Basics of Applying to Federal Grant Programs

Children’s Environmental Health Symposium
Protecting Children’s Environmental Health in the U.S.-Mexico Border Region

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Agenda

• Overview of Federal Grants
• Grant Proposal Fundamentals and Best Practices
• Questions
• Class Exercise
• Upcoming RFPs and Additional Information
• Questions
OVERVIEW OF FEDERAL GRANTS
Grants Cycle

- Pre-Solicitation
- Solicitation
- Proposal
- Award
- Implement Project
- Close-out
Federal Grants Process

• Competitive grants
  – www.grants.gov
• Request for Proposals / Applications
• Threshold Review
• Panel Review (May include individual scoring, consensus Meeting, and/or regional panel)
• Recommendation to deciding official
• Award
• EPA’s Competition Policy
  – http://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-policy-competition-assistance-agreements
    • Familiarize yourself with EPA’s policy on competition
Communications with Applicants

• EPA can:
  – Answer applicant eligibility questions – if uncertain if you are eligible or your project is eligible ask before proposal submission
  – Clarify info on administrative aspects of proposal submission
  – Respond to requests for clarification of the announcement
  – NOTE: Clarifications that result in changes to the announcement must be communicated (via modification to the announcement) to all potential applicants
Communications with Applicants

- EPA cannot
  - Offer to write proposals for applicants
  - Review or comment on draft proposals
  - Provide information on the Agency’s approach to evaluating proposals beyond what is described in Section V of the announcement
  - Provide a competitive advantage to any applicant
GRANT PROPOSAL FUNDAMENTALS
Win More – Pursue Less
Determine Viability of Applying

- Do you have enough time?
- Do you have the capability?
- Are the budget and resource requirements appropriate?
  - Consider match or cost share requirements
- If required, are your partners and stakeholders on board and available?
- Consider establishing a “Pursue-Don’t Pursue” score sheet
“Pursue-Don’t Pursue”

- Do I know them?
- Do they know me?
- Reputation
- Was I surprised by RFP or did I know it was coming?
- Have you done past work for the organization?
- How was the work received?
- Competition
- Effort
- Size of award
- Likelihood of winning
Successful Projects Ask Questions

- **What is the general problem to be addressed by this project?**
  - Exposures to asthma triggers, lead, diesel, illegal dumping, specific air or water contaminant, etc.? Limited access to health care facilities?

- **What type of community improvement will result from this project?**
  - Reduced exposures? Increased awareness of environmental hazards? Lower diesel emissions? More people gain access to health care?

- **Which people within the community will benefit from the improvement?**
  - People that work in nail salons, live in a specific neighborhood, have children of a certain age group?

- **Why/how does the environmental or health issue occur in the community?**
  - Because residents need to learn how to avoid exposures? Because a local business needs to reduce their emissions? Because new laws are needed?

- **What change in behavior is needed?**
  - Business owners install pollution control equipment? Lawmakers pass a new law?

- **What project activity will cause the behavior change?**
Proposal Big Picture

- Well-supported statement of the problem/project
- Clear, concise
- Specifies manner in which the problem will be solved through the requested funding
- Is your project aligned with the RFP program goals?
Common Proposal Components

- Statement of Need(s)
- Goals and Objectives / Outputs and Outcomes
- Scope and Task Descriptions
- Description of Team
- Schedule / Timeline
- Budget
- Monitoring & Evaluation Plan
- Sustainability Plan
- Letters of support
Tips for writing a good Statement of Need:

- Be compelling
- Clearly explain problem/need
- Get facts to support who is affected by problem
- Explain why project is a priority
- No need to be clever, clearly state the fact
Goals vs. Objectives

- Describe the overall aim(s) of the project
- Usually longer term
- More conceptual and abstract than the objectives

- Describe the intermediate results of the project
- Illustrate how the work plan activities will address the problem
- Should build capacity of the community
- Should be “SMART”
SMART Objectives

- **Specific** - clearly defined and identifiable
- **Measurable** - quantifiable outputs of the program
- **Achievable** - project is able to reach or attain
- **Realistic** – a practical idea of what can be achieved
- **Time bound** – target date of when finished
Outputs and Outcomes

• Outputs - measure the success of the work plan; are the result of the activities *i.e.* # of participants at a mangrove planting; amount of something produced.

• Outcomes - the way a thing turns out; a consequence *i.e.* a mangrove-planting event will be a change in perception of the participants who now understand the importance of mangroves.
Tips for Goals, Objectives, Outputs, and Outcomes

• Don’t confuse the goals, objectives, outputs and outcomes.
• Use action verbs for objectives such as "increase, decrease, and reduce."
• Remember objectives are different than activities.
Scope and Task Descriptions

• This section should clarify:
  – What does the proposal include? What is not included?
  – How many (events, people, items, etc.)?
  – How often?

• Should align with RFP and with goals, objectives, outputs, and outcomes
Team Description
Schedule
Budget

• Budget transforms your project plan into monetary needs
• Estimate of funds needed to complete your plan/project
• Document each type of cost
  – Direct, indirect
  – Include matching or share cost / leveraged funds
• Include only allowable costs
• Assumptions
• Review your work
Monitoring and Evaluation

How will I know if my project is successful?
Project Sustainability

• Explain how project will continue after the grant term
• For example,
  – Responsibility for continued implementation of project is assumed by a partner or stakeholder (documented)
  – Capacity-building project that follows a train-the-trainer model
  – Proposal describes a future funding sources that will sustain future implementation
Letters of Commitment

- Identify the project
- Specify what the collaborator will contribute
- Is authorized by an appropriate official
- Convinces the reader that the collaborator has the capacity to fulfill its responsibilities and is committed to achieving success
CLASS EXERCISE
Contact Information

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