7. TYPES OF APPLICATIONS

Applications for DOC grants and cooperative agreements may be classified into four major categories, which are discussed below. Review, selection, approval, and notification procedures for all applications shall be as prescribed in Chapter 8 of this Manual.

A. Pre-applications. Program Offices may request pre-applications for one or more of the following reasons: to establish productive communications between the Program Office and applicants; to determine an applicant's eligibility; and/or to determine how well a proposed project is likely to compete with other similar projects. One of the advantages of pre-applications is to assist potential applicants by giving them realistic feedback on whether their project ideas/proposals have potential for Federal funding and to discourage applications that have little or no chance of funding. Such pre-application review is intended to allow applicants to avoid incurring significant expenditures in preparing applications that are not consistent with the operating unit's program goals and objectives.

1. Pre-application Assessment. Under this type of pre-application process, regardless of any feedback that a potential applicant may receive in response to a pre-application, the applicant still has a right to submit a complete new application under the program. Pre-applications are usually reviewed by program staff who may obtain assistance from other reviewers as deemed necessary. The review is intended to form the basis for providing feedback or allowable technical assistance to applicants. This is not a process to provide assistance in the development of an application.

2. Pre-application Competition. A second type of pre-application process is one where projects are eliminated. This process can be used if, and only if, the criteria used in the determination to reject projects and prevent an applicant from submitting a full application is expressly set forth in the solicitation.

B. Competitive Applications. Competitive applications are those that have been received as a result of the appropriate solicitation of proposals and that will be reviewed based on published evaluation and selection criteria. These applications may be for new awards or for amendments.

1. New Competitive Awards

a. Competitive applications are submitted pursuant to a competitive solicitation published by a DOC operating unit. These solicitations must be accomplished through FFOs posted at Grants.gov, as required in Chapter 19, Section A. of this Manual. Widespread publicizing is strongly encouraged and is recommended, e.g., Internet, mailing lists, conferences, professional journals, and trade association newsletters.

b. All applications must be treated fairly and equitably under the review process.

2. Amendments for Renewals. For all practical purposes, competitive renewals are treated the same as a new competitive award. This type of application may be accepted unless prohibited by the program's legislation, regulations, or other published policy. Applications for competitive renewal funding must compete with new applications and must be submitted in accordance with any established deadline dates and will be subjected to the same review requirements as competitive applications for new awards. If the application is approved for funding, the Grants Officer shall fund the extended period of support as a new funding period and an extension of the original award period.

C. Noncompetitive Applications. Noncompetitive applications are those that have been received without benefit of full and open competition. Unsolicited noncompetitive applications for new awards of discretionary funds that fall within the scope of a competitive announcement will not be funded outside the competitive process and should be held for the next competition or promptly returned to the applicant with appropriate explanation. Noncompetitive applications may be used for new awards or for amendments.

1. New Noncompetitive Awards Noncompetitive applications for discretionary funds are to be approved only in unusual and extraordinary circumstances and only after the Program Officer and the Grants Officer determine that a noncompetitive award of discretionary funds is warranted by the facts, that the application is consistent with DOC missions and plans, and that the official grant file contains appropriate documentation as required in Chapter 8 of this Manual.

2. New Awards Mandated or Limited by Statute. These applications may be submitted and approved for funding when they are for statutorily authorized awards or for statutorily limited awards. These awards are required by Congress in a public law and are made with nondiscretionary funds.

3. Amendments for Renewals. If the application is approved for funding, the Grants Officer shall fund the extended period of support as a new funding period and an extension of the original award period. Appropriate uses of this type of amendment include renewals of nondiscretionary awards when appropriate; and renewals of awards which are funded annually based on an FFO posted at Grants.gov, which announced that awards would be selected for a period of more than one year but funded and extended annually, contingent upon availability of funds, satisfactory performance, and at the discretion of DOC. Noncompetitive awards of discretionary funds should not normally be given a renewal without competition. A renewal lengthens the award period and funding period while adding additional funds to the award.

4. Amendments for Continuations. A continuation amendment is made without competition and provides continued funding within an approved award period. A continuation extends the funding period and provides additional funding for an award period that has been previously approved, such as when multi-year funding was approved

at the time of award approval. Chapter 20 of the Manual provides procedures for funding multi-year awards when full funding of the award period is not available.

5. Extension Amendments at No Additional Cost to the Government Unless restricted by statute, regulations, or the terms and conditions of an award, a recipient may apply for a noncompetitive extension of the final award/funding period for up to 12 months beyond the ending date of the award/funding period as shown on the Financial Assistance Award notice. If recommended by the Program Office and approved by the Grants Officer, such an extension is made without additional funds.

D. Supplemental Applications. Supplemental applications are for funding over and above the approved budget during the current funding period with no change to the award period or the funding period. These applications should be submitted and approved prior to the expiration date of the award. Funding for these types of amendments is at the sole discretion of the operating unit with final approval of the Grants Officer. In addition, supplemental funding is subject to funding constraints or limitations of the operating unit. Supplemental applications should fully explain why it is necessary to provide additional Federal funding to supplement the last approved budget. Appropriate handling of the competitive nature of supplemental funding should be considered on a case-by-case basis. These applications may only be for amendments that clearly are within the approved scope of work. Supplemental applications should not be funded merely to avoid competition.

1. Amendments for Administrative Increases to Meet Institution-wide Increased Costs. Applications for supplemental funding may be submitted to an operating unit to cover organization-wide increased costs, such as those costs associated with salary or fringe benefit increases that were not foreseen at the time of the original application. The anticipated cost increases must take effect during the current funding period to be eligible for supplemental funding. These applications are generally not competed when the increased costs are within 25 percent of the last approved budget. If the increased costs are more than 25 percent, the application should be treated in the same manner as an application for new competitive awards, as described in Paragraph B.1. of this chapter.

2. Amendments for Expansion of a Project or Cost Overrun. Applications for supplemental expansion of a current project's previously approved scope of work or to absorb a cost overrun are generally treated in the same manner as an application for new competitive awards as described in Paragraph B.1. of this chapter. If this type of amendment is recommended by the Program Officer and approved by the Grants Officer without competition, the official award file must contain appropriate documentation to explain and justify the decision not to require competition.