Acquiring Public Grants

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INTRODUCTION

The Compassion Capital Fund (CCF), administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, provided capacity building grants to expand and strengthen the role of nonprofit organizations in their ability to provide social services to low-income individuals. Between 2002 and 2009, CCF awarded 1,277 grants, and the CCF National Resource Center provided training and technical assistance to all CCF grantees. *Strengthening Nonprofits: A Capacity Builder's Resource Library* is born out of the expansive set of resources created by the National Resource Center during that time period, to be shared and to continue the legacy of CCF's capacity building work.

Strengthening Nonprofits: A Capacity Builder's Resource Library contains guidebooks and e-learnings on the following topics:

1. Conducting a Community Assessment

2. Delivering Training and Technical Assistance

3. Designing and Managing a Subaward Program

4. Going Virtual

5. Identifying and Promoting Effective Practices

6. Leading a Nonprofit Organization: Tips and Tools for Executive Directors and Team Leaders

7. Managing Crisis: Risk Management and Crisis Response Planning

8. Managing Public Grants

9. Measuring Outcomes

10. Partnerships: Frameworks for Working Together

11. Sustainability

12. Working with Consultants

Who is the audience for *Strengthening Nonprofits: A Capacity Builder's Resource Library*?

Anyone who is interested in expanding the capacity of nonprofit services in their community – from front line service providers to executives in large intermediary organizations – will benefit from the information contained in this resource library. The National Resource Center originally developed many of these resources for intermediary organizations, organizations that were granted funds by CCF to build the capacity of the faith-based and community-based organizations (FBCOs) they served. As such, the majority of the resources in *Strengthening Nonprofits: A Capacity Builder's Resource Library* support intermediary organizations in their capacity building efforts. However, funders of capacity building programs (Federal program offices and foundations) and the nonprofit community (including FBCOs) at large will also find these resources helpful. In addition, individuals working to build capacity within a program or an organization will be able to use these resources to support their efforts to implement change and make improvements.

The ***Acquiring Public Grants*** guidebook will be helpful to any organization or coalition of organizations that wants to learn more about how to find and apply for public grants.

Who developed the ***Acquiring Public Grants*** guidebook?

The guidebook was originally developed for the Compassion Capital Fund's Demonstration Program as a technical assistance resource. It was updated in 2010 for the Department of Health and Human Services by the National Resource Center.

OVERVIEW

The Federal government awards billions of dollars every year through more than 1,500 different programs. The amount of available funds has significantly increased since February of 2009, when President Obama signed into law the $787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Grants.gov, the nation's premier website for announcing and applying for Federal funds noted in its 2009 annual report that the site received more than 16 million visitors and helped to process over 300,000 electronic applications for funding, effectively connecting organizations with access to $500 billion in awards.

With so many available funds and a wide variety of funding opportunities, the process of seeking and acquiring funding can seem confusing and overwhelming. However, assistance is available to help organizations successfully navigate the process. Spending time learning about the types and sources of funding available and becoming familiar with the language and processes of grant acquisition can make your efforts more efficient and effective.

By reading this particular volume in the *Capacity Builder's Resource Library*, nonprofits and community-based organizations will learn key concepts of effective Federal grant research and proposal writing practices, including:

- How to access and use grant research tools

- Finding relevant Federal programs and grant opportunities

- Understanding the Federal grant solicitation and award process

- The elements of a Federal grant proposal

- How grant proposals are evaluated

This guidebook will also help organizations answer the following key questions:

- How do I learn about grant funding agencies and opportunities?

- Am I ready and prepared to seek Federal grants?

- What do faith-based organizations need to know about Federal funding?

- How does the Federal grants solicitation and acquisition process work?

- What is the grant writing process?

- How do I organize and prepare for the grant proposal writing process?

- What are the characteristics of a successful grant proposal?

- How can my organization improve its chances of success and better understand what grant reviewers look for in an applicant?

Federal Grants Are Different

While some elements and best practices are common to almost all types of grant seeking, there are certain distinct and unique aspects of government grants. Many private sources, foundations, and corporations require brief proposals of only a few pages; they have minimal guidelines and are very specifically focused. Comparatively, Federal grant sources—agencies and departments—have multiple goals, specific program requirements, regulations, and eligibility limitations. Furthermore, they require compliance with a number of

government-wide standards. That is why it is important to do your homework and familiarize yourself with the various Federal assistance programs and their specific requirements.

Types of Federal Assistance

There are two basic types of Federal assistance—**"discretionary" grants** and **"formula" or "block" grants**. Discretionary grants are given by a Federal agency directly to organizations to provide services—for example, the Department of Labor may award a grant to an organization that is assisting individuals in the job search process. These grants are usually awarded competitively in response to published program announcements and requests for proposals (**RFPs**) or requests for applications (**RFAs**). These grants are also typically project-specific and time-limited.

The Federal government also puts money into the hands of other state, county, and city governments that then make grants to local organizations. These are known as "formula" or "block" grants since they are based on specific calculations to determine amounts that are awarded in a block or lump sum to the state, county, or city. These grants may be made to units of government to carry out the missions of particular Federal initiatives and programs. Unlike discretionary grants, formula or block grants may be awarded for continuing activities and are not limited to a specific project. Contact or visit the websites of your state, county, or city government for information on these resources.

Grant Research Resources

Grants.gov is currently considered the premier site for up-to-date news on funding announcements. The site aimed to improve government services to the public by supporting projects that lead to productivity and performance gains. Grants.gov maintains a searchable database of grant opportunities from twenty-six contributing agencies, offers regular e-mails regarding available funds, maintains an online submission system for participating agency grant opportunities, and provides a number of training tools and informational resources related to the grant application process. Today, Grants.gov functions as a central repository for information on more than 1,000 grant programs that distribute nearly $500 billion annually.[1]

The Federal government has many grant research sources available to help organizations. In 2005, the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, now known as the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships, created Federal Funds for Organizations That Help Those in Need, a 90-page listing of more than 170 programs operated by many Federal agencies, including the Departments of Agriculture (**USDA**), Commerce, Education (**ED**), Health and Human Services (**HHS**), Housing and Urban Development (**HUD**), Justice (**DOJ**), and Labor (**DOL**), as well as the U.S. Agency for International Development (**USAID**). Though the list references funding opportunities from 2005, many of the programs referenced throughout the report still exist today.

The Federal government also maintains the **Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA)**, a grants resource directory that enables you to search topics by program, agency, deadline, or type of assistance. You can also search the database to find assistance programs for which you are eligible and those that meet your requirements. For a step-by-step guide on how to use the CFDA website, refer to the CFDA.gov Public User Guide.

The CFDA website also contains information to help you write proposals, although you cannot apply for grants on this site. In addition to Grants.gov and the CFDA website, keep these other important resources in mind:

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1   Grants.gov, "Find. Apply. Succeed. Annual Report 2009," http://www07.grants.gov/assets/AnnualReport2009.pdf.

- *Guidance for Faith-based Organizations* — Information about programs for faith-based organizations can be found on the <u>White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships' website</u>. The Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships coordinates Centers for Faith-based and Community Initiatives within twelve different Federal departments, including the USDA, Commerce, ED, HHS, Homeland Security, HUD, DOJ, DOL, and Veterans Affairs, as well as the Corporation for National and Community Service, USAID, and the U.S. Small Business Administration. To learn more about these Federal centers, refer to Appendix A of this guidebook. These centers can help faith-based and community organizations access topical resources and opportunities.

- *<u>Guidance to Faith-Based and Community Organizations on Partnering with the Federal Government</u>* — This booklet is another good resource for a newly developed faith-based organization. It answers frequently asked questions about faith-based organizations' rights and limitations with Federal funding and provides an overview of the Federal grants process, offering guidance about the unique needs of faith-based organizations regarding seeking and managing Federal grants.

- *State and Local Grant Opportunities* — The offices and websites of your state, county, or city are good places to start learning more about local resources; they can refer you to the appropriate agency or department. Since governments are required to publish RFPs or RFAs, local newspapers should also be monitored for notices of grant opportunities. Additionally, state, county, and city governments will often hold informational **technical assistance** workshops in local communities where you can meet and talk to grant program staff. These workshops are advertised and open to the public.

- *<u>Appendix IV of the 2009 CFDA</u>* — This resource contains listings of regional and state offices and contact information for grant-making Federal agencies.

What Type of Funding Is Right for You?

If you are just starting out, seeking funds from state or local sources may be the best choice. It may be easier to get needed technical assistance from local program staff familiar with your organization and community. On the other hand, if you believe that your organization has the capacity, staff, skills, and support necessary to seek funding from the Federal government, then take the time to fully prepare for the process. It can be complex and require significant energy and concentrated effort. Whatever source you decide to pursue, research is important.

The research process will help you:

- Learn about what is available

- Determine if you are eligible to apply

- Assess whether your organization is able to meet the requirements of the grant program

ASSESSING YOUR READINESS TO APPLY FOR FUNDING

Do You Meet Minimum Eligibility Requirements for Federal Funding?

Most discretionary grant programs provide assistance to organizations, not to individuals. (To learn more about programs and assistance available to individuals visit <u>http://www.govbenefits.gov</u>.) Federal funding announcements will indicate what type of organization is eligible to apply and indicate eligibility requirements.

Before applying for funds, many organizations will seek to acquire designation as a **nonprofit organization** in the state where they operate. The first step is to apply for and receive designation as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization from the Internal Revenue Service (**IRS**). This is the Federal tax code designation for nonprofit, charitable organizations that seek donations or grant funding. Articles of Incorporation, bylaws, and a functioning board of directors are also typically required to be designated as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.

Receiving and maintaining status as a nonprofit organization allows you to receive donations that are tax deductible for your donors. It also makes you eligible to receive grant funding from both public and private sources. Establishing your status as a nonprofit organization can be a critical step in preparing to seek Federal grants.

Each state has its own requirements for incorporation and nonprofit designations. In some states, the Secretary of State's office manages this process. Contact your state government to learn how to complete the process.

OBTAINING NONPROFIT STATUS: WHERE TO FIND HELP ONLINE

✓ **Internal Revenue Service** — On the Federal level, the IRS provides guidance and answers frequently asked questions on the process of getting 501(c)(3) designation.

✓ **Center for Nonprofit Management** — CNM's free guidebook, Get Ready, Get Set, provides information about starting a nonprofit organization.

✓ **The Foundation Center** — The Center offers an online tutorial on establishing a nonprofit organization.

In addition to meeting the minimum nonprofit organization requirements, you must also determine if you meet the specific Federal program requirements to receive grant assistance, and if your program idea qualifies for funding. For example, some programs may require applicants to have a minimum number of years of experience working with a specific population or providing a particular service. Other **grantee** programs may only accept applications from applicants who have never before received Federal funds. In some cases, programs require collaboration and partnerships among several organizations.

Each Federal agency and program has its own eligibility requirements. It is a good idea to identify the agency that funds the type of work you are interested in and learn as much as possible about its programs and the types of organizations it funds. Access its website, research its programs, and monitor its press releases, notices, program announcements, and RFPs or RFAs.

You can research agency, department, or program funding history through USAspending.gov, a website that documents the type and amount of award, as well as identifies the organization receiving the award. The Office of Management and Budget (**OMB**) is required under the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 to log all Federal awards at USAspending.gov.

These sources will provide you with information about:

- Who can apply (eligibility)
- What partners you will need to identify, if any

- Target population (the group of people to be served)

- The amount of grants and what you might need to do to prepare to apply

- If the grant program will further your mission or purpose

As mentioned above, Federal, state, and local agencies often offer technical assistance workshop opportunities to talk to program staff directly. At these workshops, funding agencies generally offer information about eligibility, program goals and objectives, administrative requirements, and compliance. Attending a technical assistance workshop can be a critical step in preparing your organization to apply for assistance. Announcements of workshops are included in grant notices, press releases, newspaper advertisements, and RFPs. If a technical assistance workshop is offered for a grant program you are interested in, attend it if possible, or at least request the workshop materials so that you can review them at a later date.

Some funding announcements and Federal agencies will also accept questions about the funding opportunity. This question period allows potential applicants to clarify sections of the application and fine-tune their approach. After the question period is complete, the granting agency will often compile the questions and answers and post them on their website for all applicants to reference.

If you still have questions about a program, contact the agency's program office if permitted. Some funding announcements will identify program officers at Federal, state, and local agencies who are available to work with potential applicants, answer questions, and discuss program requirements. Refer to the contact information listed in brochures, on websites, in program announcements, and in RFPs.

Assessing Your Goals and Motivations for Seeking Federal Funding

The first question you must ask is whether or not the program funding you are seeking is consistent with your organization's mission and goals. Are you seeking funding to carry out your mission? Or are you simply motivated by the availability of the funding? In other words, are you "chasing the money"? It is very difficult to make a convincing case that an agency should fund your program if you have not had a previous commitment to the program area. Undertaking a program that is inconsistent with your mission could harm your organization by distracting it from its primary work. Consider the following questions:

- Do you have an ongoing commitment to and an established track record of serving the grant program's target population?

- Will your board of directors support a decision to apply for the grant?

- How will getting the grant impact your organization now and in the future?

- Are you willing and able to find ways to sustain the program after funding ends? Is this a long-term service commitment or a short-term effort to accomplish a specific, time-limited goal?

Discuss your interest in public funding with key stakeholders, including board members, staff, clients, other organizations doing similar work, and existing funders. All parties should be committed to the decision to seek funding since you will need their support for your application.

In addition to the issue of whether or not the funding is consistent with your organization's mission, you and your stakeholders should address the following issues:

- Will accepting public funds change the character of your organization?

- How will public funds limit or expand the services you provide today?

- Does your staff have the skills, education, and experience to deliver the proposed program?

- Do you have the capacity to manage a grant if you are successful in your application?

- Can you manage the growth that may occur as a result of additional resources?

- Are you vulnerable to depending on public funds?

- How will your existing funders perceive the acceptance of public funds?

- Does the grant require collaboration or partners? If so, can you identify and work productively with them?

Assessing the Need for Services

Make sure that you have thoroughly researched the need for the program in your **community.** A good resource for demographic data about target populations is the U.S. Census Bureau website. Contact state and local government departments and agencies that administer programs for your target population to help you determine whether there are unmet needs in your geographic and program area of interest. You should also contact others who are providing services similar to those you propose, or who serve the same population you want to work with, to learn more about service needs. Building relationships with these other service providers will prove helpful as you develop partnerships to support the grant-seeking process.

All proposals must include a statement of the problem or an assessment of the need for the proposed program, documented and supported by statistical data. If the program you are considering is already being done locally, it may be difficult to justify your program to funders unless you can document the need for another program, distinguish yours from others, and indicate how it will be different and more effective.

What Will Your Proposed Program Do?

Funding proposals must clearly set out the needs of the population to be served, the program goals, a means to accomplish these goals (program activities), and how progress or program impact (**outcomes**) will be measured. You must be able to logically explain what your program will do in terms of activities and outcomes.

Activities are the actions that will be taken. Outcomes are the changes that will take place as a result of program activities. It may help to develop a **logic model** that graphically lays out your organization's activities and outcomes. When applying for Federal funds, you must understand and clearly articulate how you will evaluate/measure your program outcomes and explain how the proposed measures relate to your activities.

Questions about program objectives/using funds

- Will you use funds to provide direct services?

- Do you need help building the capacity of your organization and/or others to serve your target population?

- Will you be starting a new program or expanding an existing one?

- Will your grant request fund a collaborative effort or a single agency?

Considering these questions will help you clarify your goals, narrow your search for assistance, and determine the type of program and funding for which you will be eligible.

GRANT ACQUISITION PROCESS

Finding the Right Grant Sources

Once you've identified which agencies serve your client population and share an interest in the problem you want to address, you are ready to begin searching for specific funding opportunities.

All Federal grant opportunities must be announced to the public through the Federal Register. Many of these grant opportunities will also be featured on Grants.gov. In addition to being referred to as RFPs and RFAs, these opportunities may also be called program announcements, notices of funds availability (**NOFAs**), or solicitations for grant applications (**SGAs**). The grant announcements will contain information about who is eligible, how to apply, how to get the grant applications package, the grant requirements, the proposal content requirements, due dates, and how to contact the agency for additional information.

Examining the Grant Announcement

Though different agencies and programs have different grant announcement and **solicitation** formats, many typically include at least the following elements:[2]

- *Agency Name* — identifies the department, agency, and program putting out the notice and the purpose of the notice

- *CFDA Number* — the identifying number in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance

- *Summary* —an overview of the program and services being sought by the solicitation

- *Dates* —identifies the deadline for submitting an application (response to the notice) and describes the methods of submitting the application

- *Instructions for Submittal* — identifies the process for submittal and delivery of the application

- *"For further information" Paragraph* — provides information on how to obtain forms/applications and who to contact with any questions

- *Supplementary Information* — the most substantial portion of the announcements, which generally contains the following sections:

    - Background — includes the authority for the grant funding, the purpose of the program, the size of the grants to be awarded, and any definitions specific to the program

    - Eligibility — defines who can apply for the grants

    - Application Requirements — lists the elements required for the application to be reviewed. There are two parts: the technical proposal (program) and the cost proposal (budget).

    - Evaluation Criteria and Selection Process — describes the information that must be contained in the technical and cost proposals and the maximum points that may be awarded for each criterion during the rating process

    - Deliverables — requirements for grant recipients to fulfill this specific grant, such as formal reports, studies, or progress reports (NOTE: Not all SGAs or RFPs have this element.)

    - Assurances and Certifications — lists the agency regulations and government-wide requirements that are applicable to the different categories of grant recipients, as well as any additional grant-specific requirements

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2   JVA Consulting, "Reading the RFP: What to Look For," http://www.jvaconsulting.com/file.php/595/How+to+read+RFP2. pdf.

After you have found the program and funding source that meets your needs, read the program announcement or RFP carefully and familiarize yourself with all of the requirements. Once you decide to apply, you may even want to create a comprehensive checklist to ensure that your application is complete. Also, review any associated rules and regulations that are referenced in the RFP or announcement. You will need to refer to the applicable sections of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) as published in the funding announcement. This is where the government-wide and agency grant requirements are published.

Knowing the Program's History

It may also be helpful to research the funding agency's grant history to help you understand the agency's interests and what kinds of programs and which organizations have been funded in the past. This kind of information may be listed in the "Announcements of Grants Awarded" section of Federal agency websites. While it may take some time to work through the process, you may be able to request copies of successful proposals from the program officer under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). All Federal agencies are required under FOIA to disclose records, with some exceptions, that are requested in writing by any person. Each agency has a point of contact responsible for responding to such requests. The FOIA points of contact can be found on their respective agency's website.

As mentioned earlier, you can also research the funding history of an agency or department through USAspending.gov. OMB is required to use USAspending.gov to report:

- The name of the organization receiving the award

- The award amount

- Information on the award, including transaction type, funding agency, etc.

- Location of the entity receiving the award

- A "unique identifier" of the entity receiving the award

Reviewing the agency's funding history compiled at USAspending.gov can help your organization identify award trends and better assess whether the funding opportunity is something that is in line with your organization's mission.

Making the Decision to Apply

Once you have identified the community needs and have determined your eligibility for funds that are applicable to address those needs, you should secure the commitment of your key stakeholders such as board members, contributors, volunteers, advisors, clients and staff, potential **partners,** and community supporters. Organizations that are in the process of making the commitment to proceed must explore the following key issues:

1. **Staff Capacity to Complete the Application**

   Successful grant writing is a time- and labor-intensive job. It requires full-time attention and the ability to access, review, organize, and translate a lot of information into a concise and coherent document. You will need strong writing skills, financial planning and budgeting skills, program design expertise, and research and evaluation skills to fully respond to the application requirements and increase the possibilities of writing a successful application.

If you are new to grant writing, consider attending a workshop or taking a grant writing class, which are often offered through local community colleges and other organizations. The Grantsmanship Center offers online grant writing assistance to organizations and conducts classes in communities across the country.

The Grantmaking School of Grand Valley State University's Johnson Center for Philanthropy also offers courses and customized education to help grant makers better understand how to analyze and respond to grant opportunities.

You can also visit the CFDA website for step-by-step instructions on developing and writing grant proposals.

State, county, and city governments may also have resources available to assist organizations in seeking grants. If you do not have the necessary skills within your organization, you may need to seek the help of a professional grant writer or other consultants in order to write a successful grant application.

2. **Hiring a Consultant**

Hiring someone outside of your organization may be a good choice if you or your staff lack the time, experience, or expertise to produce a well-researched and well-written proposal. Contracting with a consultant may be a better, less-expensive option than trying to hire a new staff person to prepare the application. The right consultant can enable your organization to seek more funding from a wider variety of sources and free your staff to continue to carry out their regular duties. Also, a consultant who is new to the organization can provide a valuable, objective viewpoint. Here are some tips on hiring consultants:

- Local funders and other agencies can provide information about consultants in your community who have done similar work. One such example is your local chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP), an organization of professional fundraisers and grant writers that operate according to a set of ethical principles and rules. The American Association of Grant Professionals (AAGP) is another good resource to reference when hiring a consultant to assist with grant writing. It also maintains a code of ethics and regional chapters.

- Be clear about what you want the consultant to do. Will he or she primarily work with one person or a team of people? Will the consultant write the entire document or will others have writing responsibilities? Do not enter into an agreement until all parties are clear about expectations.

- Interview several consultants to find the right "fit" for your organization and an individual with whom you are comfortable. The consultation process will be much more fruitful if you have a good relationship with the consultant.

- Make sure your board of directors and organizational leadership support the hiring of a consultant and are willing to make the financial investment.

- Be clear about deadlines and other specifics. It is important to collect staff input throughout the process and to have a periodic internal review process. Make sure that this is clear upfront and incorporate it into the consulting agreement.

- Understand the consultant's fees and payment requirements, as consultants have a variety of ways of charging for their services (e.g., an hourly fee, by project, or a retainer). Regardless, be sure that you understand the basis of the fee and when and how it must be paid.

- Remember that **contingency fees** are generally not a good idea and are usually unallowable costs. AFP's ethics statement notes that association members should not be compensated based on a percentage of funds raised. Most funders will not fund this cost as part of the grant.

- The consultant is not responsible for determining your program concept, program design, or objectives. They can help with researching the program, determining best practices, defining the approach and presentation, finding statistics to support your case, and perhaps designing your evaluation, but they cannot determine your target population, staff requirements, or budget. You must develop this information.

- You are responsible for the relationship with the funding agency. The consultant cannot represent your interests to the funding agency.

- Provide complete information to the consultant in a timely fashion so the consultant can meet your deadlines.

- You are responsible for reviewing and approving the proposal and implementing it. Work with your consultant in the writing process to make sure that what is written is what you can deliver.

For more information you can refer to "Tips for Hiring a Consultant," posted on the Free Management Library website.

3. **A Team Approach**

If you don't hire a consultant, it is generally not advisable to have just one individual complete the application process. Having one person do everything—planning, writing, reviewing, and editing—may result in a one-dimensional proposal. There may be gaps in the proposal that a single planner/writer/reviewer may not see.[3]

The one-person approach can also lead to implementation difficulties. Typically, the person who writes the grant is not the sole person responsible for implementing the program. Conflict can arise if those responsible for implementing have not been involved in writing the proposal.

Therefore, it is generally best to have a team work with a writer/editor on the proposal. This approach takes many skills, ideas, and perspectives into account and results in a well-rounded proposal. A single writer/editor working with a team can ensure a consistent writing style while also covering all of the important aspects of the program.

Your team should include your organization's top-level staff, those responsible for implementation, any organizations who will serve as partners in delivering the program, the person responsible for evaluation, and the individual(s) responsible for financials and budget development. The team can provide information, ideas, and perspectives that will support the grant writer's efforts and can also review the proposal as it is developed to help ensure that it is concise, logical, accurate, complete, and realistic.

MORE HELPFUL RESOURCES ON GRANT WRITING

✓ **HUD Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships** — includes links to a variety of grant writing and capacity building resources for organizations

✓ **The Minnesota Council on Foundations** — this regional membership association of foundations and giving programs maintains a number of web-based resources for grant seekers

✓ **The Office of Research at the University of Pittsburgh** —offers a list of resources from a number of government departments and agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Institutes of Health

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3   Ralph T. Nelsen, "A Few Ideas about Pursuing Federal Funding," Portland, OR: Columbia Education Center, http://www.col-ed.org/Funding/ideas.html.

If you have identified the funding source that is consistent with your mission, secured the support of your stakeholders, and identified the team members who will put the application together, you are now ready to move forward with making a proposal for public funding.

PLANNING YOUR PROPOSAL

The first step is to request an application package. Instructions will be included in the program announcement, RFP, or RFA. The application package will contain detailed information necessary to write the proposal and provide the basis for your planning. If no application package is specifically offered, the RFP or RFA itself will provide very detailed instructions for your application.

It is important to develop a central program idea or approach for your proposal. Creating a four- or five-page proposal abstract or concept paper to organize your thoughts and help you think through your ideas can be helpful. Explain how your program will create the result you and the funding agency seek and how you will measure success. This will become your proposal mission statement.

Plan ahead. Usually a very short time period exists between the date that the grant program is announced and the deadline for submittal (typically 45 days). It is difficult for inexperienced applicants to make an organizational assessment and put together a quality application in this short time period. This is one of the reasons that it is a good idea to monitor grant sources regularly—the earlier you learn about the availability of grant funding, the better prepared you can be.

Keep in mind that the grant cycle is an annual process; many of the grant announcements are made in the spring or summer following the Federal budget approval process in the fall. You may want to use one year's grant application cycle as a "dry run" for the next year's grant competition. In that case, request an application package (even if the deadline has passed) to become familiar with the process and requirements. However, be aware that grant solicitations can change significantly from year to year.

The following planning steps can make writing your proposal easier:

- *Organize your team.* The team should be involved in assessing needs, developing the proposal concept, determining the nature of your program and how it will be conducted, setting the timetable for the project, establishing program staffing and volunteer needs, and making final decisions regarding feasibility. The team will provide support to the primary writer and help with reviewing and editing the proposal.

- *Develop an evaluation plan.* It is important to ensure that the design and the budget allow for the evaluation function. The Government Performance Results Act of 1993 (**GPRA**) mandates increased accountability and performance-based management by Federal agencies and grantees. Evaluation determines whether your program has produced the outcomes expected and measures the impact those outcomes have had on the target population or condition your program proposes to address. Local universities are a good resource for help with evaluation.

- *Create a proposal outline based on the RFP.* The RFP will contain specific, detailed information about the content of proposals and extensive discussions of the issues to be addressed, program priorities, the format for the proposal, and what should be emphasized. Pay particular attention to the evaluation criteria, selection process, and application contents (what the application must contain to be considered). Create an outline based on the RFP and develop a checklist to ensure that you have included all

necessary items. The evaluation criteria and selection process should be used to guide the development of the *substance* of your proposal. The reviewer will rate your proposal and award points based on these elements. The number of points allocated to each part of the proposal is often listed in the RFP or RFA.

- **Gather resources.** These should include research sources, statistics, and other information to support the state of the problem/need and build the case for your program. A review of current literature will be required to document your familiarity with current research findings and support your approach to working with your target population. Sources of statistics include Federal agency websites, state and local government websites, the U.S. Census Bureau, local universities, and other agencies who work with your target population or problem.

- **Line up your support.** Funders often require evidence of collaboration or local support for proposals, i.e., letters from elected officials, local agencies, and program collaborators exhibiting support for your program in your local community. You may also be required to include memorandums of agreement outlining how your organization will work with others to carry out the proposed work. It may take time to secure these documents, so start early.

- **Understand matching funds or cost sharing.** Some grant applications require matching funds, also referred to as **cost sharing**. Expect to provide documentation in your application that demonstrates that you have secured matching resources. Letters from those who have committed funds, including donors or other funding agencies, will often suffice.

- **Create a work plan.** Make assignments for team members to help gather support letters, provide partnership agreements, solicit bids for equipment, and perform a variety of other tasks.

- **Create a schedule.** Agree on the timeline and dates for completion of assignments based on the application deadline. Schedule times for the team to meet throughout the writing process to allow all involved to plan their work and be prepared with assignments. Allow for regular reviews of the team's progress and provide enough time to put all the pieces together and "package" the proposal.

- **Free up staff time.** Staff time will be required for a variety of tasks, from program design to packaging the proposal. Make sure to plan for these tasks and make allowances for regular work to continue.

- **Gather attachments and fill out forms early.** All Federal grant applications require a standard Application for Federal Assistance form (**SF-424**) or some variation of it. This form provides basic information about your organization and the proposed program. Other forms, certifications, and assurances may also be required. Review the RFP and application package carefully to ensure that you have the right forms and understand how to complete them. Grants.gov provides links to all of the approved standard SF-424 Federal program forms. Gather organizational and other information needed for attachments to the proposal, e.g., bylaws, board resolutions, letters of support, resumes of key personnel, job descriptions, reports, and other support documents.

- **Start working on the budget.** Though the final budget cannot be constructed until the proposal is completed and all component costs are identified, identify key budget items and begin developing your budget justification as soon as possible. You must be able to support all proposed expenditures and relate them to the goals, objectives, and activities of your program.

See Appendix C for a Sample Grant Writing Work Plan/Checklist that can be modified to meet the needs of your project.

WRITING THE PROPOSAL

What Grant Reviewers Seek

Before you start writing, consider what Federal grant reviewers are instructed to look for regarding successful proposals. Reviewers read applications primarily to determine how closely the applicant's proposed program conforms to the specified evaluation criteria, including program objectives, whether or not a case is made to demonstrate the community needs, the expected results or benefits, the approach, staff background and organizational experience, and budget appropriateness. In short, reviewers are comparing your application to the RFP or RFA requirements. Organizing your application to match the order of the requirements as they are listed in the RFP or RFA makes it easier for the reviewers to understand your proposal.

Here are some of the questions that grant reviewers may ask:

- Does the application provide complete responses to the specific criteria listed in the RFP?

- Are the applicant's intentions clear and specific rather than obscured by meaningless jargon?

- Do the ideas presented flow logically?

- Are the activities outlined in different sections of the application consistent with each other? For example, does the budget match the program's approach?

- Are the activities described consistent with current, accepted knowledge and ideas in the field?

- To what extent does the application explain the selected population's need for assistance? Are the numbers of participants to be served identified?

- Are the project's objectives measurable? If so, how will success (or failure) be evaluated?

- How will the skills, experience, and education levels of key staff help achieve the program's objectives?

- To what extent does the applicant demonstrate a thorough understanding of the costs of the project?

- Are the activities and corresponding budget reasonable, and are sufficient details provided to make that judgment?

- Is a persuasive, realistic case made to approve the proposal?

Neatness and presentation are important. Make sure the body of your proposal is well organized and easy to follow from one section to the next. Use consistent formatting and section numbering throughout your application. This will make creating your table of contents easier and enhance the readability of your proposal. Follow the guidelines in the RFP or RFA for font size, margins, section numbering, and number of pages. Reviewers pay attention to all of these details.

The Program Narrative

Most funders, whether public or private, look for the same basic elements in proposals: (1) the executive summary; (2) introduction of the organization or organizational background; (3) the statement of problem or needs assessment; (4) project goals and objectives; (5) project methods or program design; (6) project management; (7) project evaluation; (8) future funding; and (9) the budget. However, each RFP will have its own specific instructions for proposals.

- ***Executive Summary*** — This may be the most important part of the proposal since it is the first page that reviewers see. It is a snapshot of what is to follow, summarizing all of the key information contained in the proposal—the problem you plan to address, the solution you propose, and the amount of funding you are seeking. It should be concise (one to three pages), descriptive, and persuasive, convincing the reader to further consider the proposal.

- ***Introduction of the Organization*** — This section provides the opportunity to establish the credibility of your organization. It should describe your mission, history, track record, and successes, and establish that your organization's goals and capacity are consistent with the goals the funding agency is seeking to meet.

- ***Statement of the Problem/Needs Assessment*** — This section should describe the problem or specific needs you plan to address within your community. It should describe the needs of your target population—not your agency. Needs must be documented with statistical and other evidence, linked to the program strategies you propose, and relate to the state or national priorities of the grant program. Remember, Federal agencies are concerned with issues of national importance. Your needs statement should be persuasive and offer a credible argument in support of your program and approach.

- ***Goals and Objectives*** — Goals are statements that express the change you will produce through your program. Objectives are statements that define how many, who, how much or by what measure, and over what period of time the change will take place. Both goals and objectives must be stated in clear and measurable terms and focus on results. They should also be clearly related to the goals, objectives, and priorities of the Federal initiative.

- ***Program Design and Methods*** — The methods section describes the specific activities that will take place to achieve the objectives and enable the reader to visualize the implementation of the project. This section should convince the reader that your agency knows what it is doing, thereby further establishing its credibility. The section should also describe the activities you've planned, your rationale for choosing those activities, and why they will work. It may be helpful to research other program models that have been successful with your target population. Cite current literature and best practices to support your program design.

- ***Project Management*** — Describe your organization's ability to conduct the program and manage it administratively, and provide any information about your experience with similar projects. Cite the qualifications and experience of key staff and consultants, as well as the level of effort to be devoted to the grant. Be prepared to attach job descriptions and resumes of key staff. If you are employing consultants, include their scope of work and their resumes, too. Also, include timelines and milestones to illustrate how your program will work and what will be accomplished when. Charts and diagrams may be helpful in illustrating your project administration and management plan.

- ***Evaluation*** — Review the RFP requirements carefully and use them as a foundation for designing your evaluation plan. There are two types of formal evaluation. One type measures program outcomes and the other analyzes the process. Either or both might be required for your project. The approach you choose will depend on the nature of your project and its objectives. You will need to describe how data about the program and participants will be collected and explain why those methods are important and good measures of program effectiveness. You will also need to explain who will collect the data, when, and how it will be collected. Finally, explain how the evaluation information will be analyzed and reported.

- ***Future Funding*** — Also referred to as "sustainability," this part of the proposal focuses on what will happen to the program after funding ends. Explain which parts of the program will end and which you will sustain through other funding sources. Identify additional sources of potential support or ways to generate revenue to support the activities. If the program will end when the funding period expires, explain why it will no longer be needed.

The Budget and Budget Narrative

The budget consists of two parts—the line item budget and the budget narrative. The proposal must demonstrate a clear and strong relationship between the stated objectives, project activities, and budget. The RFP or RFA will describe allowable cost categories for the program budget.

The line item budget describes the specific categories of program funding (including matching funds, if applicable), as well as expenses and their amounts. It also requires both public and non-public sources to be delineated. You will need to complete SF-424, Attachment A: Budget Information. This is the standard, two-page Federal budget form for non-construction projects. A different form is required for construction projects. The form's purpose is to summarize and describe the requested financial assistance. Other forms may be required by the agency and by government-wide rules.

The budget narrative is an explanation and justification of the line items and amounts. The narrative explains what you are going to spend the grant funds on, how you arrived at the amounts for each line item, and the purpose of each line item. The budget narrative must be consistent with the line item budget and be arranged in the same order.

OMB Circular A-122 addresses issues of cost and budgeting for Federal grants to nonprofit organizations. Understanding the cost principals and allowable costs for grant programs is critical to creating a budget that can be approved. Finally, be sure that the requested budget amount is within the allowable range of the grant amounts described in the RFP.

TIPS FOR WRITING A WINNING GRANT PROPOSAL

✓ Review the proposal early and often.

✓ Have staff and the grant writing team members review the proposal for consistency and correctness.

✓ Review the writing style and make sure it is consistent. The proposal should "flow" and be easy to read.

✓ Make sure your intentions are clear and your process is logical.

✓ Eliminate jargon and informal language.

✓ Have a third party proofread for grammar, spelling, content, and consistency.

REVIEW, PACKAGE, AND MAIL

Agencies will provide guidance on how proposals are to be packaged, the number of copies to be provided, and other details in the RFP or RFA. Allow plenty of time to package the grant application—at least half a day—since you must be sure that every detail is complete.

Work with your team to ensure that you have followed the required format and provided complete responses to the questions and criteria in the RFP or RFA. Use your outline and application work plan to make sure nothing has been missed.

Many of the required forms will have to be inserted into your narrative or other sections. Take care that these items are in the right place and numbered appropriately. Create a table of contents after you have completed and checked your page numbering for the entire package.

RFPs and RFAs may contain checklists for complete applications—use them to be certain that you have included everything and to ensure that you have not exceeded the maximum page requirement for your proposal and attachments. Remember, deadlines are not negotiable, so anticipate delays in your schedule and plan for technical and other difficulties.

Currently, almost all funding announcements will indicate that applications are to be submitted electronically through Grants.gov. Before you can submit an application or proposal, you must first register to use the system. Step-by-step instructions on how to register as an applicant within Grants.gov can be found in the Applicant User Guide. Because registration can take from one to three weeks, it is advised that organizations register well in advance of the solicitation due date.

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CHECKLIST FOR REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS

❐ Proof of nonprofit status

❐ List of your board of directors

❐ Audits or financial statements

❐ Application forms

❐ Required certifications

❐ Letters of support

❐ Partnership agreements and assurances with original signatures

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Once an organization is registered, they can use Grants.gov to submit their application. Like the registration process, the application process can sometimes involve delays, and it is recommended that organizations submit their applications at least 72 hours in advance of the application due date. Once you have submitted your application, you will receive notification of whether you have successfully uploaded your application, and a confirmation screen will appear highlighting a tracking number and time/date stamp. Be sure to keep the tracking number on file in case you run into any issues and need to contact Grants.gov for technical support.

In some cases, the funding agency or department will allow applicants to submit hard copies by mail. When doing so, applications should be mailed via the U.S. Postal Service, delivered by a commercial carrier, or hand-delivered to the address listed in the application package. Consider using certified mail or other means of "guaranteed delivery," as it is worth the extra cost. Faxed applications are generally not accepted, but check the announcement details to be sure.

Whether submitting electronic copies using Grants.gov or sending hard copies by mail, your application package must be received on or before the due date and by the time specified, and delivered to the address listed in the program announcement and/or RFP or RFA. Late proposals will not be considered.

HOW WILL YOU KNOW IF YOU ARE FUNDED?

The grant announcement may include information about the time frames for grant review and award announcement, depending on the agency or program. If this information is provided, it is usually stated in general terms. The grant review and notice of award process is very difficult to predict with accuracy. Therefore, organizations should not depend on grant funding to be available by a specific time.

When submitting an application using Grants.gov, you can easily check the status of an application using the tracking number. To learn more about potential statuses you might encounter after submitting your proposal, refer to Grants.gov's *Tracking your Grant Application Package: What to Expect After Submission*.

If not sent by e-mail, notice of grant awards is often provided in writing to the awardees. Grant recipients are also listed in Federal agency announcements and on agency websites. Do not be surprised if the RFP/RFA does not directly indicate how awards will be announced.

Under no circumstances should your organization begin operating a grant program or expend dollars related to the grant program until you are notified of the award, a grant agreement is signed, and your organization is officially authorized to begin program operations by the awarding Federal agency.

WHAT IF YOU ARE NOT FUNDED?

If your proposal is not funded, try to find out why you did not receive funding and how you could improve a future application. You can follow up with the program officer identified in the funding announcement, who will either provide you with information about your application or tell you who to contact to get feedback. In some cases, written comments on your proposal may be available. Again, you may also be able to obtain copies of successful proposals to guide future efforts.

Keep in mind that, after the awarding of Federal funds, OMB is required under the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 to log all Federal awards. Visit USAspending.gov to learn the type and amount of awards, as well as which organizations received funding.

Remember that this is a competitive process, with many organizations applying for each grant. In some cases, there may be 20–200 applications submitted for every one that is approved for a grant. Organizations may apply several times before they receive an award. Getting feedback on your application can help you improve your chances of receiving funds the next time around.

SUMMARY

Here are some key points to keep in mind:

- Research and monitor grant programs and funding cycles. It could take up to a year for a program and funding to become available and applications solicited.

- Become familiar with grant requirements and processes. Read grant announcements (even if you are not applying) to develop a comfort level with the language and process of grant seeking.

- Identify the need for your proposed program and clarify your motivations for seeking funding. Ensure that the program you are considering is consistent with your mission. Let the needs of those you seek to serve drive your pursuit of dollars. Do not "chase the money."

- Develop your program concept. Think through your program ideas and make sure you can clearly explain what your program will do, how it will do it, and why it will produce the outcomes that you and the grant program seek.

- Find the appropriate grant resource to help you meet the needs or population you have decided to address. Check grant requirements to ensure that you can meet them. Just because money is available does not mean the grant is right for your organization.

- Determine your organization's capacity to prepare an application and manage the program you propose. Make sure your organization's management capacity (e.g., the strength of your staff, financial, reporting, and evaluation resources) is strong enough not only to complete the application but to manage the program successfully if you are funded.

- Get support from key stakeholders and potential partners. Key stakeholders—board members, donors, staff, volunteers, and client groups—must support your application. You will need to provide documentation of their support in your application.

- Use the team approach to grant writing. Grant writing requires a number of skills and is a challenging process. It will take the skills and abilities of a number of people to successfully prepare an application. Develop a work plan, assign tasks and deadlines, and then manage the process to make sure you meet the application deadline.

- Follow instructions to the letter. Become thoroughly familiar with the grant announcement, RFP, or RFA. Develop outlines and checklists to ensure that you complete all the steps and include all required information in the format and order requested.

- Adhere to deadlines. The agency must receive your completed application package on or before the due date and time. If it is late, it will not be reviewed.

- Learn from the experience. Even if you are not funded, going through the process will help prepare you for your next try and teach you valuable lessons about your organization, teamwork, and partnership.

You should now have a better understanding of how to identify relevant public programs and grant opportunities and how to write quality grant proposals that will result in an increase in the resources available to you, as well as help you better complete your mission and serve your clients.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Resources

Grant Writing

American Association of Grant Professionals (AAGP)

AAGP is a good resource to reference when hiring a consultant to assist with grant writing. AAGP maintains a code of ethics and regional chapters, as well as a regular e-newsletter and journal.

Grants.gov

The premier site for news on Federal funding and electronic filing, Grants.gov also offers a number of resources for organizations who want to register and use the online system, e.g., guides on how to register, submit, and track applications; animated tutorials on determining eligibility, registering, and completing online applications; checklists to help you through the online registration process; and detailed logs of frequently asked questions and troubleshooting tips.

Foundation Center's Proposal Writing Short Course

This two-part course outlines the basic components of a proposal and considers important elements such as budget and expenses, administration, and the research process involved in writing a proposal.

The Grantsmanship Center

The center hosts proposal writing workshops held across the United States and provides access to online grant writing guidance.

A Guide to Proposal Planning and Writing

Guidelines and tips on planning and writing a grant proposal written by Jeremy T. and Lynn E. Miner.

Federal Funds for Organizations That Help Those in Need

This 2005 report from the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, now known as the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships, includes 90 pages listing more than 170 programs operated by many Federal agencies.

HUD's Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives

This webpage provides links to a variety of grant writing and organization capacity building resources.

Federal Centers on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships

The White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships coordinates Centers for Faith-based and Community Initiatives within twelve different Federal departments. These centers work collaboratively to build viable partnerships between the Federal government and nonprofit organizations.

Center at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Phone: (202) 358-3595
E-mail: partnerships@hhs.gov

Center at the U.S. Department of Commerce
Phone: (202) 482-2770
E-mail: FBNP@doc.gov

Center at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Phone: (202) 708-2404
E-mail: Talk_to_us@hud.gov

Center at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Phone: (202) 461-7689
E-mail: vafbnp@va.gov

Center at the U.S. Department of Agriculture
Phone: (202) 720-3631
E-mail: collaborate@usda.gov

Center at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Phone: (202) 646-3487
E-mail: infofbci@dhs.gov

Center at the U.S. Agency for International Development
Phone: (202) 712-4080
E-mail: fbci@usaid.gov

Center at the U.S. Department of Education
Phone: (202) 205-9655
E-mail: edparters@ed.gov

Center at the U.S. Small Business Administration
Phone: (202) 205-6452
E-mail: partnerships@sba.gov

Center at the U.S. Department of Labor
Phone: (202) 693-6017
E-mail: CFBNP@dol.gov

Regulations and Federal Guidance

The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)

The CFR is the codification of the general and permanent rules published in the Federal Register by the executive departments and agencies of the Federal Government. Visit the CFR to find key rules and regulations governing grant programs. See Appendix C of the CFR to learn about funding and initiatives that may be of interest to nonprofits and community based organizations.

Office of Management and Budget Circulars

OMB issues circulars that apply to government-wide standards and requirements for programs.

Standard SF-424 Forms

At least two standard forms are required for all Federal grant programs — SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance and the SF-424 A, Budget Information: Non-Construction Programs. Some agencies may use variations of these forms.

Summary of Other Resources

Recovery.gov

Created under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and operated by the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board, this site houses a number of tools to track where and how recovery funds are spent. Users can search by geographic area or type of program support.

Federal Register

All Federal program announcements, rules, and regulations are published in the Federal Register, which is updated daily.

Get Ready, Get Set

This free guidebook from the Center for Nonprofit Management provides information about starting a nonprofit organization.

Guidance to Faith-Based and Community Organizations on Partnering with the Federal Government

This report answers frequently asked questions about faith-based organization's rights and limitations with Federal funding and provides an overview of the Federal grants process, offering guidance about the unique needs of faith-based organizations regarding seeking and managing Federal grants.

Internal Revenue Service (IRS)

The IRS provides guidance on the process of obtaining 501(c)(3) status.

U.S. Census Bureau

The Census Bureau is an excellent source for statistics and other information about local and state populations and national trends.

USAspending.gov

This website documents the type and amount of awards, and identifies the organizations receiving awards. OMB is required under the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 to log all Federal awards at USAspending.gov.

Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP)

AFP convenes professional fundraisers and grant writers that adhere to the organization's ethical principles and rules. The group maintains more than 30,000 members and over 200 chapters and can be a great resource when looking to hire consultants to assist in grant writing efforts.

APPENDIX B

Glossary

Source: Various U.S. Department of Health and Human Services grant announcements.

Award — Financial assistance that provides support or stimulation to accomplish a public purpose. Awards include grants and other agreements in the form of money, or property in lieu of money, by the Federal government to an eligible recipient.

Block grants — Grants that the Federal government awards to other state, county, and city governments, which then make grants to local organizations.

Budget period — The time interval into which a period of grant assistance is divided for budgetary and funding purposes.

Capacity building — Capacity, very simply, is the ability to perform or produce. So to build the capacity of an organization, you do something that increases its ability to perform or produce. As a result of capacity building activities, a nonprofit organization can accomplish more than it could before.

Cash contributions — The grant recipient's cash outlay, including money contributed to the recipient by donors.

Community — Refers to any group of individuals who share common distinguishing characteristics, including residency (e.g., the "low-income" community, the "religious" community, or the "professional" community). The individual members of these "communities" may or may not reside in a specific neighborhood, county, or school district, but the local service provider may be implementing programs and strategies that will have a measurable effect on them.

CBO — Community-based organization

CFDA — Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance

Community development corporation (CDC) — A private, nonprofit corporation governed by a board of directors (consisting of residents of the community and business and civic leaders) whose principal purpose is planning, developing, or managing low-income housing or community development projects.

Contingency fees — Payment based on a percentage of funds raised or profits acquired due to one's work.

Cooperative agreement — An award agreement for financial assistance between the grant recipient and the Federal government that outlines the terms of working and financial relationships when a grant requires "substantial cooperation" between the awarding office (the Federal government) and the grant recipient during performance of the program or project. "Substantial involvement" means that the recipient can expect Federal programmatic collaboration or participation in managing the award. The specific responsibilities of the awarding agency and the recipient will be determined as part of the process of creating the cooperative agreement.

Cost sharing/matching — Cost sharing refers to an element of some grant programs that requires the grantee (the organization receiving the grant) to provide part of the funding for the program either in cash or by contributing facilities or other resources of value. These funds or resources are sometimes referred to as "matching funds." They usually must be raised from other non-Federal sources.

CFR — Code of Federal Regulations

Discretionary grants — Grants that are announced by a Federal agency through published program announcements and requests for proposals/application and awarded competitively directly to organizations to provide services.

Distressed community — A geographic urban neighborhood or rural community of high unemployment and pervasive poverty.

Eligible Applicant — A private, nonprofit organization.

DOJ — Department of Justice

DOL — Department of Labor

ED — Department of Education

Faith-based community development corporation — A community development corporation that has a religious character.

FBO — Faith-based organization

Formula grants — Grants that the Federal government awards to other state, county, and city governments, which then make grants to local organizations.

Grantee — The organization receiving grant funds.

GPRA — Government Performance Results Act of 1993

HHS — Department of Health and Human Services

Intervention — Any planned activity within a project that is intended to produce changes in the target population and/or the environment and that can be formally evaluated.

IRS — Internal Revenue Service

Letter of commitment — A signed letter or agreement from a third party to the grant applicant that pledges financial or other support for the grant activities contingent on receiving a grant award.

Logic model — A graphic overview of an organization's tools and resources, the services they provide, and the intended impact of those services.

Nonprofit organization — Any organization (including a faith-based organization or a community development corporation) exempt from taxation under section 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 by reason of paragraph (3) or (4) of section 501(c) of such Code. Proof of nonprofit status may be documented by:

  a. A reference to the applicant organization's listing in the Internal Revenue Service's (IRS) most recent list of tax-exempt organizations described in the IRS Code;
  b. A copy of a currently valid IRS tax exemption certificate;
  c. A statement from a state taxing body, state attorney general, or other appropriate state official certifying that the applicant organization has a nonprofit status and that none of the net earnings accrue to any private shareholders or individuals;
  d. A certified copy of the organization's certificate of incorporation or similar document that clearly establishes nonprofit status.

NOFA — Notice of funds availability

OMB — Office of Management and Budget

Outcomes — The changes, benefits, and impact that a program or initiative has had on a population or problem.

Outcome evaluation — Systematic examination of the impact of the program and what resulted for the participants, clients, consumers, or customers. Another commonly used phrase is "summative evaluation." See "process evaluation."

Partner (or partnering agency) — Another eligible individual and/or organization carrying out a grant-funded project as part of a consortium of two or more entities in accordance with an agreement, and led by the entity which is the grant recipient/grantee. In such cases, the lead grantee is ultimately responsible for administration of the grant funds and submission of required reports.

Performance measurement — A tool used to objectively assess how a program is accomplishing its mission through the delivery of products, services, and activities.

Poverty Income Guidelines — Guidelines published annually by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that establish the level of poverty defined as low-income for individuals and their families.

Process evaluation — Systematic examination of the degree to which a program is operating as intended, looking at what service it provides, how is it provided, who receives services, and how much service is delivered. Another commonly used phrase is "formative evaluation." See "outcome evaluation."

RFA —Request for applications

RFP — Request for proposals

SF — Standard Form

SGA — Solicitation for grant applications

SPOC — State Point of Contact. The designated entity for a state responsible for the coordination and review of proposed Federal financial assistance and direct Federal development. The SPOC is designated by the state and is optional. Participating states can be found here: http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc/.

Subaward – An award of financial assistance in the form of money, or property in lieu of money, made under an award by a recipient to an eligible sub-recipient or by a sub-recipient to a lower tier sub-recipient.

Technical assistance – Providing specialized skills, information, and/or support to organizations and/or individuals on a one-to-one basis.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) – Title I of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-193) created the TANF program, which transforms welfare into a system that requires work in exchange for time-limited assistance. The law specifically eliminates any individual entitlement to or guarantee of assistance; repeals the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), Emergency Assistance (EA), and Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) programs; and replaces the programs with a block grant entitlement to states under Title IV-A of the Social Security Act.

Third party – Any individual, organization, or business entity that is not the direct recipient of grant funds.

USAID – U.S. Agency for International Development

USDA – U.S. Department of Agriculture

APPENDIX C

Sample Grant Writing Work Plan/Checklist

ITEM	RESPONSIBLE	DUE DATE
Application team assembled		
501(c)(3) determination letter from IRS; proof of state nonprofit status, including corporate seal		
Brief history of the organization and its mission, accomplishments, and partners		
Articles of incorporation and bylaws		
Current list of board of directors, including names, titles, and addresses		
Minutes of board meeting or resolution authorizing grant application		
Resumes of project staff, organization/CDC staff, organizational partners		
Documentation of cost share commitments		
Original cover letter and signed forms		
Original letter to SPOC (if applicable)		
Congressional district number		
Geographical boundaries/Census blocks of project area		
Most recent population, poverty statistics, unemployment rates for service area, AND data sources (also # and % receiving TANF, if possible)		
List of grants received (amount/funder) and indication of whether or not FBO/CBO has been delinquent on grant activities, report, or audit requirements		
Description of activities in area receiving funds		

ITEM	RESPONSIBLE	DUE DATE
Experience or linkages with organizations who have experience in area of need		
Documentation to demonstrate sound management practices, progress reporting, and audit requirements, such as manual, memo, or statement		
Audit or CPA letter (or if CPA not hired, signed statement by executive director and treasurer) to confirm sufficiency of financial management system		
Strategic plan/report or other documentation that identifies needs for program intervention		
Current status/need/description of project		
Map(s) of project area		
Any committed or potential funding sources, or partnership agreements		
Discussion of how grant funds will be used		
Budget and narrative		
Support letters and testimonials from concerned interests other than the applicant		

APPENDIX D

References

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Recovery.gov

The Grantsmanship Center

White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. "Guidance to Faith-Based and Community Organizations on Partnering with the Federal Government."