

Easygrants Frequently Asked Questions

1. How do I start an application?

- o Secure DUNS, CCR and EIN numbers before attempting to complete an Easygrants application. Guidelines are available on <http://www.broadbandusa.gov>
- o You can file multiple applications under a single Easygrants account (username and password)
- o Do not wait until the last minute to file your application. NTIA and RUS expect a high volume of applications during this round of funding.
- o Call/email the helpdesk for any/all Easygrants questions: Password issues and account lockouts should be resolved on the phone with the applicant by contacting the helpdesk at:
 - Phone: 1-877-508-8364
 - E-mail: BroadbandUSA@usda.gov

2. How do I Log On?

- First Time Users:
 - o Step 1: Visit <https://applyonline.broadbandusa.gov>.
 - o Step 2: Select "Register Here"
 - o Step 3: To register, you must supply contact information (first and last name) and establish your log-in information. Your e-mail will serve as your Login ID.
 - o Password Policy: Passwords will expire every 90 days. If your password has expired, you will need to create a new password with the following requirements:
 - At least 8 characters and no more than 16
 - At least one upper-case letter
 - At least one lower-case letter
 - At least one digit (0-9)
 - At least one special character
 - Different from your last 8 passwords
 - Should not contain your first or last name
- Returning Users
 - o Step 1: Visit <https://applyonline.broadbandusa.gov>.
 - o Step 2: Input Login ID (the user name and password supplied upon registration).
 - o Step 3: Input Password (created upon registration – if forgotten, please e-mail BroadbandUSA@usda.gov for assistance).

3. What is New in Easygrants?

NTIA and RUS added sufficient servers to sustain the expected application volume for the second round of applications.

Additional modifications include:

- Central Contractor Registration (CCR) Integration provides you the ability to lookup your Organization's information from CCR using your organization's Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number. This functionality makes it easier for you to input you information and provides better data consistency.
- Authorization functionality allows you to select an Authorized representative from your organization from the list of points of contacts pulled from CCR in the step above. Then it will automatically notify/request authorization from that person before you can submit an application.
- More validations and business logic were implemented to check required fields and ensure better information accuracy entered by applicants. The Review and Submit page should be checked often to ensure you are meeting the required validations.

4. How do I get started in Easygrants?

- Proper browser settings
 - It is recommended that you use *Mozilla Firefox* for optimal performance when using Easygrants, however the Easygrants application will work on many operating systems including:

Browser	Windows: 2000, XP, Vista, 7	Apple: Mac OS 10.x
Internet Explorer 6.0	Yes	N/A
Internet Explorer 7.0	Yes	N/A
Internet Explorer 8.0	Yes	N/A
Firefox 2.0	Yes	Yes
Firefox 3.0	Yes	Yes
Safari 3.1	Yes	Yes
Safari 4.0	Yes	Yes
Chrome 4.0	Yes	Yes

- If the applicant experiences difficulties with the system in Internet Explorer, using Firefox 2.0 or 3.0 to access the Easygrants system may avoid these issues. Firefox is available free from www.Firefox.com.
- At times, the Easygrants system may use pop-ups. When using a pop-up blocker, change the settings on your browser to allow pop-ups on Easygrants.
- Cookies must be enabled in the browser for Easygrants to work properly. In most browsers, cookies are enabled as part of the default settings. If they are not enabled, enable them in the browser's privacy options.
 - Internet Explorer:
 - Click Internet Options on the Tools menu.
 - On the Privacy tab, move the settings slider to Low or Accept All Cookies.
 - Click OK.
 - Firefox:
 - From the top menu bar, open the Tools menu (Windows) or the Firefox menu (Mac). When a drop-down menu appears, pick Options for Windows and Preferences for a Mac.
 - Click on the Privacy icon. Look for the box labeled Cookies.
 - Enable Cookies in Firefox
 - Check the box next to 'Accept Cookies From Sites.' Scroll through the menu next to the words 'Keep Until' and choose the appropriate option.
 - Use the 'Exceptions' button to make specific exceptions to the rule to accept all cookies. Click this button, and a dialog box will appear. Type the address of a Web site that the applicant does not want to accept a cookie from. After typing in the URL, select 1 of the 3 buttons 'Block,' 'Allow For Session,' or 'Allow.'
 - Close the box and then click on 'Show Cookies' to see all the current cookies on the computer. Finally, to enable cookies in Firefox click 'OK' for Windows or close the preferences box for a Mac.

5. I just started my application, yet some sections on the Main page already display green checks indicating they are completed. Why?

If you have previously registered or completed applications in Easygrants, the "Contact Information" section may already show a green check mark on the "Main" page. This is because all the contact information required (i.e. primary email address and phone number) was already completed when you registered or worked on a prior application. Easygrants pre-populates the Contact Information with your profile information. Although indicated as complete, please review to validate and provide additional contact phone numbers or email addresses if desired. Additionally, for new PCC applications, the Environmental Questionnaire Part 2 will be initially marked with a green check mark. This check mark will disappear if the response to the question regarding "construction or ground disturbing activities" indicates the need for completing Part 2 of the Environmental Questionnaire.

6. I have two applications open at the same time and am seeing data from one application appearing in the other? Why?

If you created more than one application in the Easygrants system, do NOT attempt to open multiple applications under separate browser windows. The system does not support the ability to simultaneously access multiple applications. Please work on a single application at a time and close the application before opening another application.

7. We would like more than one person to be able to access Easygrants at the same time. This way we can work on multiple parts of an application simultaneously. Is this possible?

It is not recommended that multiple users access Easygrants to work on the same application(s) concurrently. This may lead to data overwrite issues.

8. How do I download templates and upload files?

- Use Adobe Reader 7.0 or 8.0 to view PDF files. Applicants can download Adobe for free at <http://www.adobe.com/reader>
- Acceptable file types:
 - **RUS Applicants:** Permitted file types include: .xls, .doc, .pdf, .rtf, .docx, .xlsx
 - **NTIA Applicants:** Permitted file types include: .xls, .doc, .pdf, .rtf, gif, jpeg, jpg, .docx, .xlsx
 - File types that are not permitted, such as PowerPoint documents, should be saved as PDFs before uploading.
- Downloading Templates:
 - In order to successfully download templates from Easygrants and upload documents to your application, please make sure to **turn off pop-up blockers on your browser**.
 - Add this web site: <https://applyonline.broadbandusa.gov> to your browser's trusted sites. Downloading: If using Internet Explorer, follow these steps to set up the browser to enable the download of templates, etc.
 - Open Internet Explorer
 - Go to Tools | Internet Option
 - Click on the Security tab
 - Click on Trusted sites and then the Sites button
 - Add the Easygrants URL in the Add This Website to the zone field and click on Add
 - Require server verification (https:) for all sites in this zone checkbox is unchecked
 - Click on Close.
 - Go back to the Security tab and click on Custom level with the Trusted sites zone selected
 - Under Settings, go to the Downloads section. a) Choose Enable for Automatic prompting for file downloads. b) Choose Enable for File download. c) Choose Enable for Font download
 - Also under Settings, go to the Use Pop-up Blocker setting and choose Disable
 - Click on OK in the Security Settings
- Uploading Templates: Upload restrictions include:
 - The system cannot accept documents that are larger than the maximum number of pages set for that particular document, or are not of a permitted file type.
 - The maximum recommended file size is 5MB. Uploads larger than 16MB will not be accepted by the system and you will be unable to submit your application.
 - For reference, a 16 MB is equivalent to a Word document of approximately 960 pages and an Excel spreadsheet of approximately 2,400 pages.
 - Applicants can reduce PDF and other upload file sizes by using compression software or by reducing the quality of included images.
 - Some uploaded document have a maximum page limit specified in the instructions for that upload. Essay questions and text fields have individually defined character limits. Please refer to the NTIA Grant Guidance or the RUS Application Guide for individual question character limits.
- Supplemental Uploads
 - To include supplemental information with your application, please include a cover sheet to label the information.
 - Applicants may use the Supplemental Information upload to submit additional documents.

- Free Utilities for PDF Conversion
 - The following tip is for NTIA BTOP applications only and is *not* encouraged for RUS BIP applications: Although the Easygrants system is capable of converting Word and Excel files to PDF, the process can be time consuming. In order to expedite the application process, NTIA advises applicants to convert requested documentation into PDF prior to uploading them to Easygrants. By creating their own PDF files, applicants can ensure that there are no technical or formatting issues with their documents before submitting them through Easygrants.
 - There are a number of free utilities available online that the applicant can use to create PDFs of single documents or to combine multiple documents into one PDF.
 - Adobe allows the applicant to set up a free trial version of its PDF conversion service. This utility will allow applicants to convert five documents for free. Follow the instructions to create a username and password. <https://createpdf.adobe.com/>
- Primo PDF or CutePDF will convert any document to PDF. To do so, follow the links below to access the sites, choose the file to convert, name the file, and enter an e-mail address in the applicable box. The PDF will then be emailed to the applicant. These can be accessed through the following links: <http://www.primopdf.com/download.asp> or <http://www.cutepdf.com/products/cutepdf/Writer.asp>. (Note: please use discretion regarding the content of your files when using such services.)
- Formatting:
 - In Round 1, it was found that a number of Excel documents converted to PDF through Easygrants were either mis-formatted or unreadable. To ensure that uploaded PDFs are correctly formatted, applicants must ensure that the PDF conversion settings in Microsoft Office are set to default. When converting an Excel spreadsheet to PDF, Easygrants uses Office's built-in PDF converter with all the Office default settings for saving Excel to PDF. The print settings are not considered because Easygrants is not printing the file to PDF, but rather *saving* the file to PDF.
 - If cells within an Excel file are password protected, the document will still upload successfully. However, the data within the document may not display as expected when converted to PDF. The Excel worksheet or workbook itself *should not be* password protected. Doing so may cause issues when uploading the file to Easy Grants.

9. How do I view a PDF of my application?

A PDF version of your application can be viewed once the application is submitted. On the "Home" Page or the "Review and Submit" page, find the button "View PDF". When you click this button, a pop-up window will load, indicating that the request for a PDF to be generated has been sent. If you do not see this pop-up window, please be sure that your browser is set to allow pop-ups from this site.

Depending on the volume of applicants trying to generate a PDF, the process of generating the PDF of your application might take anywhere from a few minutes to 15 minutes. You can check to see if the PDF has been generated by closing the pop-up window and re-clicking the "View PDF" button. If it has been generated, the PDF will open in a separate application. If not, you will see the same pop-up menu letting you know that the request has been sent. This DOES NOT mean that a new request has been sent rather it indicates that not enough time has passed for the first request to be processed. Please allow a few more minutes before closing the pop-up window and trying again.

10. What is the maximum file size allowed for my application?

Each uploaded document has a maximum page limit specified in the instructions for that upload. Essay questions and text fields have individually defined character limit which are defined in the NTIA Grant Guidance or RUS Application Guide. There is a 16MB file limitation for all Uploaded files. RUS applicants may upload as many documents as needed for each upload type, whereas NTIA applicants are encouraged to upload only 1 upload per upload checklist item.

11. May I apply an "electronic signature" to the certifications and other documents that require a signature?

No. If an upload requires a signature, the applicant must print, complete, obtain signatures, scan electronically, and then upload as an attachment to the application.

12. Why don't I see my uploaded attachments in the PDF of the application?

Your PDF will only include the questions in the core application and will NOT INCLUDE uploads. Instead, you can print these from the uploads checklist if you want a hardcopy.

13. I completed my application and all of the items in the Validation Summary on the application's Main page have green checks. Why is my application still incomplete on my Home page?

When you are finished with the application, you must proceed to the Review and Submit page (via link in the left navigation bar) to be sure each page was completed correctly and to hit the Submit button.

14. How do I submit my application?

- You can review application status on the "Review and Submit" page. This page will indicate whether all required text fields have been filled on a given page with a green check mark. If a page is missing any required information, the omitted field will be listed along with a red x.
- After the application has been submitted, the electronic system will not allow further revisions. Your applications will be reviewed based on the final version submitted via the online system or via mail. NTIA and RUS are not accepting alternative means for submitting applications or supplemental documentation, such as a CD or Flash Drive.

15. What are some common Issues with uploading/downloading and submitting?

- Problems uploading/downloading
 - Please do not upload files more than once if the system is moving slowly. Once you select upload, the file enters a queue. Selecting upload multiple times, will further slow the upload speed. Easygrants now displays improved error messages to the user for page level validations, submission level validations, and upload errors for files that are password protected, corrupted, or too big. Make sure files are not too big, password protected, or corrupted.
- Validation Issues
 - When finished with the application, you must proceed to the Review and Submit page (via link in the left navigation bar) to be sure each page has been completed and meets system validation rules. Upon reviewing you should select the Submit button to finalize the Application. Once submitted, the application cannot be edited.
 - It is recommended that you periodically check the Review and Submit page as you complete the application to check your progress.
 - Electronic/Digital signatures are not accepted. You must download the forms, complete them, print them, sign them, scan them electronically, and then upload them to your application.
- **NTIA Applicants Only:** If a box or answer does not apply to you, enter a "0" or "NA" in the space provided. Easygrants will not recognize an application as complete until all spaces are filled.
- Incomplete Messages
 - The "incomplete" message on the page often occurs because there is a blank box somewhere on the screen. Please ensure that data is entered into each box, even if the entry is a zero.

16. What are the dates of the application period?

All applications for projects must be submitted between February 16, 2010, at 8:00 a.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST) and March 15, 2010, at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT).