

New Electronic Signature Option for Grant Award Notifications

Beginning November 19, U.S. Department of Education program officers will have the option of signing a Grant Award Notification (GAN) electronically in the Grants Management System (G5), reducing the need for paper copies of a GAN. Program officers will still be able to print paper GANs, sign them manually, and send them via U.S. Mail when desired.

The overall concept of generating a GAN to complete administrative actions and obligating funds will not change. However, creating and receiving an electronically signed GAN will entail some new procedures for program officers and grant recipients.

Each time an electronically signed GAN is processed, an email will be automatically sent to grant recipients with a link directing them to log into G5 to view and/or print the GAN. The people receiving this email will be: the ED Program Contact, the Project Director (for discretionary grants), the Certifying Official (for discretionary grants), the State Director (for formula grants) and the Authorizing Official (for formula grants). This step will require each of the email recipients to have individual access to G5 to view the GAN so that Personally Identifiable Information, such as DUNS and Social Security numbers will remain secure.

To sign up for G5, new users follow these steps:

- Go to www.g5.gov
- Click on the "Not Registered? Sign Up" link on the left of the G5 Homepage.
- Enter all requested information and click on "Continue," then "Submit." Bear in mind that the name and email address entered on the registration page by key parties must match the information G5 has on file for those individuals. This information can be found on the most recent GAN or the project application. After submitting the information, an Account Activation email will be sent to the user with additional instructions.
- Open the email and click on the "Activate My Account" link to complete the account activation process.
- Once the account has been activated, the user will be directed to log in to G5. Once the user has logged in to G5, the "Edit Profile" page is displayed. The user should scroll down to the "Available Types" field.
- Project directors and state directors must select the "Project Director" role from the list of "Available Types."
- Certifying officials and authorizing officials do not select any role from the list of "Available Types".

Additional guidance for new G5 users may be found under the Help Menu, located under the Main tab of the G5 home page, or under the Frequently Asked Questions section.

To ensure that the e-signature appears properly in the Adobe Reader software on individual computers, program officers choosing to sign a GAN electronically and grant recipients receiving an electronically signed GAN must ensure that their Adobe Acrobat or Adobe Reader preferences are set up for validating signatures. Otherwise, the signature box will show a question mark and the words "validity unknown." Setting up Adobe preferences for electronic signatures should only need to be done once. The steps to do this for most versions of Acrobat and Reader are below. The steps may vary for newer versions of the software.

- Open Adobe Reader or Adobe Acrobat
- Go to the "Edit" menu
- Select "Preferences"
- Select "Security"
- Click on "Advanced Preferences"
- Select the "Windows Integration" tab
- Ensure all checkboxes are checked
 - "Enable searching the Windows Certificate Store for certificates other than yours"
 - "Trust ALL root certificates in the Windows Certificate Store for the following operations:"Validating Signatures" and "Validating Certified Documents"