new window. You may read the Assurances on-line or print them off. When you are finished, close the window.
3. Click on the "**I agree**" button.

4. An Assurances window will appear. Click on the "**Accept**" button.



5. The date field will be automatically filled with the current date.



3.5.2 Certifications

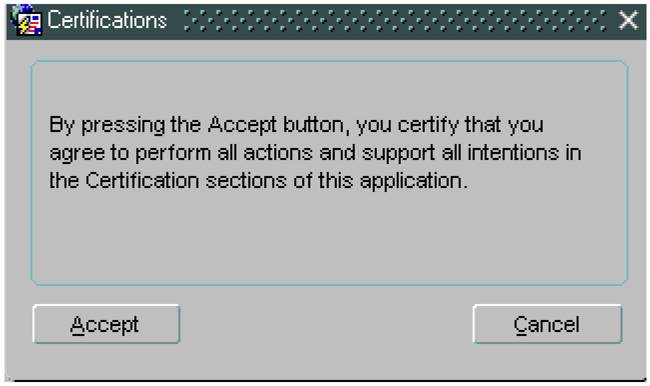
The name of the authorized certifying official for the Certifications can be the same person as the authorizing certifying official for the Assurances or a different person. This person can be selected here by clicking on the arrow and selecting a person on file. If the person needed is not on file, he/she must create his/her own *eGrants* account.

To sign off on the Certifications, complete the following steps:

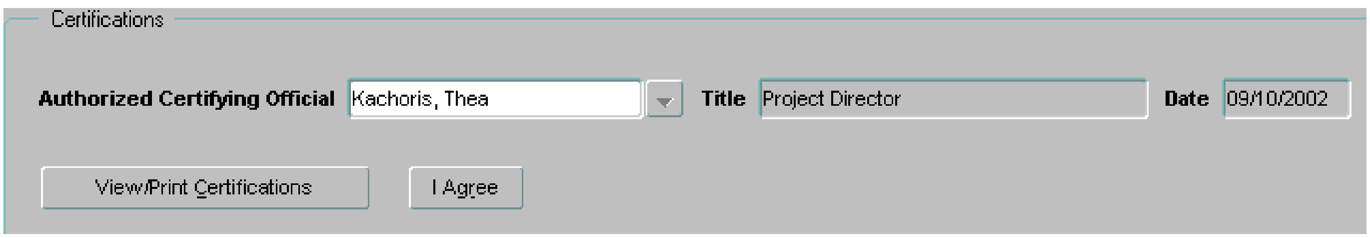
1. The authorized certifying official must log onto *eGrants* and access the application.
2. In this tab, press the "**View/Print Certifications**" button. This will bring up a new window. You may read the Certifications on-line or print them off. When you are finished, close the window.

3. Click on the "**I agree**" button.

4. A certifications window will appear. Click on the "**Accept**" button.



5. The date field will be automatically filled with the current date.



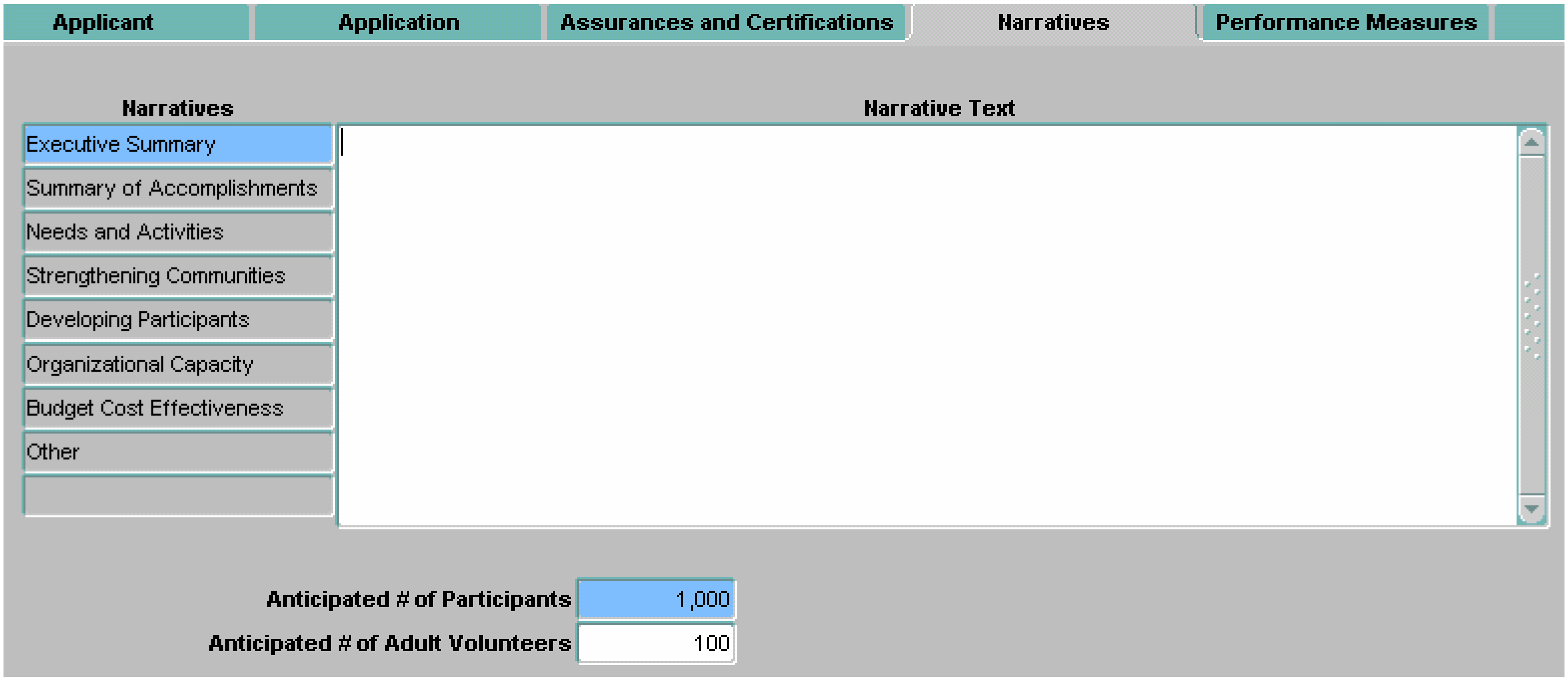
3.6 Narrative Tab

Use the **Narrative Tab** to enter your application narratives, and to indicate the total number of participants you expect to serve in your program. The narrative tab of the SF 424 is divided into several categories. On the left of the screen you will see categories that we ask you to address as part of your application. Refer to the application instructions for what to include in each section. By clicking on each section, you open the editor for that section of the application.

The length of each section will be indicated in the application instructions. Because eGrants is not a word processor, you will find it easier to create your application with a word processor, and cut and paste the sections accordingly.

To check the length of your document in Microsoft Word, click on “Properties” under the “File” pulldown menu. Then click on “Statistics.” You will see two values: Characters, and Characters with spaces. The number of characters with spaces must be equal to or less than 41,000.

The Executive Summary (all applicants) and Summary of Accomplishments (for former grantees) should be no longer than one page long, double spaced in 12 point font. (2,000 characters per each, including spaces and punctuation).



The **Program Narrative** is the main piece of your application, and consists of: Needs and Activities; Strengthening Communities; Recruitment and Development (of Participants);; Organizational Capacity, Budget/Cost Effectiveness; and Other. **Together, the total number of characters in must not these sections must not exceed 41,000 characters, or the equivalent of 20, double-spaced pages.** While there is no limit on each section, the total number of characters you have in these sections combined are counted and you will not be able to submit your application if you exceed the limit.

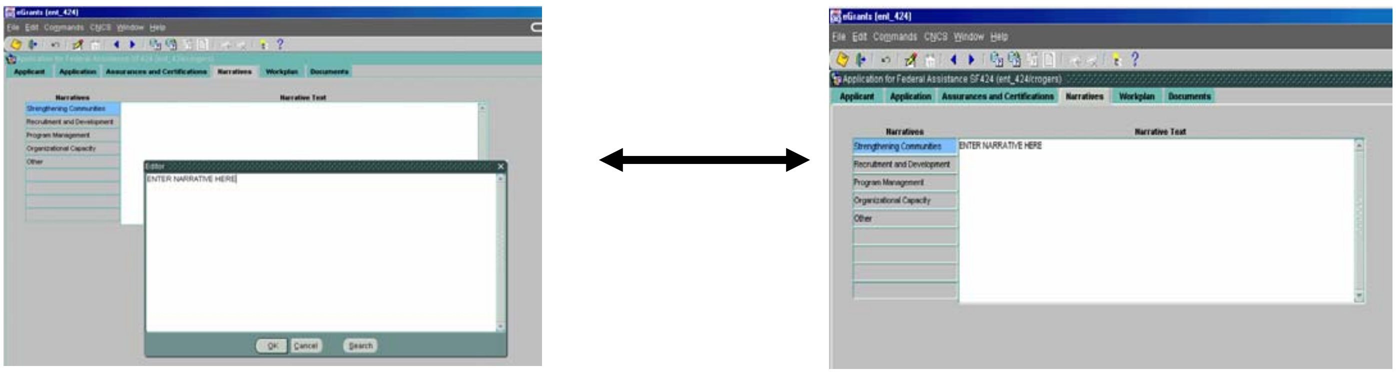
You will be entering text in each section separately. Refer to the instructions for guidelines on how to address each section.

3.6.1 Entering Text

There are two methods for entering text into the Narrative field:

Method #1:

Double click on the white space and open the Editor Box. Begin typing your narrative directly into the Editor. When you are finished, click on **OK** and the text will appear in your Narrative Field.



(NOTE: these sections do not exactly mirror those in the LSA Narrative Tab)

Method #2:

Compose your narrative in a Microsoft Word (or other word processing) document and then "Cut and Paste" it into the Narrative Text field. To do this, follow these steps:

1. Compose your narrative in a Word document.
2. Log into *eGrants* and click on the **Narratives Tab**.
3. Open the Word document that contains your narrative.
4. Highlight the text you want to copy
5. Go to the **Edit** menu and select "**Copy**"
6. Go to *eGrants* and put your cursor in the appropriate narrative field
7. Go to the Edit menu again and select "**Paste**."

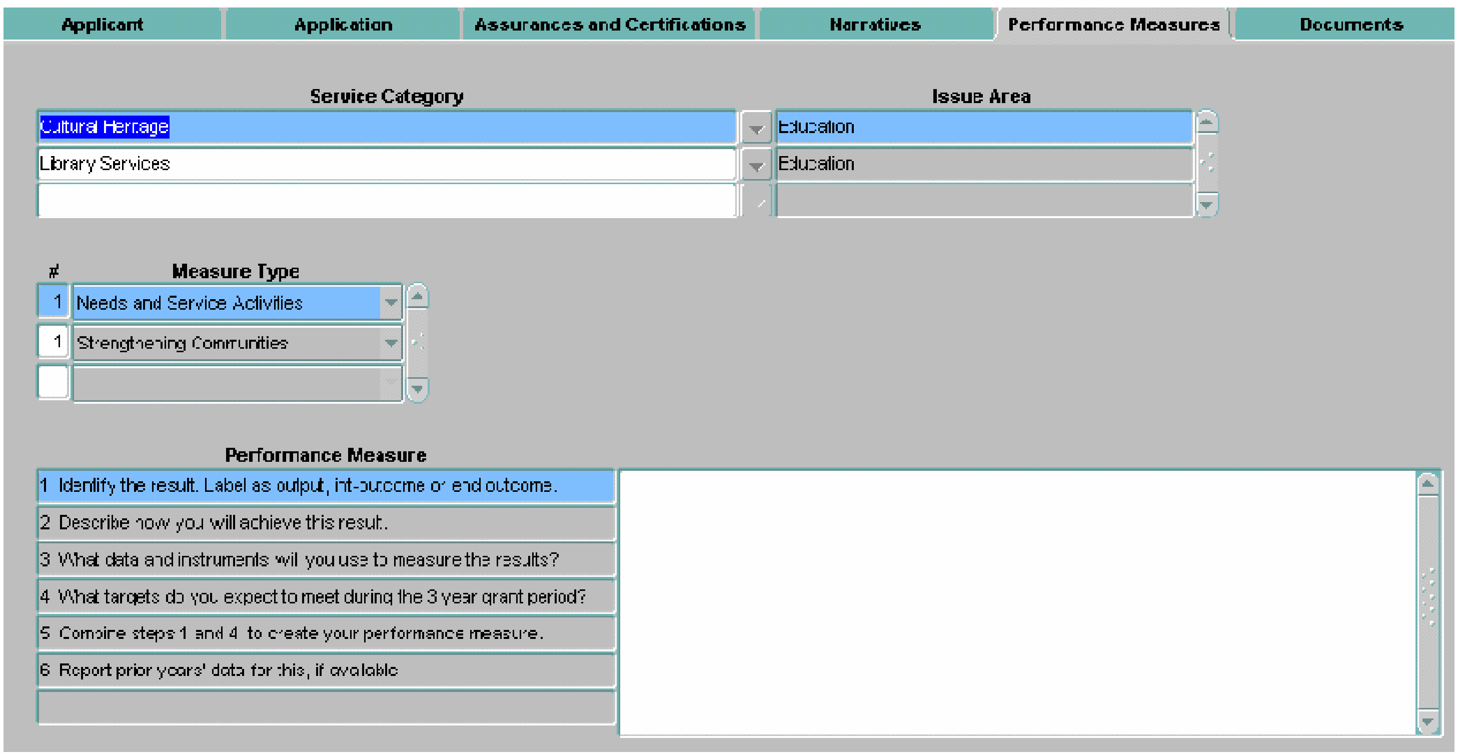
Helpful Hints:

Be sure to ***Spell Check*** your document while it is in Word. ***eGrants*** cannot perform this function.

eGrants* does not accept most Word formatting features.** To ensure that your information is copied correctly, ***do not use Bold, Italics, Bullets, Underlines or other formatting tools.

3.7 Learn and Serve America Performance Measurement Tab

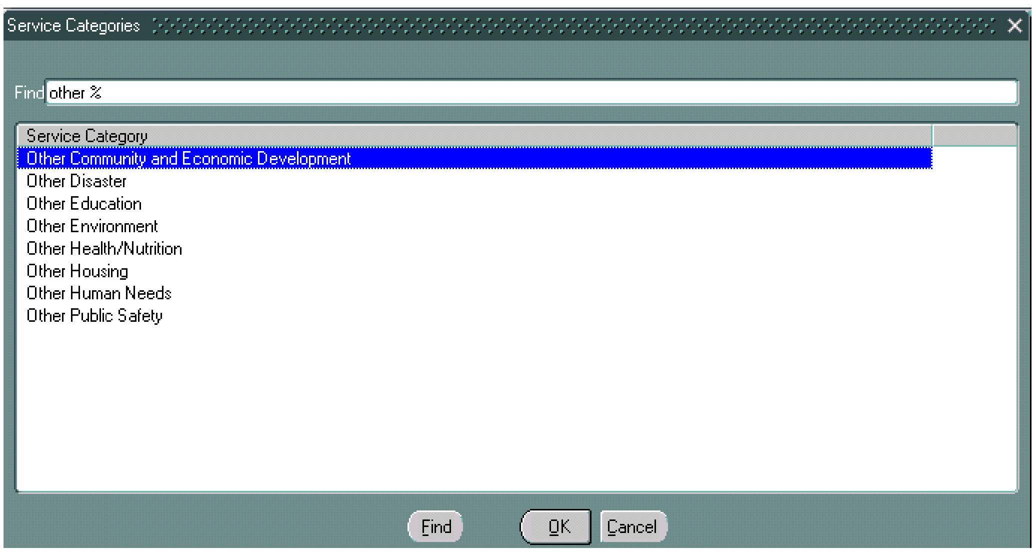
When you click on the Performance Measures tab, you will see this screen:



If you are a former Learn and Serve America grantee, you will notice that this resembles our objective worksheets you were required to submit for the 2000 grant cycle. While some of the categories may have changed slightly, its use is the same: You will use this tab to build your Performance Measures.

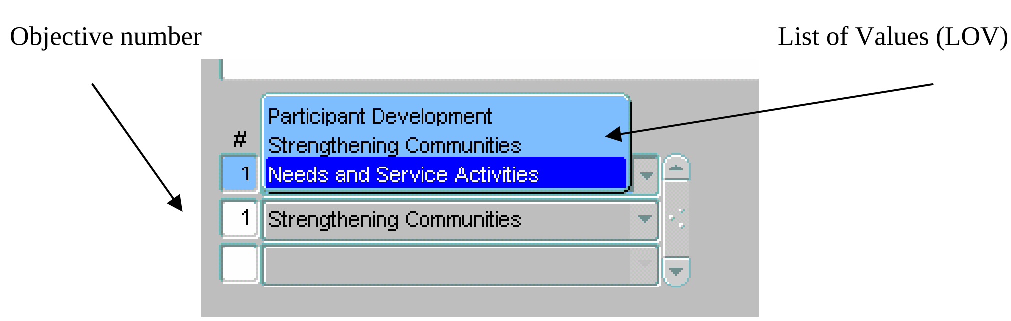
First, click on the arrow to the right of the first line under “Service Categories” and select the service activities that will occur in your program. You may select as many as apply, but only one for each line. If you do not find a service category that describes your service activities, select one of the “other” categories.

HINT: You can go right to the category you are looking for by double clicking in the blank field (or clicking on the arrow) and typing the first few letters of the word. There is a % following your letters which acts as a wild card and will find everything starting with the letters you typed. For example, click the arrow and type “O”, and you will get this:



Simply highlight the selection you want and click “OK”

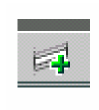
Now you need to select the type of performance measure you are crafting. Remember, Learn and Serve grantees must submit at least one objective in each category. Click in the small space to the left and enter the number of the objective. Then, click the LOV and select one from this list:



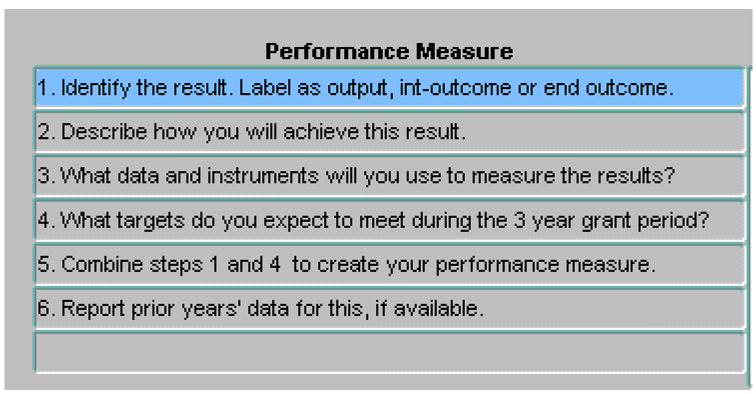
You will number your performance measures consecutively by category, like this:

1. Needs and Service Activities
2. Needs and Service Activities
1. Strengthening Communities
2. Strengthening Communities
1. Participant Development

HINT: If you need to add a line for an objective or a service category, be sure the cursor is on the last line in the list you are asked to fill in. Click on the “Insert Record” option on Commands pull-down menu, or hit the toolbar button below. This will allow you to add as many lines as you need.



For each performance measure number you highlight, you now click on each section to the left of the text box and complete according to your grant instructions. You must fill in each one of the sections listed to the left of the text box:



Each section is a part of a complete objective, and helps us to understand not only what the measure is about, but how you will measure it and how you will determine success.

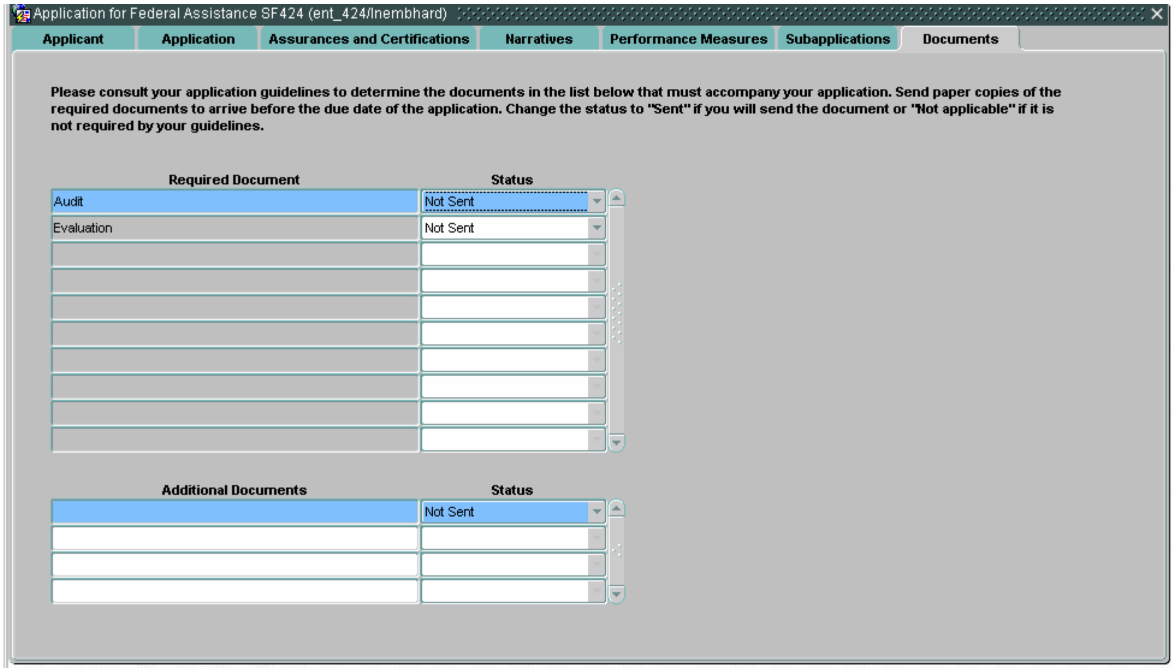
Repeat the steps until you complete the performance measures you have identified for your program. Refer to 3.6.1 on how to enter text. Remember to hit SAVE when you are **done with each performance measure**.

HINT: If you accidentally create an objective you later wish to delete, click on that Objective , and then click “delete current record” under the Commands pull-down menu, or hit the

on the toolbar

3.8 Documents Tab

The **Documents Tab** includes a list of the documents that are required for your application, but must be submitted separately from eGrants.



The Learn and Serve America Guidelines lists the documents you are required to submit. For each required document, select the appropriate status from the pull-down menu:

Select ***"Already on File"*** if the document is already on file with the Corporation and a duplicate document is not needed

Select ***"Not Applicable"*** if your application guidelines do not require that you send the document with your application.

Select ***"Sent"*** if you have sent the document listed to the Corporation. Documents must be submitted within 5 business days of the submission of your application.

If any required documents are listed as "***Not Sent***" you will not be able to Verify or Submit your application.

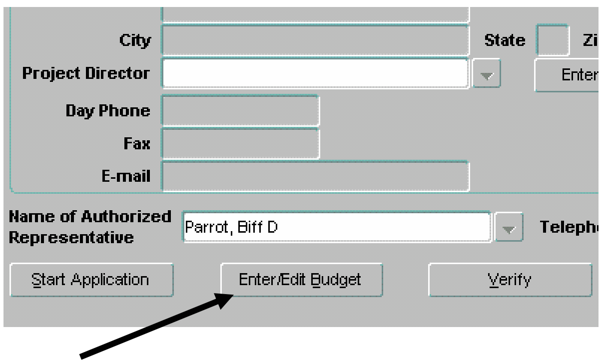
If you have questions about any of the required documents, contact the Learn and Serve America office.

3.9 Entering a Budget

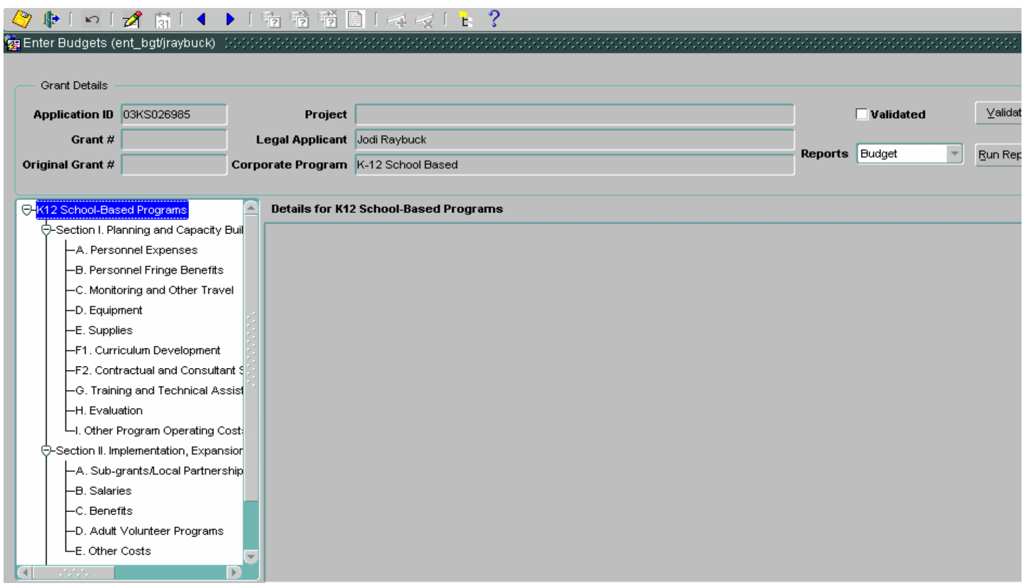
IMPORTANT: We strongly encourage you to create your budget offline, using the form provided in the application guidelines. While *eGrants* can add the totals of lines and sections for you, and can calculate some line items, most line items will require that you type in your own calculations. We do NOT recommend that you build your budget directly into eGrants without

Step 1. Open the Enter Budget Screen

To enter your budget, click on the "**Enter/Edit Budget"** button at the bottom of the Applicant Tab on the **Application for Federal Assistance 424** screen.



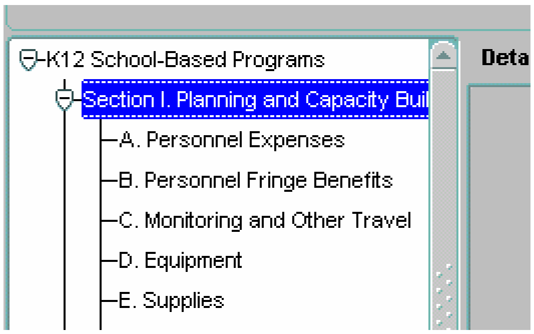
This will take you in the **Enter Budgets** screen. Note that the screen is grayed out. This

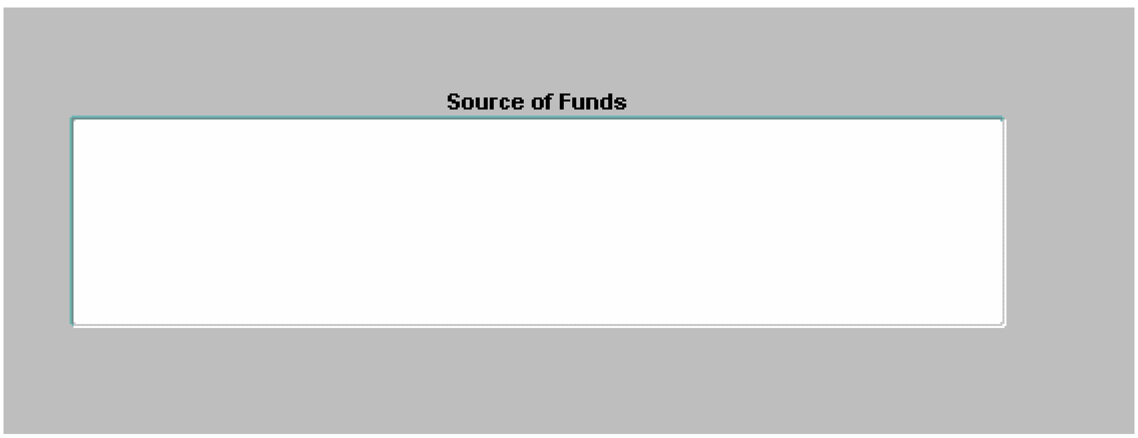


will change as soon as you highlight a budget category or sub-category.

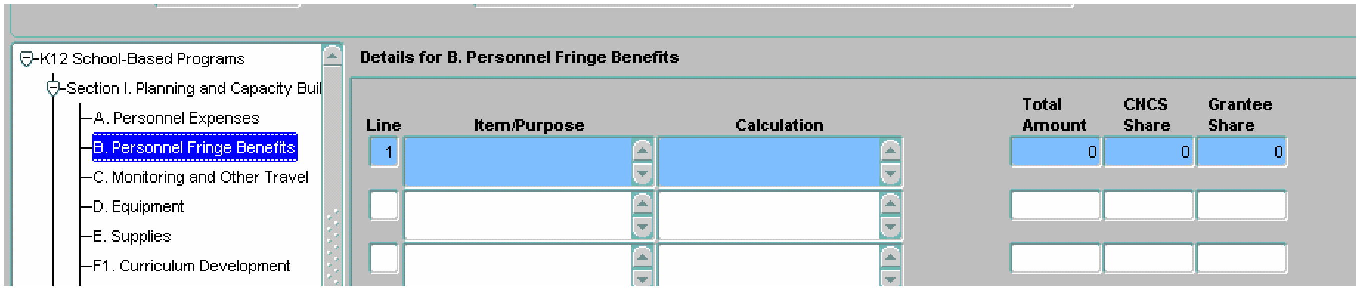
Step 2. Source of Funds

On the left side of the **Enter Budgets** screen, you will see a menu tree with a list of budget categories appropriate for your program. If your cursor is on **a main heading and/or section title**, a window will open on the screen to the right, asking you to identify your source of match funds.





Step 3. Select a Budget Category
When you click on any part of the budget "tree" it will bring up the narrative screen to the right , as pictured below.



Step 4. Enter Budget Information
To enter your budget details, put your cursor on each of the budget categories or sub-categories. You will notice that the fields to the right change depending on which category or sub-category you have highlighted. For each budget category, enter the budget details, according to the application guidelines for your program. You must enter a value for the CNCS share and the Grantee share. The total of CNCS share and grantee share must equal the Total Amount.

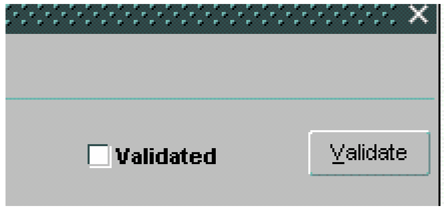
The information that you enter in this screen becomes both your budget cover sheet and your budget narrative. A separate form is not required for the budget narrative.

HINT: You can view your budget form or narrative at anytime while you are working on it. Simply follow the instructions outlined in step #6 below, "Printing Your Budget." When you are done looking at the screen, you can click on the X in Adobe window to close the report and return to entering your budget information.

HINT: Use the TAB key to move between columns on the Budget Narrative screen. Putting your mouse in the numerical fields and clicking on them may reduce the number of spaces in that field the system will allow you to enter.

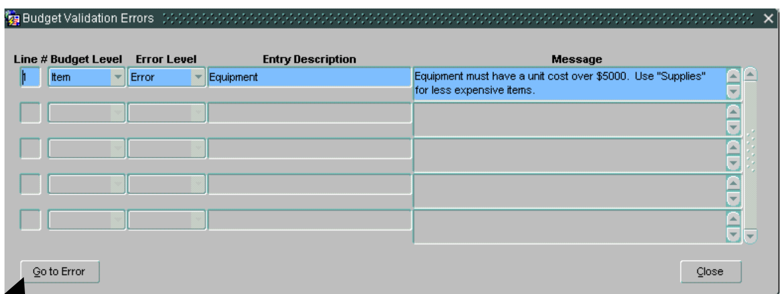
Step 5. Save
Remember to save often. You can return to this screen at any time to continue working on your budget.

Step 6. Validate the Budget
Before you can submit your application to the Corporation, you must have a valid budget that follows the guidelines for the program to which you are applying. For example, the



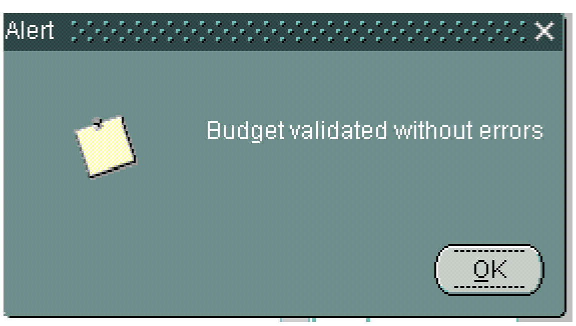
grantee share may need to be a minimum percentage of the total amount.. To verify that your budget meets these guidelines, click the **Validate** button at the top right of the screen.

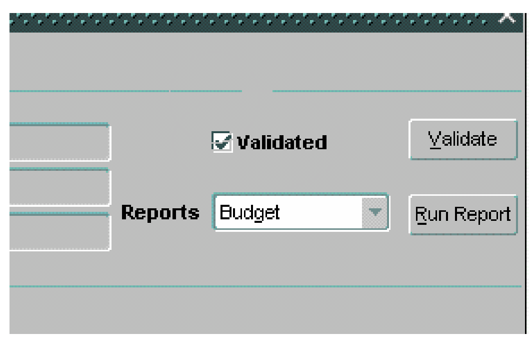
If there are any problems with the budget, a window listing the problems will be displayed. Note the corrections that are needed.



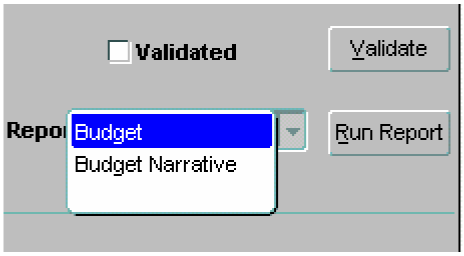
Click on "**Go to Error**" and make the adjustments to the budget and attempt to validate again. If your budget is valid, a message will confirm this:

Notice that the "**Validated**" checkbox is now checked. If you make any changes to the budget after validating, you will need to validate again.





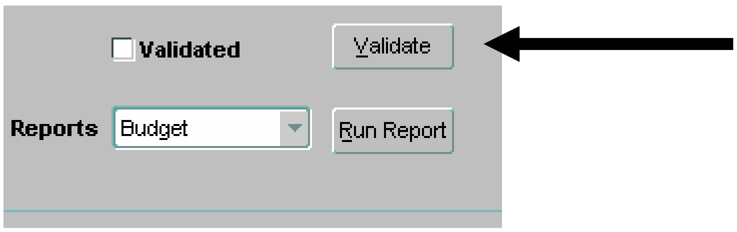
Step 7. Printing the Budget and Budget Narrative
The budget and budget narrative is generated as a report by the *eGrants* system. To print each one, go up to the right hand corner of the budget screen and select the report you wish to print. Then click "run report." You must run each report to get all the information you submitted.



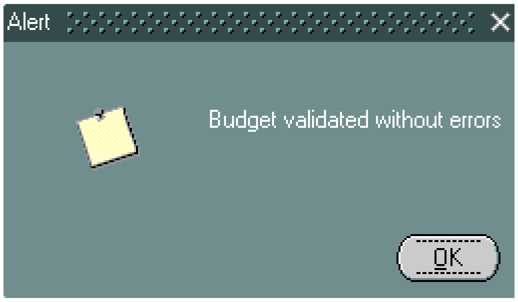
3.10 Submitting Your Application

3.10.1 Validating and Verifying Your Application
In order to submit your application, your budget must be validated and your application must be verified. If there are any errors, you will not be able to submit your application.

- **To validate the budget,** click on the "**Enter/Edit Budget**" button from the **Application for Federal Assistance (SF424**). Click on the "**Validate**" button from the **Enter Budgets** screen.

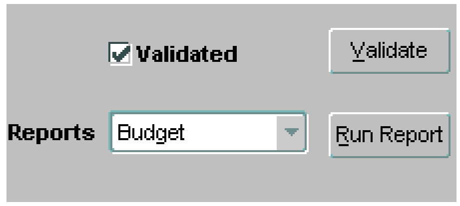


If there are no errors, you will receive a message:

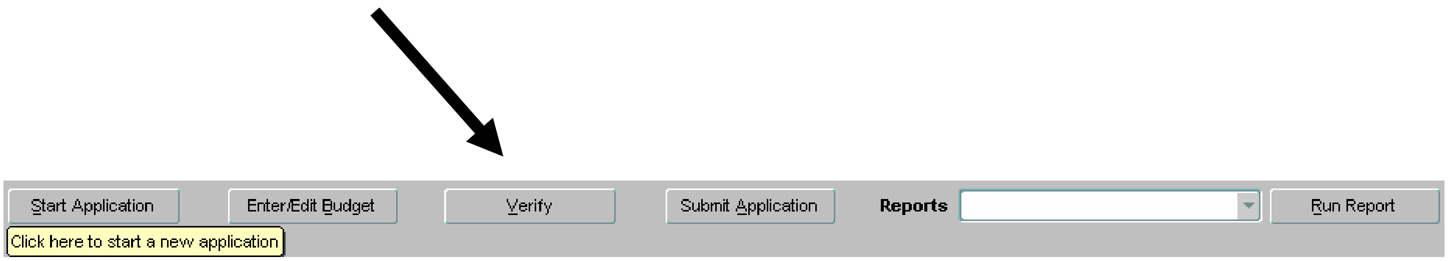


If there are errors in your budget, a box will be displayed with each error. Correct the errors and ***re-validate the budget until there are no errors***.

The system indicates that the budget has been validated in the upper right of the screen with a check mark in the "validated" box.



- **To verify the Application for Federal Assistance (SF424),** click on the "**Verify**" button from the **Application for Federal Assistance** (SF424).



If there are no errors, you will receive a message that there are no errors. If there are errors in your application, a box will be displayed with each error. Correct the errors and ***re-verify the application until there are no errors***.

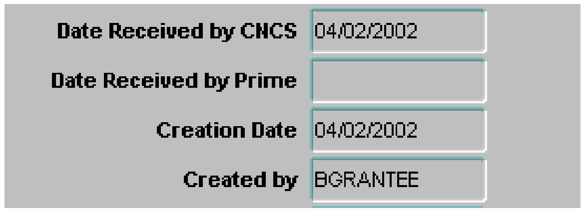
3.10.2 Submitting Your Application

When the application is verified, submit your application to the Corporation by clicking the "**Submit Application**" button from the **Application for Federal Assistance** (SF424) Applicant Tab.

You will receive a pop-up window that says your application has been successfully submitted to the Corporation. In addition, you will note that:

1. The status of your application changed from "Grantee Initial Entry" to "Submitted to CNCS" in the **Application for Federal Assistance** screen.

2. The date the application was submitted is entered in the “Received by CNCS” date field in the **Application for Federal Assistance** screen.

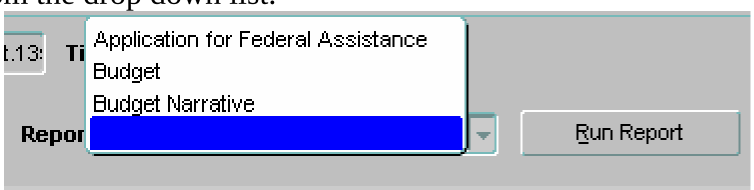


Once an application has been submitted to the Corporation you cannot make any changes to the application.

3.10.3 Printing Your Application

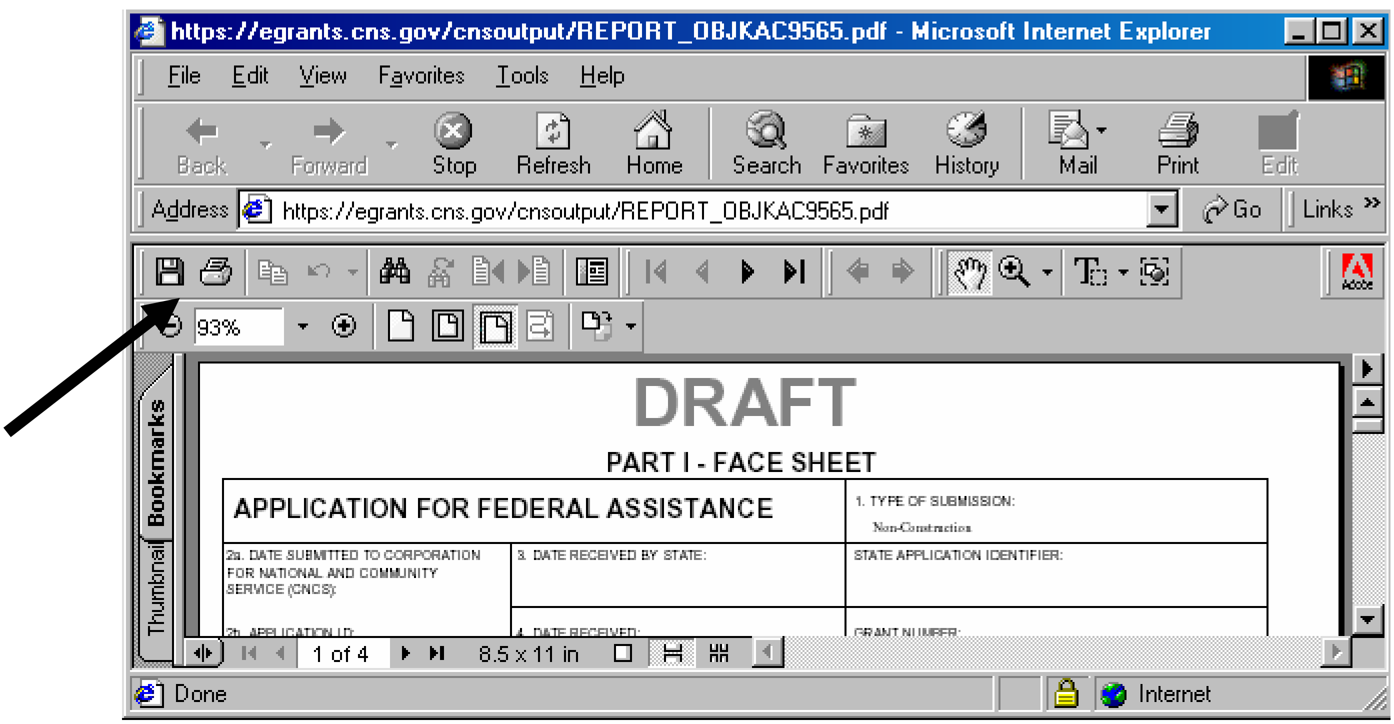
We suggest you print a hard copy of your application. To do that:

1. Go to the **Applicant Tab**.
2. Select one of the reports you would like to run (SF424, Budget, Budget Narrative) from the drop down list.



Click the “**Run Report**” button.

3. This will open Adobe Acrobat Reader and a new window.

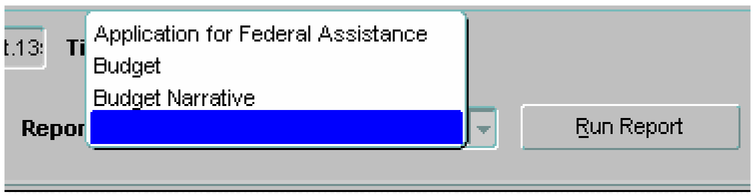


4. You may print your report/application from here.

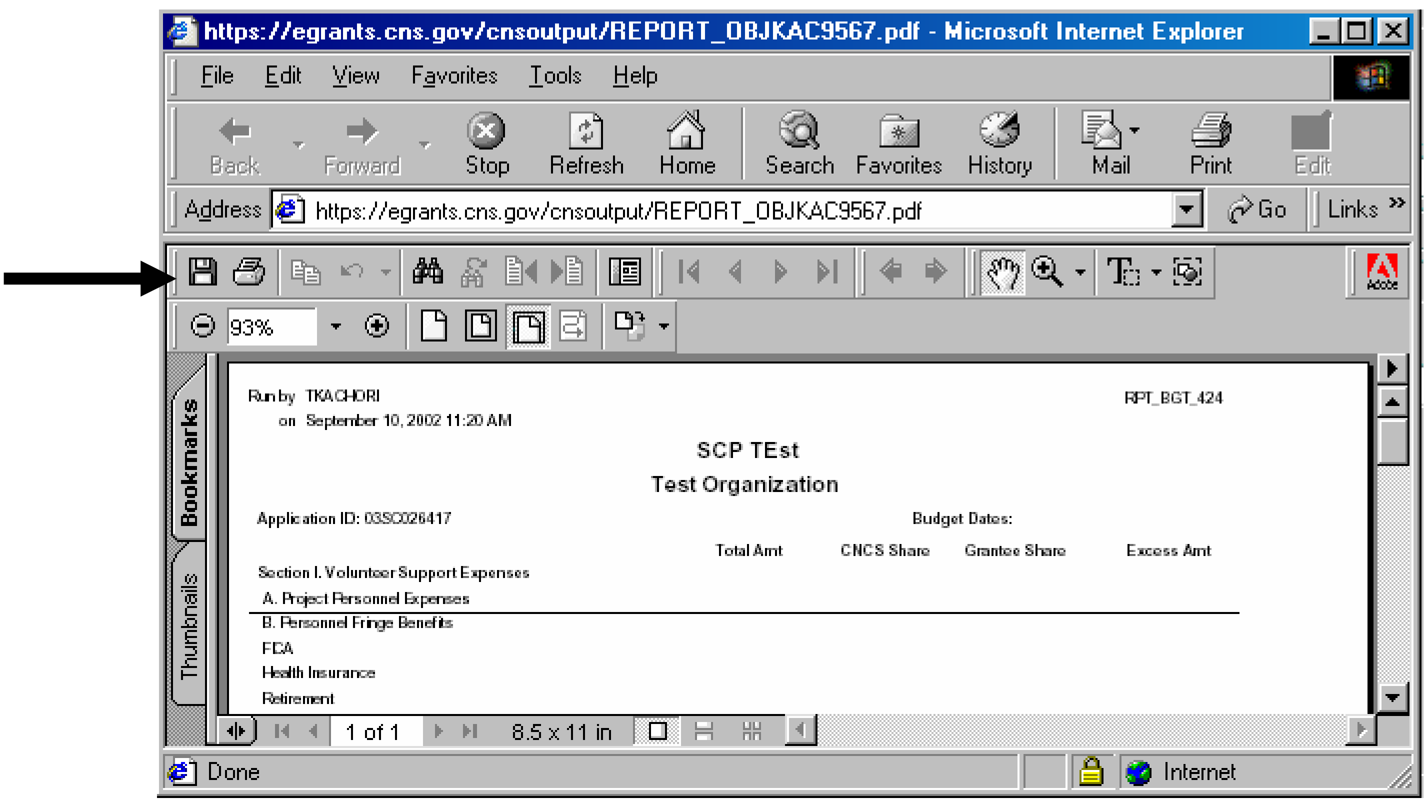
3.10.4 Saving Your Application

Your application is automatically saved to a central database, so you are not required to save your application to your hard drive or a diskette. However, if you would like to save a copy, you need to run a report in *eGrants*. To do that:

1. Go to the **Application for Federal Assistance (SF424)** screen.
2. Select one of the reports you would like to run (SF424, Budget, Budget Narrative) from the drop down list.



3. Click the "**Run Report**" button.
4. This will open Adobe Acrobat Reader and a new window.



5. You may save your report/application from here. To do this, ***you must have Adobe Acrobat Reader 5.0 or higher***.