Grant Application 101
Concept to Submission

December 17, 2015
Florida Grants Consortium Workgroup
Objectives

• Provide an overview of the grant application development and submission process
• Promote best practices for grant applications
• Increase the knowledge base of today’s audience
Agenda

• Overview
• Deciding to apply
• Application preparation & planning
• Developing the application packet
Agenda

• Submitting an application
• Commits from panel members
  – At the end of each section
• Open Forum – Q&A & Discussion
  – At the end of each section
Overview

• Goal of the application process
  – Develop a proposal that:
    • Serves a public purpose
    • Addresses agency needs
    • Is compatible with the agency’s mission, goals, & objectives
    • Is selected for funding by the grantor
Deciding To Apply

• Solicitation/RFP review
  – Eligibility requirements
  – Grantor’s goals, objectives, & purpose
    • Purpose area (what problem, issue, deficiency is expected to be addressed by the award)
    • Service population/area
    • Expected outcomes
    • Grantor’s success measures
Deciding To Apply

– Priority considerations
  • Typically spelled out in grant solicitation
  • Linked to the grantor’s purpose
– Amount and length of the potential award
– Allowable usage of awarded funding
Deciding To Apply

– Project cost sharing (match funding)
  • Cash match
  • In-kind match
Deciding To Apply

• Internal assessment
  – Is the opportunity purpose consistent and compatible with needs (how & why)?
    • Because we need more money is generally not a good answer
  – Are the grant priorities and outcomes aligned with the strategic direction and mission of the agency?
Deciding To Apply

• Internal assessment
  – Purpose area expertise
    • Is there expertise within the organization to plan, implement, and manage a funded project?
  – Resource requirements and availability
    • What resources are available compared to needed?
      – What resources can be grant funded?
      – What are the budget implications for using grant funds for additional positions, for example?
Deciding To Apply

• Management Approval
  – A grant award becomes a contractual relationship when accepted
    • Award acceptance requires signature by a person authorized to contractually obligate the agency
Deciding To Apply

• Executive Office of the Governor (EOG) Approval
  – Applications for federal funding require approval from the EOG *prior* to submission

• Federal Grants Tracking System (FGTS)
  – Is the vehicle for requesting EOG approval for a grant application submission
Federal Grants Tracking System (FGTS)

• Setup with a threefold purpose
  – To create and maintain an inventory of all programs partially or fully funded with federal sources
  – To document and implement an internal process whereby information on all federal funding (received or denied) can be collected, assimilated, and evaluated as needed.
Federal Grants Tracking System (FGTS)

– As the portal for agencies to provide notification to the EOG of their interest in applying for federal funding & initiate EOG review and approval
Federal Grants Tracking System (FGTS)

• Agencies received EOG notification about the FGTS in a memo dated November 10, 2015
  – New grant applications should be given priority and entered in FGTS as soon as possible
  – Agencies are expected to enter information on existing grants by the end of January 2016
Federal Grants Tracking System (FGTS)

- FGTS input requires some basic information
  - Term
  - Value
  - Budget Authority
  - Identifying information
Federal Grants Tracking System (FGTS)

• Grant description
  – Brief description of program and/or federal award
    • Specific program/project to be funded
    • Service/client population
      – Numbers
      – Type:description
    • Linkage to Governor’s priorities
Federal Grants Tracking System (FGTS)

– Impact of non-approval or cessation
  • What happens if the EOG denies the application request or funding ceases?
    – Program impacts
    – Mitigation options
    – Notification requirements
    – Any other relevant comments
Deciding to Apply & FGTS

Panelist Comments

Workgroup Questions – Answers - Discussion
Application Preparation & Planning Preparation

• Determine who will be doing the submission
• Download and thoroughly review the application
• Review submission instructions
  – Look for things such as
    • Page count limitations
    • Specified fonts and margins
    • Page numbering
    • File naming instructions
  – The goal here is for there to be no surprises or “Oh –Nos” on the day of the submission!
Application Preparation & Planning

Preparation

• Download required forms
  – Ensure required information is available and correct
    • Data Universal Numbing System (DUNS)
      – # unique to each agency/organization
    • System for Awards Management (SAM) registration
    • Authorization to submit and password
      – For whomever is doing the electronic submission
Application Preparation & Planning Preparation

• Assurances & Certifications
  – Standard Assurances
    » A laundry list of statutes, executive orders, policies, procedures, that federal grant recipients must agree to comply with
  – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities
  – Accounting system and financial capability questionnaire
  – Indirect Cost Agreement
Application Preparation & Planning
Proposal Development

• Determine who will lead the development of the project proposal

• Pre-Development Meeting with Stakeholders
  – Best Practice: Inclusion of all stakeholders who will be impacted by or obligated to the project
  – Get all the questions – issues – concerns on the table
  – Get consensus on the scope and direction of the project
Application Preparation & Planning
Proposal Development

• Define the proposal development team
  – Grant writer(s)
  – Programmatic expertise
  – Budget expertise
Application Preparation & Planning Proposal Development

• Grant Writer or Writers?
  – Caution: Writing by committee can be problematic
    » Differences in writing style can create flow issues when trying to combine information written by multiple writers
  – If compelled to use multiple writers
    » Assign a lead writer to blend writing styles
    » Assign individual writers to specific sections
Application Preparation & Planning Proposal Development

• Delegate tasks and assignments
  – Research
  – Literature review
  – Budget draft
  – Proposal review

• Completion timeline
  » Consistent with submission due date
  » Cognizant of internal agency review and approval process
Application Preparation & Planning
Proposal Development

• Prepare an application packet checklist
  – Comprised of everything required for the submission
  – Invaluable for monitoring and managing the application process
Application Preparation & Planning

Panelist Comments

Workgroup Questions – Answers - Discussion
Proposal Objectives

• When completed the proposal packet should answer all of the following questions
  – Who is your agency and why are you exceptional?
    » Answered in:
      • Introduction
      • Staff qualifications and agency expertise
  – What is the measurable problem or need being addressed?
    » Answered in:
      • Problem/Needs Statement
Proposal Objectives

– What measureable impact will there be on the problem or need?
  » Answered in:
    • Goals & objectives
    • Outcomes

– How will the impact on the problem be accomplished?
  » Answered in:
    • Methods and design
Proposal Objectives

– How will methods and impact be evaluated?
  » Answered in:
    • Project evaluation
– How will grant funding be spent?
  » Answered in:
    • Budget
Proposal Packet
Project Abstract or Summary

• Executive level summary of the proposal
  – Written last - read first
    » First and best chance to make a good impression
  – An “overview” of the key elements of the proposal
  – Generally 1 page, not more than 2 pages
Proposal Packet
Project Narrative

• Introduction
  – Who is your agency?
  – How long has it been in existence?
  – What public purpose does it serve?
  – Make a connection between agency and grantor
    » How is the agency a fit for the funding
    » Prior accomplishments
  – Best Practice:
    » Introduction should lead logically to the problem statement
Proposal Packet
Project Narrative

• Problem statement / Needs assessment
  – What is the problem or need being addressed?
    » Why is it a problem or need?
    » Where is it a problem?
      • In a population?
      • In a geographic area?
    » Who will benefit and how will they benefit?
    » Social and economic costs to be affected
    » How severe is the problem?
      • Present as much concrete evidence of the problem’s or need’s magnitude as possible
      • Ensure support data is current, relevant, and defensible
Proposal Packet
Project Narrative

» How was it determined there is a problem or need?
» What current gaps exist between the problem/need and how it is being addressed?
» How will the project close the gap?

• Best Practice:
  – Avoid defining the problem/need as a lack of money, program, or facility
    » Money buys methods to achieve solutions
    » Programs & facilities are possible solutions
Proposal Packet
Project Narrative

• Goals, objectives, and outcome expectations
  – Linked to the grantor’s goals, objectives, outcome expectations, and priority considerations
  – Describes the intended impact on the stated problem or need area
  – Goals are the broad statements of achievement
    » Reduce recidivism
    » Improve education levels
  – Objectives are specific & measurable outcomes
    » Reduce recidivism from 30% to 25%
    » Improve test scores by 10% from current baseline
Proposal Packet
Project Narrative

– SMART
  » Specific
    • Clearly defined benefit
  » Measureable
    • Can and how will progress be measured
Proposal Packet
Project Narrative

» Achievable
  • Is there a reasonable expectation of success?

» Realistic
  • Where did the figure come from?
    • Based on sound reasoning or is it “pie in the sky” but sounds good?

» Time based
  • Is it doable in the time frame
Proposal Packet
Project Narrative

• Project methods and design
  – How is the project expected to work and solve the stated problem or address the needs
  – How does it address the grantor’s priority considerations?
  – Is linked to project objectives
    » Plan of action for achieving each objectives
      • What is going to be done
      • How it is going to be done
      • Where it is going to be done
      • Who is going to do it
Proposal Packet
Project Narrative

• What other resources will be utilized to do it?
  • Assessments
  • Learning activities
  • Equipment
  • Facilities
Proposal Packet
Project Narrative

– Why is this the method of choice
  » Are there other methods?
    • Were they considered?
    • What lead to the conclusion that the selected methods is the right methods?
– Is the project innovative or does it contain innovative elements?
– What are the critical timelines?
Proposal Packet
Project Narrative

• Agency expertise and staff qualifications
  – Build the case that the agency has the capacity and capability to successfully implement and manage the proposed project
    » Note prior success stories
  – Demonstrate the qualifications of key staff
    » Education
    » Accomplishments
  – External collaborations and expertise
Proposal Packet
Project Narrative

• Project Evaluation
  – Directly linked to the projects objectives
    » Note: if deciding what to measure is problematic, the objectives should be revisited
  – Can serve two purposes
    » Measurement of effectiveness
    » Guide project adjustments and improvement
Proposal Packet
Project Narrative

– How will the program’s achievements and success be measured?
  » Evaluation design
    • Change in relation to an established baseline?
    • Comparison to a like group that do not receive project benefits?
    • Individualized pre and post program assessments
  » Evaluation techniques
  » Evaluation time period
Proposal Packet
Project Narrative

– Who will do the evaluation?
  » Internal staff
    • Be cognizant of the perception of bias
  » External
    • Becoming common for federal grantors to require external evaluation
    • NOTE: Consult with your Procurement Office and exercise care regarding external evaluations to prevent running afoul of Florida’s procurement laws and rules
Proposal Packet
Project Narrative

• Sustainability
  – What happens when the grant funding ends?
    » Does the program end?
    » What is the funding mechanism for continuation?
    » Note: remember discussion of sustainability is a requirement for EOG approval
Proposal Packet
Budget & Budget Narrative

• Cost are allowable
  – Per OMB circular & guidance
  – Per the specific grant

• Consistent with the project/program methods

• Realistic
  – Estimate as accurately as possible
  – Don’t overstate or understate

• Justifiable
Proposal Packet
Budget & Budget Narrative

• Categorized
  – Application instructions will generally provide categories
    » Personnel Costs
    » Operating Costs
    » Contracted Services / Consultants
    » Facilities & Equipment
    » Indirect Costs
Proposal Packet
Budget & Budget Narrative

• Cost calculations
  – Demonstrate how costs were determined
  – Consistent with the project design

• Cost Sharing (Match Funding)
  – Show by category/item
  – Calculate as with grant funding
  – Allowable costs the same as for grant funds
Proposal Packet
Budget & Budget Narrative

• Budget narrative
  – Describes the need and use for each category/item
    » Links costs to the project’s design and methods
  – Identifies the source of match funding
Proposal Packet
Project Timeline

• Timeline
  – Identifies key project milestones and target dates
    » Consistent with the project design and methods
    » Logical
    » Sequential
    » Realistic
  – Serves two purposes
    » Demonstrates pre-planning to the grantor
    » Serves as an implementation and operational plan post-award
Proposal Packet

Other

• Letters of support
• Indirect cost agreement
• Position descriptions
• Org charts
• Any other information that supports the application
Proposal Packet
Certificates and Assurances

• All grantor required certificates and assurances
  – Ensure signature by a person authorized to contractually bind the agency
    » If signed by delegate – letter of delegation must be attached
Proposal Packet
Final Review

• A last review by the application team
  – Ensure application instructions have been followed
  – Ensure required elements have been addressed
  – Re-read
    » Content
    » Flow
    » Grammar
    » Spell check
Proposal Packet
Final Review

• Route for internal agency management approval
Proposal Packet Submission

• Submit packet following grantor application submission instructions

Eagerly Anticipate Notification of Award!
Proposal Packet & Any Other

Panelist Comments
Workgroup Questions – Answers - Discussion
Workshop Panelists

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