

# Circular No. A-89 Revised

August 17, 1984

**TO THE HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND ESTABLISHMENTS**

**SUBJECT: Federal Domestic Assistance Program Information**

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1. **Purpose.** This revised circular supersedes Circular A-89, dated December 31, 1970. It provides the basis for a systematic and periodic collection and uniform submission of information on all federally financed domestic assistance programs to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) by Federal agencies. It also establishes Federal policies related to the delivery of this information to the public, including through the use of electronic media. The policies and responsibilities established by this Circular apply to all executive departments and agencies as defined by Section 551(1) of Title 5, United States Code.

The information system established by this Circular is designed to assist in identifying the types of Federal domestic assistance available, describing eligibility requirements for the particular assistance being sought, and providing guidance on how to apply for specific types of assistance. In addition, it is intended to improve coordination and communication between the Federal Government and State and local governments.

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2. **Rescissions.** This revised Circular supersedes OMB Circular No. A-89 dated December 31, 1970, and Transmittal Memorandum No. 1, dated June 25, 1980.

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3. **Authority.** The Federal Program Information Act (Public Law 95-220) was signed into law in December 1977. This Act provided for the efficient and regular distribution of current information on Federal domestic assistance programs. The Act was amended in October 1983 by Public Law 98-169 to give the Administrator of General Services the responsibility for carrying out this function. The Act outlines the duties of the Administrator of General Services and the Director of OMB. It also directs Federal agencies to furnish information on their domestic

assistance programs and serves as the compelling mandate for collection and distribution of current information on Federal domestic assistance programs.

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**4. Background.** The requirements contained in this Circular are a revision of those prescribed by OMB Circular No. A-89, dated December 31, 1970. This Circular prescribes the manner in which

General Services Administration (GSA), OMB, and executive branch agencies that administer domestic assistance programs are to carry out their statutory responsibilities under the Federal Program Information Act.

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**5. Policy.** Comprehensive information on all Federal domestic assistance programs will be maintained by the GSA. Using that information as the source, a Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance will be prepared and issued annually and updated periodically, and a computerized retrieval system, presently the Federal Assistance Programs Retrieval System (FAPRS), will be maintained and updated by the GSA.

Executive branch agencies shall submit to OMB on a timely basis and in accordance with instructions provided by GSA, information on all domestic assistance programs and activities that are federally funded and that are administered by such agency.

The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance will be the single, authoritative, Government-wide comprehensive source document of Federal domestic assistance program information produced by the executive branch of the Federal Government. The Catalog is a guide to all domestic assistance programs and activities regardless of dollar size or duration. Specifically, these programs include general purpose aid to States and localities (general revenue sharing and shared revenues); payments in lieu of taxes; assistance to State and local governments to finance essential public services and productivity efforts; indirect assistance or benefits resulting from Federal operations; and automatic payments for which no application process is required. Any other executive branch publication that describes a group of Federal domestic assistance programs is considered a specialized catalog. Publications containing comprehensive descriptions of individual programs that specify application guidelines, administrative requirements, and other details, and pamphlets or leaflets containing conventional public information of a generalized nature are not considered specialized catalogs. Unless otherwise required by law, specialized catalogs may be published only when specifically authorized and developed within the following guidelines and criteria:

1. Proposals for the development and publication of any specialized catalog of Federal domestic assistance programs will be submitted to the General Services Administration for approval in the conceptual planning stages. The request for clearance will include full justification of the need for such a specialized catalog and will clearly indicate why the particular need cannot be adequately served by the currently available Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance.
2. Whenever feasible, justifiable ad hoc needs of an agency will be satisfied by the development of specialized user guides or supplements to the material contained in the currently available Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance in lieu of developing completely separate catalogs. Continuing needs for

this type of information will generally be met by changes to the indexing schemes or substantive content of the Catalog. Agencies will advise the General Services Administration of their needs and proposed efforts in this area.

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6. **Definitions.** For the purpose of this Circular, the following definitions shall apply:

- a. A "federal domestic assistance program" is any function of a Federal agency that provides assistance or benefits for a State or States, territorial possession, county, city, other political subdivision, grouping, or instrumentality thereof; any domestic profit or nonprofit corporation, institution, or individual, other than an agency of the Federal Government. A Federal domestic assistance program may in practice be called a program, an activity, a service, a project, a process, or some other name, regardless of whether it is identified as a separate program by statute or regulation. It will be identified in terms of its legal authority, administering office, funding, purpose, benefits, and beneficiaries.
- b. "Assistance" or "benefits" refers to the transfer of money, property, services, or anything of value, the principal purpose of which is to accomplish a public purpose of support or stimulation authorized by Federal statute. Assistance includes, but is not limited to grants, loans, loan guarantees, scholarships, mortgage loans, insurance, and other types of financial assistance; provision or donation of Federal facilities, goods, services, property, technical assistance, counseling, statistical, and other expert information; and service activities of regulatory agencies. It does not include provision of conventional public information services.
- c. Federal agency means any agency as defined by Section 551(1) of Title 5, United States Code.
- d. Administering office means the lowest subdivision of any Federal agency that has direct operational responsibility for managing a Federal domestic assistance program.

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7. **Action Requirements.** The head of each executive department and establishment shall establish internal policies, procedures, and responsibilities to implement the policies contained in this Circular and shall provide overall direction for establishing a mechanism for collecting, coordinating, and submitting current program information.

In particular, the head of each executive department and establishment shall be responsible for assuring that information on each domestic assistance program administered by such agency is collected, maintained, and

submitted to OMB. This includes narrative and financial program information on all funded programs as defined and outlined in special reporting instructions transmitted by GSA to the agencies and departments.

Toward this end, each agency or department shall:

a. Establish procedures of administrative control to assure the adequacy and timeliness of program information collected and submitted.

b. Designate a single office within the department or agency to:

-- monitor and coordinate the federally funded domestic assistance program information of the agency or department;

-- maintain a complete inventory of all funded programs that is derived from the basic program data of the individual agency or department information system.

This inventory shall include information on one-time programs and programs of short duration, as well as on continuing programs; and

-- assure that all new and amended program information shall contain the official GSA program number and title when published in the Federal Register as any type of Federal assistance program announcement. This includes but is not limited to entries published as final regulations and amendments under the Rules and Regulations Section, as well as notices of any kind pertaining to ongoing programs.

c. Request prior approval for the preparation, publication, and distribution of all specialized catalogs or supplements, except where there is statutory authorization for such catalogs or supplements. Any proposed specialized catalog format must be as nearly identical to the Catalog format as possible in order to eliminate inconsistencies in program data reporting. Anticipated continuous need for a particular type of information will be conveyed to GSA for consideration of Catalog reformatting to accommodate such requirements.

GSA is responsible for maintaining an efficient and effective program information system. Toward this end, GSA shall:

a. Issue detailed reporting instructions to Federal agencies and departments governing the collection of information needed for the Federal assistance information data base.

b. Maintain an information data base of Federal domestic assistance programs and activities.

- c. Provide information to the general public through a printed catalog and electronic media on all Federal domestic assistance programs.
- d. Plan and make improvements in the information data base and continue to seek ways to disseminate the information.
- e. Provide information to Congress through printed media on all Federal domestic assistance programs that employ a formula.

For each Federal domestic assistance program, the data base will include but not be limited to the following information:

- a. Program number and title.
- b. Popular name, if applicable.
- c. Federal department/agency or independent agency and primary organizational subunit administering the program.
- d. Authorizing legislation, including popular name of the act, titles and sections, public law number, citation to the United States Code, and statute.
- e. Objectives and goals of the program.
- f. Type(s) of financial and nonfinancial assistance offered by the program.
- g. Uses and restrictions placed upon a program.
- h. Eligibility requirements, including applicant eligibility criteria, beneficiary eligibility criteria and required credentials and/or documentation.
- i. Application and award processing, containing pre- application coordination; application and award procedure; application deadlines; range of approval/disapproval time; appeal procedure; and availability of a renewal or extension of assistance. Most circular coordination requirements are included in this section.

- j. Assistance considerations, including an explanation of the award formula and matching requirements and the length and time phasing of the assistance.
- k. Post assistance requirements, including any reports, audits, and records that may be required.
- l. Financial assistance, containing the 11-digit account identification code; obligations for the past fiscal year and estimates for the current fiscal year and for the budget year; and a range and average of financial assistance.
- m. Program accomplishments (where available), describing quantitative measures of program performance.
- n. Regulations, guidelines, and literature containing citations to the Code of Federal Regulations and other pertinent informational materials.
- o. The names of persons to be contacted (or telephone number) for detailed program information at the headquarters, regional, and local levels.
- p. Programs that are related based upon objectives and uses.
- q. Examples of funded projects to indicate proposals that are acceptable under particular programs, and
- r. Criteria used in selecting proposals for award, i.e., additional information on application review and award procedure.

The Catalog will contain but will not be limited to the following:

- a. An introductory section that contains Catalog highlights, an explanation of the Federal Assistance Programs Retrieval System, a section on how to use the Catalog, an explanation of the Catalog and its contents, and suggested proposal writing methods and grant application procedures.
- b. A comprehensive indexing system that categorizes programs by their agency, eligible applicant, application deadlines, function, popular name, and subject area.
- c. Listings showing the programs that have been deleted from or added to the Catalog and the various program number and title changes.

- d. Program descriptions that will contain the information included in the Federal domestic assistance information data base.
- e. Comprehensive appendices showing Federal assistance programs that require coordination through the system of Federal circulars, legislative and Executive Order authority for each program, commonly used abbreviations and acronyms, agency regional and local office addresses, and sources of additional information contacts.

The Catalog is issued as a complete looseleaf document in the spring of each year and updated periodically to accommodate subsequent changes in specifically selected information. As required by the Law, GSA distributes free copies of the Catalog to Federal, State, and local government offices. At the national level, copies are provided to: Members of Congress, congressional staff, and executive branch agencies. At the State level, copies of the Catalog are provided to: Governors, State coordinators of Federal-State relations, Directors of State Departments of Administration and Budget Offices, Directors of State Departments of Community Affairs, Directors of State Planning Agencies, State clearinghouses, Directors of State Agricultural Extension Services, State Municipal Leagues, State Association of Counties, chief State school officers, and State Employment Security Agencies. At the local level, copies are provided to: Mayors, County Chairmen, Chairmen of Boards of Commissioners, and city planners. Copies are also provided to the Federal Information Centers, Federal Regional Councils, Federal Executive Boards, Federal Depository Libraries and appropriate field, and area offices of most Federal agencies. The Catalog is also provided to other agencies of State and local governments.

The Catalog is sold on a subscription basis to private individuals and organizations not specified above. The purchaser is entitled to issues at a subscription rate determined by the Public Printer. The Catalog is distributed by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, as required by Section 1902 of Title 44 of the United States Code.

The Federal Assistance Programs Retrieval System (FAPRS) is an electronic medium of information dissemination, a computerized retrieval system that provides access to the data base of programs that are in the Catalog. The purpose of this system is to help the public identify sources of Federal assistance.

FAPRS operates on a question and answer format to retrieve information on applicable programs. It does this by matching the characteristics of a community and its needs (which are supplied by the prospective applicant) with Federal programs (identified by title and number) that might provide assistance to meet those needs. FAPRS serves as a research tool to help reduce the manual effort required (when using the Catalog) to identify Federal programs useful to a potential applicant.

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**8. OMB Responsibilities.** OMB is responsible for collecting and reviewing information on Federal domestic assistance programs and providing such information to GSA. Also, the Director shall be responsible for assuring that the Administrator of GSA incorporates all relevant information received on a regular basis.

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9. **Information Contact.** Further information may be obtained by contacting the Federal Program Information Branch at the General Services Administration or by contacting the Budget Review Division at the Office of Management and Budget.

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10. **Sunset Review Date.** The provisions of this Circular are effective upon issuance. The policies promulgated in this Circular will be reviewed no later than three years from date of issuance.

**David A. Stockman**  
*Director*

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