

Grant Management System Generic Requirements

Purpose

This document is a high level specification of requirements for a Grant Management System. For ease of reference this document shall refer to the above as GMS.

This specification is not based on a single requirement, nor does it go into a detailed level of complexity regarding grant funding processes. Instead it is aimed to cover the high level needs common to a GMS and is "user" centric rather than technically driven.

We encourage this approach because we believe that over-specified and highly technical specifications result in large documents that are difficult for the average user to digest and which do not reflect their priorities and needs. The success of a GMS should not be based on how much technical wizardry it can provide but on how focused it is to tangible business benefits such as how many users are utilizing the system daily in a way that helps them do their job quickly and effectively.

The common requirement for most organisations is that their GMS provides an easily accessible, web based online portal capable of both allowing applicants to submit grant application forms and also allow the organisation to receive, process and award grants and perform relevant activities following award such as monitoring the grants and recording payments. All of this should be available in a secure and consistent manner.

The solution will be used by a variety of different people with differing levels of technical competency, from the individuals seeking to make applications for grants to grant officers, scheme managers, reviewers and decision makers, and therefore a system must be very simple and intuitive to use. It is therefore important to understand the needs of your target users and deliver functions in the most appropriate way for each user group. The different types of user of a GMS include:

1. Individuals who looking for grants offered by your organisation and making applications for these grants online
2. Grant officers or case workers receiving, acknowledging and performing checks on new grant applications. Grant officers may also provide assistance to grant applicants during the application process, and may perform post award activities such as monitoring grantees.
3. Grant assessors/reviewers who review applications in detail and potentially score applications.
4. Grant decision makers who formally shortlist or make recommendations, e.g. committee members, panels etc.
5. Directors, managers or people who formally approve recommendations.
6. Finance officers and managers who record and process payments against grants.
7. Scheme or programme managers who are responsible for designing and publishing new grant funding schemes.

A typical GMS solution should deliver tangible benefits to those users described above from the outset and there are several solutions available in the marketplace that can offer most of this "out-of-the-box". An out-of-the-box solution offers the benefits of being a tried and tested, reliable product usually with a published road-map that future proofs the technology, however you may also have custom or specific requirements that may not be obvious or readily available and when this is the case it is important to choose a product that not only has flexible configuration options but has an active community group who can help influence the direction of the product without bloating the product with features that do not benefit the grant making community as a whole.

It is beneficial to perform user focused requirements analysis when preparing your ITT to ensure your specific needs are being met, even then it is not always clear what all the user requirements may be.

The introduction of a GMS into an organisation which does not have one in place or is running an antiquated system provides an excellent opportunity to review and improve precisely how you deliver your different funding schemes. Scheme reviews can help understand the needs of different grant teams, managers and officers, however the biggest benefit is that it presents the opportunity to identify common processes, tasks and activates and define a common approach which brings efficiencies and cost savings.

It is useful to perform this detailed review as part of introducing a solution and can be performed prior to procuring a solution in order to help inform functional requirements, or can be performed by the solution provider, assuming they have the relevant expertise, as part of implementing the new solution. If scheme reviews are to be included as part of your overall requirement it is important to budget accordingly for this and to ensure the solution provider has adequate experience in performing or supporting such reviews.

Determining Scope

A GMS usually has common components and functionality. Administration tools are common to most configurations however differences arise depending on the users that the system needs to cater for.

The following table highlights key issues that need to be considered and communicated to potential suppliers to help ensure they are able to accurately understand your requirements.

#	Issue to consider	Comment/Examples
1	Who are your grants targeted at?	<i>E.g. academic researchers / local community groups / individuals.</i>
2	What are the key objective(s) of your grant scheme(s)?	
3	What is the typical value of the grants offered?	<i>E.g. average grant value is £50,000</i>
4	How will interested parties find grants of interest?	<i>E.g. via your organisation's website</i>
5	How many different funding grant schemes are provided by your organisation?	<i>E.g. 5 distinct grant schemes</i>
6	What differences, if any are there between your grant schemes?	<i>E.g. in average grant value, number of applications, submission deadlines.</i>
7	What are the common grant management processes performed?	<i>E.g. application submission, followed by internal checks, assessment, decision, approval and issue of grant offer.</i>
8	If you run multiple schemes do these follow a similar process, if not how do they differ?	<i>E.g. in assessment, approval, payment frequency etc</i>
9	How many grants do you typically award each year across your grant schemes?	<i>E.g. around 40-50 grants per year in each scheme.</i>

10	Who will be the overall system administrator/s?	<i>Provide names of administrators</i>
11	How many staff members will require access to the system?	<i>E.g. grant officers/managers, approvers, finance team</i>
12	Other than applicants, how many other external users do you expect to use the system?	<i>E.g. peer reviewers</i>
13	Do you need to have designated users with the capability to create reports and publish them to other users?	<i>Yes / No</i>
14	Does your GMS need to integrate with other systems in your organisation?	<i>E.g. with your organisation's finance system or CRM.</i>
15	Do you have the required infrastructure, hardware, software and hosting in place to implement the GMS?	<i>Yes / No</i>
16	Do you have existing grant data to be migrated? If so, what volume?	<i>E.g. 1000 grants split across 4 different grant schemes</i>
17	Do you have existing contacts and organisations to be migrated? If so, what volume?	<i>E.g. 500 organisation records and 1500 reviewer records.</i>

Example Requirements

The following section outlines the different features of a GMS. For your own solution some features would be deemed mandatory while others are desirable or may be a future requirement and some may not be required at all. In either case you should ask suppliers not to simply indicate their compliance but to also describe how their product/solution meets this requirement citing examples.

Category	Description
M	Paragraphs marked "M" in the column represent mandatory requirements which MUST be met by suppliers.
D	Paragraphs marked "D" in the column represent requirements which are DESIREABLE and could be met by suppliers.
F	Paragraphs marked "F" in the column represent requirements which are not currently required but are likely to be in the FUTURE .
NA	Paragraphs marked "NA" in the column represent requirements which are NOT APPLICABLE .

The following requirements are for illustration and you would need to specify the above options for each requirement to suit your needs and add any additional requirements you think are necessary.

1	Core Requirements	M/D/F/NA
1.1	Must be an online web based solution compatible with all modern web browsers.	M
1.2	The solution must be based on an established product that is proven, robust, and secure and includes a published road-map that ensures the currency of the technology.	M
1.3	The solution must be intuitive and simple to use. Each functional area must be seamlessly integrated with another allowing users to move freely between areas of the system without confusion.	M
1.4	The solution must provide secure web access from remote locations and support multiple users with different levels of access to the underlying functions.	M
1.5	Secure login system with encrypted links for working off site (SSL certificates)	M
1.6	Specifically designed as a grant management system.	M
1.7	Technical support available during normal office hours (9am to 5pm)	D
1.8	A proven track record must be demonstrated by the supplier.	M
2	Grant Management	
2.1	Provide start to finish grant management from applicants completing and submitting application forms online to checking scoring, approving, awarding and monitoring the award. Must include the ability to keep all information and actions for each application in a single "electronic case file".	M

2.2	Must have an extensive security model to allow system access to be controlled. The security model must include functional level access (e.g. users involved in checking should not necessarily be allowed to approve a case). The security model must also include the ability to restrict access at a scheme/application level whereby certain users should have access to manage grants in specific schemes.	M
2.3	Users must be able to search the GMS providing easy lookup of applications by reference, applicant, organisation or project title.	M
2.4	Responsive workflow processing to allow applications to be processed based on the relevant workflow for the grant schemes. It must be possible for authorised users to roll-back a work-flow stage with an audit log maintained of all workflow processing. The workflow must include the ability to send email automatic notifications to relevant users upon completion of workflow tasks.	M
2.5	The GMS must provide template based emails for corresponding with applicants and which link to the application case file providing a full history of email correspondence. There must be no limit the templates that can be configured and templates must be capable of merging data from the online application form and other relevant grant data (e.g. project dates, grant value sought, scoring information etc.)	D
2.6	The GMS must have the ability to record telephone conversations, notes and actions against application case file providing a full history.	D
2.7	The GMS must be capable of generating word documents based on templates (which can contain merge fields from the GMS and application form). This must include a document store for both system generated documents and also uploaded documents. The document store must be linked to the grant application case files as well as linking documents uploaded in the applicants online forms.	D
2.8	The GMS must provide a dashboard which provides staff with a complete view of all applications and awards in the system including a breakdown of the workflow stages and the applications at each stage. There must be tools available to filter the dashboard, for example by scheme or case worker.	D
2.9	The GMS must include an integrated contact management system which provides a view of all people (e.g. applicants, reviewers, client staff) and organisations within the system.	D
2.10	The GMS must allow a restricted list of organisations to be defined, which can only be updated by authorised individuals and not by applicants.	D

3	Grant scheme and form configuration	
3.1	Administrators must be able to create an unlimited number of grant schemes, either by creating a brand new scheme or copying an existing grant scheme	M
3.2	The GMS must include a comprehensive form builder allowing for application, progress reporting or claim forms to be built by authorised users. The form builder must be simple to use and not require specialist skills or without the need of support from the supplier. The form builder must provide a wide variety of question types including, text, multiline text, number, currency, drop down lists, check boxes, check box lists and file uploads. The form builder must also provide validation logic (e.g. min word count, min max values/dates) and also allow questions to be hidden or displayed based on the answers to specific questions.	M
3.3	Administrators must be able to control which schemes are available for applicants to submit applications to at any given time. Administrators should be able to specific a specific submission deadline against a scheme	M
3.4	The GMS must allow a workflow to be configured for each grant scheme, allowing different workflows for different schemes to be configured where required. This must be available as simple online tools available to authorised users and requiring no specialist skills or without the need of support from the supplier.	M
4	Application form submission	
4.1	The GMS must have the ability for applicant to register in the system prior to completing an online application form. This process must include email address verification. Users must be able to maintain basic account details including their address and contact details which is the automatically used when they complete applications.	M
4.2	The GMS must have the ability for users to locate and complete online application forms. Users must be able to save and return to their incomplete forms. The system must have security features which automatically log users out after a period of inactivity, if this happens the system must save the applicants form before logging them out.	M
4.3	The system must allow an applicant to provide a completed CV as part of their application.	D
4.4	The online application forms must enable applicants to invite other participants to collaborate on the completion of the form where appropriate. The type of participants that can be invited must be configurable on a scheme by scheme basis.	D
4.5	The GMS must allow applicants to download a PDF version of their application form at any stage, including all attachments in a single file PDF.	M
4.6	The GMS must allow applicants to specify the project budget in detail. This can include multi-year budgets, for specific budget cost types. Rules must be available to restrict budgets where appropriate, and this can change on a scheme by scheme basis.	M
4.7	The GMS must allow a representative from the host organisation's research/grant team to approve final submission of an application, following initial submission by the lead applicant.	D

4.8	Each application created must have a unique reference number. It must be possible to tailor the prefix of each grant scheme.	D
4.9	The GMS must prevent applicants submitting more than one application to certain schemes.	M
4.10	The GMS must allow staff to view application forms in the process of being drafted by applicants (prior to submission) so that staff can assist and offer support.	D
4.11	The GMS must track the number of un-submitted online applications for each grant scheme.	M
5	Eligibility Checking, Review and Approval	
5.1	The GMS must allow acknowledgement emails and letters to be generated and sent to applicants by authorised users.	M
5.2	The system must allow applications to be returned to applicants for updates, with comment explaining why, enabling them to be resubmitted before a "required by" date.	M
5.2	The GMS must enable authorised users to perform checks on applications before they are formally assessed. This should include bulk checking of multiple applications based on specific checking criteria, which can differ on a scheme by scheme basis.	F
5.3	Authorised users must be able to invite reviewers to assess applications. The reviewers may or may not be external members of staff. Multiple reviewers can perform reviews of each application, however this may differ on a scheme by scheme basis.	M
5.4	The GMS must support the finding and matching of reviewers based on their areas of expertise. This includes bulk matching of applications with reviewers.	D
5.5	The GMS must detect potential conflicts of interest where the applicant belongs to the same organisation as the reviewer.	M
5.6	The GMS must provide visibility of the progress of reviews to authorised users, and allow reminders to be sent to reviewers.	M
5.7	Internal or external reviewers must be able to login to a restricted area of the system where they can perform reviews on applications assigned to them. Reviewers must be able to accept or reject a review, and when appropriate declare a conflict of interest.	M
5.8	A reviewer must be able to access relevant parts of an application, and complete a review form online. This can include scoring the application based on specific criteria and recording comments, including feedback to the applicant where appropriate. Review forms can change on a scheme by scheme basis.	D
5.9	The system must support multiple stages of review on a scheme by scheme basis. For example: internal review → peer review → committee review → interview.	D
5.10	The GMS must allow panel/committee members to access a list of applications being considered at an upcoming meeting. This includes access to the application form, completed reviews, and any supporting documents.	D
5.11	The GMS must support the production of documents for decision making meetings e.g. Review packs including details on applications and their completed reviews, and documents providing summaries of applications awaiting decisions.	D
5.12	The GMS must provide a function to allow decisions to be recorded following a board/committee/panel meeting. The system should support recording decisions one application at a time or in bulk.	M

6	Approval and Award Letters	
6.1	The GMS must enable authorised users to perform a final approval on applications. This must include the ability to review and adjust financial budgets, including approval by a delegated levels of authority based on the grant value, with segregation of duties.	M
6.2	The system must be able to generate award letter/contract documents, and include conditions of award, payment schedules, and expected reporting requirements.	M
6.3	The GMS must be able to issue award letters/contracts via email to the applicant.	M
6.4	The GMS must allow an applicant to record their acceptance/decline of an award letter/contract via the online portal.	D
7	Award Management	
7.1	The GMS must assist with the post award activities including the management of progress reports, claims, payments and award conditions.	M
7.2	Authorised users must be able to create payment schedules against a grant.	M
7.3	The GMS must allow a grant's budget to be adjusted and re-profiled in the event of changing circumstances relating to the project.	
7.4	The GMS must allow payment authorisation, with delegated levels of approval authority, based on the payment value amount.	M
7.5	Finance users must be able to create batch payment files including details of authorised payments.	D
7.6	Payment files should be customisable to meet the format of our finance system.	D
7.7	The GMS must allow authorised case officers to send progress reports to award holders or other relevant users, either individually or for multiple grants at once.	D
7.8	The GMS must allow Award holders or other relevant users to complete and submit progress reports forms via an online portal.	M
7.9	The GMS must allow award holders to complete and submit claims against their grant via an online portal.	
7.10	The GMS must provide a process for reviewing submitted progress reports and claims, returning them when appropriate for further information, and accepting/rejecting them in the system.	M
7.11	It should be possible to restrict the authorisation of payments if certain grant conditions or progress reports have not been completed.	M
7.12	The GMS must allow for grants to be marked as complete.	M
7.12	It should be possible to put an award on hold which prevents payments being made.	M
7.13	The GMS should allow the source of funding to be recorded against schemes and individual awards.	D
8	Others	
8.1	The GMS must include a comprehensive query tool, enabling all data and form fields to be queried, and the results exported.	M
8.2	The system must be capable of storing emails and documents.	M
8.3	The system must have administration features enabling documents, templates, scheme workflow, application forms, reporting forms and all other settings associated with the system to be controlled by non-technical users.	M

8.4	The system should include a library of standard form questions which can be used for creating both application and reporting forms, and to ensure the consistency and quality of form design across all schemes and programmes.	D
8.5	The system should have tools to support productivity, including but not limited to: bulk email, bulk assigning of staff to applications, bulk assigning of reviewers, bulk generation of applications forms or board/meeting papers.	D