



*Certified Grants Management Specialist (CGMS)*

*Candidate Handbook*



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## **INTRODUCTION**

The National Grants Management Association (NGMA) is recognized throughout the grants management industry as the membership association leader providing tools for grants professionals to support and maintain high levels of grants management competency and to establish standards of excellence for grants managers.

NGMA provides comprehensive full lifecycle grants management training, professional certification, continuing professional education, resources, and a forum for networking for grants industry professionals. NGMA serves all levels of government (federal, state, local, tribal), nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education, and affiliated private sector organizations.

The CGMS credential is formal recognition of master level knowledge and specialty practice in the field of full lifecycle grants management. Maintaining the credential demonstrates to your peers your dedication to the highest standards of competency as a grants management professional.

Earning the CGMS credential enhances your professional reputation and represents your high level of commitment to continued professional development.

Pan Powered (PAN) provides technical assistance to NGMA and the CGMS Committee in the delivery of the computer based CGMS exam through a network of more than 400 testing centers throughout the U.S.

Please use this Candidate Handbook to understand the CGMS application, testing, and recertifying processes. If you have questions about this information, please contact NGMA at [info@ngma.org](mailto:info@ngma.org) or (202) 308-9443.

## **CGMS CREDENTIAL DESIGNATION**

Upon achieving a passing score (112 correct answers out of 150 questions) on the CGMS exam, candidates will be awarded the title of Certified Grants Management Specialist (CGMS). Candidates who have passed the CGMS exam may use the awarded designation as long as their certification remains current (three (3) years per renewal cycle).

## **THE CERTIFIED GRANTS MANAGEMENT SPECIALIST (CGMS) EXAM**

The computer-based CGMS exam is offered at over 400 proctored testing centers throughout the U.S.

The CGMS exam contains 150 multiple-choice questions. Candidates will be given three (3) hours to complete the exam.

## **FEE SCHEDULE**

### **Practice Test**

\$50 Practice Test (40 questions) (optional)

**CGMS Exam Fee** (includes non-refundable \$75 application fee)

\$500 CGMS Exam Fee for NGMA members (with discount code provided during application)

\$600 CGMS Exam Fee for non-members

**CGMS Retesting Fee** (for those who do not pass the exam on the first try and wish to retest after a 90 day waiting period)

\$175 CGMS Exam Retake Fee for NGMA members

\$250 CGMS Exam Retake Fee for non-members

### **CGMS Renewal Fee**

\$175 CGMS Renewal/Recertification Fee (upon 3-year renewal) for NGMA members

\$250 CGMS Renewal/Recertification Fee (upon 3-year renewal) for non-members

Fees must be paid in U.S. funds to NGMA by Visa, MasterCard, Discover, American Express or check. If paying by check, the check must be received and cleared before the exam can be scheduled.

## CGMS EXAM REGISTRATION

### Eligibility

To be eligible to sit for the CGMS exam, candidates must attest to having one of the following:

- a) **A minimum of a bachelor's degree** from an accredited institution of higher education or equivalent foreign degree that would allow you to qualify for a master's or doctoral degree program at an accredited U.S. college or university **AND a minimum of three (3) years** full-time\* grants management experience in the last 10 years\*\*; or
- b) **No college degree, BUT a minimum of five (5) years** full-time\* grants management experience within the last 10 years\*\*.

\*Full-time is defined as 32 hours per week or more.

\*\*Grants management experience includes any and all activities covered by the Grants Management Body of Knowledge, a summary of which is available on the NGMA website ([www.ngma.org](http://www.ngma.org)) and in Appendix B of this handbook.

### Application Process

Applications must be submitted prior to exam registration. Candidate eligibility to sit for an exam will be valid for 365 days from the date of application and payment. Qualified candidates are permitted three (3) additional testing attempts, within one year of initial testing. An exam retake fee must be paid for each retake testing attempt.

If a candidate does not take the exam for which he/she applied and paid for within 365 days of payment, the application will be closed and the candidate must submit a new application (and application fee) with the required supporting documentation and candidate fees.

An email reminder to schedule retesting will be issued to eligible candidates close to the end of the first 90-day wait-period. There will be no additional reminders.

You must apply with your legal name as it appears on your current government-issued photo identification that you will use to enter the proctored testing center to sit for the exam. Accepted forms of identification include valid driver's licenses, passports, and government-issued identification cards. Unacceptable forms of identification include gym memberships, warehouse memberships, school identification cards, credit cards, and identification with signature only (no photo).

The online application can be linked to through the NGMA website ([www.ngma.org](http://www.ngma.org)). You will be prompted to create an online profile that will serve as the basis for all interaction with PAN. Please record your username, password, and email address as used on the application for future reference and/or access to the system at a later time as NGMA does not have access to change this.

### Application Deadline

Candidates are strongly encouraged to submit a completed application at least seven (7) days prior to their desired testing date. Upon application processing, candidates will receive information about scheduling a testing appointment. Testing appointments must be made at least 48-hours in advance.

## Scheduling the CGMS Exam

Applications are accepted on a continuing basis. Upon approval of an application and a processed payment, an email notification of eligibility to sit for the exam and a Notice to Schedule on how to schedule a testing session will be sent to the email address on file.

The testing appointment must be made at least 48-hours prior to your preferred test date. Most testing sites have morning and afternoon testing sessions available. PAN will do its best to accommodate the requested test site and date. Seats are filled on a first-come, first-served basis, based on test center availability.

Candidates will receive a confirmation email including exact test location, date, and time via email. **The candidate must present this document at the site on the test date.**

## Exam Registration and Testing Process

1. Review this Candidate Handbook prior to scheduling your exam. Failure to follow the instructions can cause a delay of your exam registration. For questions regarding exam registration, contact NGMA at [info@ngma.org](mailto:info@ngma.org).
2. Complete the exam application and pay the appropriate application and exam fees. You must register with your full legal name as it appears on your current government-issued photo identification.
3. **IMPORTANT:** To receive important electronic correspondence about scheduling your testing session, ensure that your email program accepts mail from [info@ngma.org](mailto:info@ngma.org) and that NGMA always has your current email address on file. NGMA will not be responsible for incorrect contact information.
4. Schedule a testing session (see “Scheduling an Exam” above).
5. Candidates requesting special testing accommodations (see “Reasonable Accommodations” on page 7) under the Amended Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) must submit their test scheduling requests at least 30 days prior to their preferred testing dates.
6. You will be notified of the exact test location, date, and time via a confirmation email. **You must bring your printed confirmation with you to the test site.**  
  
**You must bring current government-issued photo identification with signature to the test site.** Acceptable forms of identification include driver’s licenses, passports, and government-issued identification cards. Unacceptable forms of identification include gym and/or warehouse memberships, school identification cards, credit cards, and identification with signature only. **If accepted identification is not brought to the testing site, it will be considered a “no-show” and a refund will not be given.**
7. Please arrive at the testing center at least 15 minutes prior to the start of the testing session. Those arriving late for a testing session may not be permitted to test.

8. Sit for the exam. The exam consists of 150 multiple-choice questions. You will be given three (3) hours to complete the exam. Upon completion of the exam, scores will be immediately emailed to the candidate. The email link will be available for 60 days after testing. **Results will not be given at the testing facility.**

### **Retaking the Exam**

Approximately 60 days after the initial testing date, candidates who do not pass the exam will receive a one-time email with information about retaking the CGMS exam. Candidates are allowed three (3) testing attempts in a 365 day period from the initial date testing. Each candidate must pay the retesting fee as listed on the fee schedule on page 3 of this Candidate Handbook.

### **Certificates**

After passing the CGMS exam, candidates will receive a personalized certificate, which is suitable for framing. Certificates are printed and mailed to passing candidates on a monthly basis.

### **Eligibility Audits**

A percentage of candidate applications will be audited to ensure compliance with the eligibility criteria. Applications for audit will be selected randomly. If your application is selected for audit, you will be provided with instructions on how to supply satisfactory documentation that supports your compliance with the eligibility criteria before your certificate is released.

### **National Registry**

NGMA will maintain a registry of current CGMS credential holders for public access on the NGMA website. The benefit of including your name on the registry is that your credential can be verified by your customer or employer. If you do not want your name listed, you must inform NGMA at [info@ngma.org](mailto:info@ngma.org).

### **Delay of Application**

After applying and paying for the CGMS exam, a candidate can ask for up to a one (1) year delay with an additional fee of \$100 related to illness, family emergency, military commitment, or other extenuating circumstances. This deferral must be requested within 15 days of the circumstance and the appropriate fee and supporting documentation must be submitted to NGMA at [info@ngma.org](mailto:info@ngma.org). If a testing appointment has already been scheduled, an additional \$50 cancellation fee will apply.

## **REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS**

Reasonable accommodations provide candidates with disabilities a fair and equal opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skill in the essential functions being measured by the exam. Reasonable accommodations are decided based on the individual's specific request, disability, documentation submitted, and appropriateness of the request. Reasonable accommodations do not include steps that fundamentally alter the purpose or nature of the exam.

Reasonable accommodations generally are provided for candidates who have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits that person in one or more major life activities (e.g., walking, talking, hearing, and performing manual tasks); have a record of such physical or mental impairment; or are regarded as having a physical or mental impairment.

To apply for reasonable accommodations, the candidate must request the accommodations in the application process and provide documentation that supports reasonable accommodations provided by an appropriate licensed professional on the professional's letterhead. The documentation must include a diagnosis of the disability and specific recommendations for accommodations.

Requests for accommodations must be submitted to NGMA at [info@ngma.org](mailto:info@ngma.org) at least 30 days prior to their preferred test date.



## EXAM INFORMATION

There are 150 multiple-choice questions on this exam. You will have three (3) hours to complete the exam.

The exam is based on the major areas of the full lifecycle of grants management including General Knowledge, Pre-Award Activities, Award Activities, Post-Award Activities and Audit/Closeout. See Appendix B for more detailed information about exam content.

## SAMPLE EXAM QUESTIONS

The following questions serve as samples of the question type and question content that could be found on the CGMS exam. These questions will not be repeated on the actual exam. Please see the answer key in Appendix C.

1. What is the standard for determining the reasonableness of Federal grant costs?
  - A. Whether or not the costs exceed those which would be incurred by a prudent person in like circumstances
  - B. Whether they are included in the budget
  - C. Whether they are documented
  - D. Whether they are allowable to the grant
2. Which Act allows for greater accessibility and participation of making regulations by all citizens?
  - A. Federal Register Act (FRA)
  - B. Negotiated Rulemaking Act (NRMA)
  - C. Administrative Procedures Act (APA)
  - D. All of the above
3. Which piece of legislation stipulates that Federal grant recipients **MUST** consider the potential impacts of their projects on ecological systems and natural resources?
  - A. Clean Air Act (CAA)
  - B. Environment Act (EA)
  - C. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
  - D. National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)
4. Which of the following entities is responsible for approving a Federal grantee's indirect cost rate proposal?
  - A. Cognizant agency
  - B. Federal government
  - C. U.S. Department of the Treasury
  - D. United States Congress
5. Within the terms and conditions of a Federal grant award, when is a progress report due?
  - A. Every month
  - B. Upon request
  - C. Only upon closeout
  - D. Not less than annually

6. Under Federal procurement procedures, some form of cost or price analysis shall be made for which of the following actions?
- A. Procurement actions of \$50,000 and over
  - B. Procurement actions of \$100,000 and over
  - C. Procurement actions of \$500,000 and over
  - D. Procurement actions that exceed the simplified acquisition threshold
7. Who is responsible for following up on a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) resulting from an audit finding?
- A. Auditor
  - B. Auditee
  - C. Cognizant agency
  - D. Subrecipient
8. What action always **REQUIRES** an amendment to a Federal award?
- A. Procurement of equipment
  - B. Change in the scope of the grant
  - C. Change in staff assigned to a grant
  - D. Change in the number of participating in a training
9. When does the closeout occur during the grants life cycle?
- A. After the grant funds are expended
  - B. After the grantee submits final reports
  - C. After the date of the final compliance and completion review
  - D. After the date of completion of the award (project end date)
10. Under Federal regulations, funds **MUST** be obligated by which of the following dates?
- A. Last day of the project period
  - B. Final submission date of the SF-425
  - C. End of the Federal fiscal year
  - D. Issue date of the grant

## OTHER EXAM INFORMATION

### Cancellations, Rescheduling, and No-shows

You may cancel or reschedule a testing session up to four (4) business days before your testing appointment through the online scheduling system. A \$50 non-refundable fee will apply.

Day of Testing Appointment:	Must Reschedule/Cancel By:
Monday	Tuesday of the previous week
Tuesday	Wednesday of the previous week
Wednesday	Thursday of the previous week
Thursday	Friday of the previous week
Friday	Monday of the current week
Saturday	Tuesday of the current week

Not appearing for a testing appointment or rescheduling the exam less than four (4) business days before a testing appointment results in a testing candidate being marked as a “no show.” Refunds of exam fees are not provided for no shows.

### Exam Rules

NGMA and PAN follow industry standard testing rules as follows:

#### Prohibited Items

Candidates are expressly prohibited from bringing the following items to the test site:

- Cameras, cell phones, optical readers, or other electronic devices that include the ability to photograph, photocopy, or otherwise copy test materials
- Notes, books, dictionaries, or language dictionaries
- Book bags or luggage
- iPods, MP3 players, headphones, or pagers
- Calculators, computers, PDAs, or other electronic devices with one or more memories
- Personal writing utensils (e.g., pencils, pens, and highlighters)
- Watches
- Food and beverage
- Hats, hoods, or other headgear

If PAN personnel determine that you have brought any such items to the test site, they may be demanded and held for an indefinite period of time by PAN testing personnel. NGMA reserves the right to review the memory of any electronic device that may be in your possession at the testing center to determine whether any test materials have been photographed or otherwise copied.

If our review determines that any test materials are in the memory of any such device, we reserve the right to delete such materials and/or retain them for subsequent disciplinary action. Upon completion of our review and any applicable deletions, we will return your device to you, but will not be responsible for the deletion of any materials that may result from our review, whether or not such materials are test materials.

By bringing any such device into the test site in contravention of our policies, you expressly waive any confidentiality or other similar rights with respect to your device, our review of the memory of your device and/or the deletion of any materials. PAN, the testing site, and the test administration staff are not liable for lost or damaged items brought to the testing center.

### **Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct**

By registering for the CGMS exam, candidates agree to the [Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct](#) published by the CGMS Committee, posted on the NGMA website ([www.ngma.org](http://www.ngma.org)).

### **RECERTIFICATION**

Candidates passing the CGMS exam are certified for a period of three (3) years. CGMS recertification assures employers and peers that you are knowledgeable about the most current processes and practices in the field of full lifecycle grants management.

The recertification cycle begins the day a candidate passes the CGMS exam and ends at the end of the same month, three (3) years later.

To qualify for recertification/renewal, you must submit a [certification](#) of a minimum of 60 Continuing Professional Education credits (CPEs)/Continuing Education Units (CEUs) and a renewal fee of \$175 for members and \$250 for non-members prior to your certification expiration. If your recertification application is received after your expiration date, there is a three (3) month grace period with an additional fee of \$100 paid at the time of the renewal being submitted. The continuing education credits must be valid (accredited) CPE/CEU credits that deal with subjects related to grants, financial management, audit control and the grant making process. According to generally accepted standards, 50 minutes of training equals one (1) CPE. General knowledge and ethics-related CPE/CEUs that are not related to grants will not be accepted. Applicants may accrue grant-related CPEs/CEUs from a variety of sources; for example, NGMA offers training at its Annual Grants Training Program, monthly training, and live webinars to help CGMS credential holders satisfy the continuing education requirement for recertification. Webcast CPEs will only be accepted if watched as a group with a SME facilitator.

## ***Appendix A: Recommended References***

Some resources that are recommended for review by candidates prior to taking the CGMS exam are as follows:

### U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circulars and Guidance for Grants and Agreements:

Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards.

Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and other Non-Profit Organizations (OMB Circular A-110) published at 2 CFR 215, including appendices.

Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State, Local, and Tribal Governments (OMB Circular A-102) published as a common rule by federal awarding agencies. For the complete version of OMB Circular A-102 common rule, see agency regulations, such as HHS at 45 CFR 92 and USDA at 7 CFR 3016. (Note: OMB Circular A-102, as maintained on OMB website, does not contain the full requirements of the OMB Circular A-102 common rule.)

Cost Principles for Educational Institutions (OMB Circular A-21) published at 2 CFR 220, including appendices.

Cost Principles for State, Local, and Indian Tribal Governments (OMB Circular A-87) published at 2 CFR 225, including appendices.

Cost Principles for Non-Profit Organizations (OMB Circular A-122) published at 2 CFR 230, including appendices.

Cost Principles for Commercial Organizations at 48 CFR part 31 (Federal Acquisition Regulation).

Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non-Profit Organizations (OMB Circular A-133) published at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/assets/a133/a133\\_revised\\_2007.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/assets/a133/a133_revised_2007.pdf).

OMB Circular A-133 Compliance Supplements published on OMB website:

- June 2012 Compliance Supplement
- March 2011 Compliance Supplement
- June 2010 Compliance Supplement
- March 2009 Compliance Supplement
- March 2008 Compliance Supplement
- Appendix A: Data Collection Form (Form SF-SAC)

OMB Guidelines to Agencies on Government-Wide Debarment and Suspension (Non-procurement) published at 2 CFR 180, including agencies' implementing regulations at 2 CFR Subtitle B.

OMB Guidance

### Other Grant Requirements:

Government-wide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace published at 2 CFR 182, including agencies' implementing regulations at 2 CFR Subtitle B.

Universal Identifier and Central Contractor Registration published at 2 CFR 25.

Reporting Subaward and Executive Compensation Information published at 2 CFR 170.

Award Term for Trafficking in Persons published at 2 CFR 175.

Award Terms for Assistance Agreements that include funds under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 published at 2 CFR 176.

Byrd Anti-Lobbying Amendment Common Rule, see agency codifications at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants\\_chart/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_chart/).

Federal Grants and Cooperative Agreement Act, 31 USC 6301.

Federal Cash Management Improvements Act, 31 USC 6501.

Single Audit Act, 31 USC 3751.

Government Performance and Results Act, 31 USC 1101 note.

Federal Managers Financial Integrity Act, Public Law 97-255.

Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Act, 31 USC 3301 note.

National Archives and Records Administration Efficiency Act, 44 USC 101 note.

## **Appendix B: CGMS Exam Classification System Summary**

### General Knowledge

- Grant Life Cycle
- Uniform Administrative Requirements
- Cost Principles
- Order of Precedence of Laws, Regulations, Policies, Guidance
- Federal Appropriation Process
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Risk Assessment

### Pre-Award

- Choosing Appropriate Funding Instrument
- Federal Funding Opportunity Notices
- Application Requirements
- Types of Grants
- Applicant Evaluation

### Award

- Notice of Award and Acceptance
- Contractual Terms
- Lobbying Restrictions
- Public Policy Requirements
- Vendor and Sub-recipient Distinctions
- Financial and Performance Reports
- Grant File Contents
- Subrecipient monitoring
- Indirect Cost Rate Agreements / Cost Allocation Plans

### Post-Award

- Procurement Standards
- Financial Management Standards
- Property Management Standards
- Internal Controls
- Electronic Payment Systems
- Prior Approval Requirements
- Audits and Resolution Process
- Debarment
- Enforcement
- Liquidation of Obligations

### Closeout/Audit

- Record Retention Requirements
- Final Reporting Requirements
- Access to Records

## Appendix C: Sample Question Answer Key

Question #	Domain	Answer
1	General Knowledge	A
2	General Knowledge	D
3	Pre-Award Activities	C
4	Pre-Award Activities	A
5	Award Activities	D
6	Award Activities	D
7	Post-Award Activities	C
8	Post-Award Activities	B
9	Audit/Closeout	D
10	Audit/Closeout	A



## ***Appendix D: Exam Preparation Tips***

### **How to Study**

NGMA encourages candidates to prepare for the exam by using resources such as those listed in Appendix A of this Candidate Handbook.

Plan your review methods well in advance of the exam. Think about the study method that is best for you (e.g., individual review, study group, class) and the types of materials that are most helpful (e.g., textbooks, audio or video programs, outlines, memory aids). It may also be helpful to use materials given to you during training activities related to your work.

### **Managing Test Anxiety**

A little anxiety regarding test taking can be helpful because it stimulates and motivates you to perform at your best; however, severe anxiety can hinder test performance. If you know that you frequently experience severe test anxiety, consider preparing yourself for the exam by developing coping mechanisms to make your tension work for you. In addition, the practice test is a great tool to see if you are ready to sit for the exam.

Before the day of the exam, visualize and rehearse the testing situation. Imagine yourself taking the exam with a positive attitude and focused but calm behavior.

Take measures to reduce your stress during the exam. Use deep-breathing techniques, and be sure to stretch your muscles periodically. Such exercises can reduce both physical and mental stress. If necessary, take a few minutes to imagine a calm, pleasant scene, and repeat positive phrases.

Do not let the comments or behavior of testing personnel or other examinees make you anxious. As examinees are taking different versions of the exam, examinees will finish at different times – some finishing very early, others taking the full three (3) hours. Examinees that finish more quickly than you may not perform any better than you. Everyone works at his or her own speed. Some of the best test performers routinely use the total allocated time. Remember that (a) there is no limit to the number of examinees who can receive passing scores, (b) there is no bonus for completing the exam early, and (c) you are not competing with anyone else.

Eating well, avoiding too much alcohol, and maintaining a regular sleep pattern for several days before the exam will help you to be physically prepared. Also, on the day before you take the test, collect all the supplies you will need and choose comfortable clothing. Knowing that you are prepared for the test will help to reduce your anxiety.

Finally, your best method for controlling your anxiety is to feel prepared for the test. Designing a study plan well in advance will help you get ready.

## Tips for Taking the Exam

- Budget your time well. You will have three (3) hours to complete 150 multiple choice questions. You will want to complete more than half (75) in less than half the time. This is because you will want extra time after completing the full exam to review questions you either skipped or questions you may have marked for review. Also allow time so that every hour you can take a minute or so to relax your eyes and stretch your neck and hand muscles.
- Read each question carefully, focusing on what is being asked. If you are uncertain about the answer but nevertheless want to give a tentative response at the time, mark the test question to indicate that you want to review the test question and your answer if time allows. Go back to questions marked in this manner after completing the entire test.
- Read all options before selecting your answer. Always select the best choice.
- Do not overanalyze or try to “read into” a question. Questions are not written to be tricky. Do not assume additional information beyond what is given in the test question. All information necessary to answer the question will be given in the text of the question or scenario.
- Remember that this is a national test. The questions will be based upon an accepted knowledge base. Choose options that you know to be correct in any setting.
- If there are questions including the words “not,” “except,” or “least,” answer with particular care because you will be looking for the exception. These questions involve a reversal of your usual thought patterns.
- Pay close attention to key words such as “best,” “most,” “primary,” or “usually.” These words indicate that other options may at times be correct, but given the wording or situation in the test question, you must judge which option is the best.
- Skip difficult questions and come back to them later. Questions on the test are not ordered by difficulty (i.e., they do not go from easiest to hardest). Also, content areas (the domains) and topics are addressed randomly in questions throughout the test.
- When guessing, use the process of elimination. Treat each option as a true or false statement, and eliminate those that you would not select. Narrow your choices and then make an educated guess.
- Answer every question, because there is no penalty for guessing. Go through the entire test, answering the questions you believe you know and skipping the ones you do not. Leave time at the end of the testing period to go back to the questions you skipped or want to review. If you are running out of time, leave a minute or so at the end to complete all of the blank questions randomly. Remember, you have a 25% probability of answering a question correctly by chance alone, so don’t miss any!
- If reading English is difficult for you because English is not your primary language, maximize your time by reading and answering all the shorter questions first. After completing all of the short questions, go back and attempt to answer the longer questions.
- Review the suggested resources listed in Appendix A of this handbook.