



Intermediary Development Series

Acquiring Public Grants



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The National Resource Center gratefully acknowledges the expert and experienced practitioners who assisted in the development of *The Intermediary Development Series* guidebooks:

Acquiring Public Grants
Building Multiple Revenue Sources
Delivering Training and Technical Assistance
Designing Sub-Award Programs
Establishing Partnerships
Identifying and Promoting Promising Practices
Managing Public Grants
Measuring Outcomes

The ideas and information in this publication should not be construed as an official Department of Health and Human Services position. This guidebook is published in the interest of technical information exchange.

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Introduction

Welcome to *The Intermediary Development Series*—a multi-volume series designed to outline the key steps and elements necessary to help intermediaries build capacity in the faith-based and community-based organizations (FBO/CBOs) they serve. This series represents more than the sharing of information. It represents a common commitment to an intermediary's ideals—providing the most effective services in a more efficient manner to the grassroots organizations that are reaching those in our country with the greatest needs.

Who is the audience for *The Intermediary Development Series*?

An *intermediary* is something that exists between two persons or things, or someone who acts as an agent or mediator between persons or things. An intermediary organization, then, exists between the people with the resources and the organizations needing the resources—namely finances or information.

The Compassion Capital Fund, administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, helps FBO/CBOs build capacity and improve their ability to provide social services to those in need. In this context, an intermediary acts as a mediator between the Federal government and grassroots organizations to help accomplish these goals. This series will prove useful to both existing and emerging intermediaries (those currently funded through CCF as well as an expanded audience of potential recipients) and the FBO/CBOs they serve.

What is *The Intermediary Development Series*?

Think of it as help when and where it's most needed—a ready reference for common priority issues and comprehensive answers to critical questions. It was developed as a key component of the Compassion Capital Fund in response to the questions and concerns consistently posed by intermediaries representing all areas of expertise and experience levels. The following titles are included in this eight-volume series:

Acquiring Public Grants
Building Multiple Revenue Sources
Delivering Training and Technical Assistance
Designing Sub-Award Programs
Establishing Partnerships
Identifying and Promoting Promising Practices
Managing Public Grants
Measuring Outcomes

How is *The Intermediary Development Series* used?

It is intended to be used as a practical guide for intermediaries to help FBO/CBOs in a variety of tasks including securing more funding, providing services more effectively or on an increased scale and also helping them operate more efficiently. As such, it's flexible—readers who wish to use it as a self-guided reference for specific questions are likely to keep it nearby. Key terms (bolded within the text) are defined in a glossary of terms included in the appendix of each

guidebook. It's also comprehensive—emerging intermediaries may find the volume, *Delivering Training and Technical Assistance*, especially helpful for more in-depth assistance. Finally, regardless of the audience, its user-friendly format makes it easy to share with the variety of organizations intermediaries serve.

Who developed *The Intermediary Development Series*?

This series was developed for the Department of Health and Human Services by the National Resource Center—an information clearinghouse designed to provide customized technical assistance, specialized workshops and other useful tools to help increase intermediaries' scale, scope and effectiveness. Expert practitioners were enlisted to develop and field-test each topic in *The Intermediary Development Series*, ensuring each volume would provide accurate and, most of all, *practical* answers to common questions.

Acquiring Public Grants

By reading this particular volume in *The Intermediary Development Series*, intermediary organizations and the **faith-based** and **community-based** organizations they work with will learn key concepts about 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 help organizations answer these 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 our organization improve our chances of success and understand what grant reviewers look for in an applicant?

Federal Funding Overview

The Federal government spends billions of dollars every year for health and human services programs that are distributed through over 1,500 different programs. The variety and multiplicity of grant funds can make the process of seeking and acquiring funding seem confusing and overwhelming. However, assistance is available to help organizations navigate the process successfully. Spending time learning about the types and sources of funding and becoming familiar with the language and processes of grant acquisition can make your efforts more efficient and effective.

Federal Grants Are Different

While some elements and best practices are common to almost all grant-seeking, there are some 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. On the other hand, 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 (discussed later in the guidebook). That is why it is important to do your homework and spend time becoming familiar 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, a Department of Labor may give 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 or applications (termed **RFPs** or **RFA**s). These grants are usually project specific and time-limited.

The Federal government also puts money in 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

The Federal government has many grant research sources available to help organizations. The White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (**OFBCI**) has created a listing of nearly 100 programs of the Departments of Agriculture (**USDA**), Justice (**DOJ**), Health and Human Services (**HHS**), Labor (**DOL**), Education (**ED**), Housing and Urban Development (**HUD**) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (**USAID**). The list contains general information about programs that may be of interest to small or grassroots organizations and is available in the brochure, *Federal Funding Opportunities for Organizations that Help Those in Need*, obtained at the OFBCI website, www.fbci.gov.

The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (**CFDA**) is the Federal government's primary grants resource directory, accessed at www.cfda.gov. Here, you can search topics by program, agency, program deadline or type of assistance. You can also search this database to find assistance programs for which you are eligible and those that meet your requirements. You can then contact the agency or go to the website of the office that administers the program and find out how to apply.

The CFDA website also contains information to help you write proposals, although you cannot apply for grants on this site. You must go to the website of the appropriate department, agency and program in order to get the specific information needed to apply.

In addition to the CFDA and FBCI websites, keep these other important resources in mind:

FedGrants: www.fedgrants.gov. This website promotes the free Federal grants opportunities listing and notification service. Register here and you will be notified of program announcements, deadlines and changes in grant programs of particular interest to you.

The Federal Register: www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html. This is the official Federal government publication where all Federal program announcements, notices and regulations are published. Updated daily, the Federal Register should be monitored regularly for program announcements and regulations that apply to programs.

Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Grants Guide: www.hhs.gov/fbci/guide. The Grants Guide lists grant opportunities for faith-based organizations (**FBOs**) and community-based organizations (**CBOs**). Each program has been rated according to the type of opportunity it presents to small, grassroots organizations.

Guidance for Faith-based Organizations: If you represent a faith-based organization, special help is available to help you learn about and access Federal resources. Information about programs for faith-based organizations can be found at the White House FBCI website mentioned earlier and at the agency Centers for **Faith-Based and Community Initiatives** at the departments of Housing and Urban Development, Labor, Justice, Health and Human Services, Education, Agriculture and the U.S. Agency for International Development. These websites can be accessed through links at www.whitehouse.gov/government/fbci/technical-assistance.html or at the specific agency website.

Another good resource for a newly developed faith-based organization is the *Guidance to Faith-Based and Community Organizations on Partnering with the Federal Government* booklet, which is available on the OFBCI website at www.whitehouse.gov/government/fbci. It provides an overview of the Federal grants process and offers guidance about the unique needs of faith-based organizations regarding seeking and managing Federal grants.

While there are no Federal funds set aside specifically for faith-based organizations, a program like the Compassion Capital Fund (**CCF**) is designed to help faith-based and other community-

based organizations in accessing Federal resources through technical assistance and training. For specific information for faith-based organizations and the Compassion Capital Fund, go to www.hhs.gov/fbci. The site also contains links to other Department of Health and Human Services faith-based initiatives as well as information about technical assistance providers across the country.

State and Local Grant Opportunities: The offices and websites of your state, county or city are good places to start learning more about these sources; they can refer you to the appropriate agency or department. Governments are required to publish Requests for Proposals (**RFPs**) or Requests for Applications (**RFAs**) so local newspapers should be monitored for notices of grant opportunities. Finally, 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.

Appendix IV of the CFDA contains listings of regional and state offices and contact people for grant-making Federal agencies. This information can be accessed at www.cfda.gov/public/cat-app4-14.htm.

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 requires 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?

Nonprofit Status: Most discretionary grant programs provide assistance to organizations, not to individuals. Typically, organizations must first incorporate then acquire designation as a **nonprofit organization** in the state where they operate. The next step is to apply for and receive designation as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit (nonprofit) 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 in order to successfully complete these steps.

Where to Find Help Online

- ❑ On the Federal level, the IRS provides guidance on the process of getting the 501 (c)(3) designation on its website at www.irs.gov/charities/charitable/index.html.
- ❑ Additionally, the Center for Nonprofit Management offers a free guidebook, *Get Ready, Get Set*, with information about starting a nonprofit organization. It is available at www.cnmsocal.org/Services/p_grgs.html.
- ❑ Additional assistance is available in a guidebook from the Institute for Youth Development (IYD) at their website www.youthdevelopment.org for a small fee.

Receiving and maintaining your status as a nonprofit organization allows you to receive donations that are tax-deductible for the donors. It also makes you eligible to receive grant funding from both public and private sources. Establishing your status as a nonprofit organization is 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.

Other Program Eligibility Criteria: 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 programs, such as the novice **grantee** program for Community Technology Centers at the Department of Education 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 their programs and the types of organizations they fund. Access their website, research their programs and monitor their press releases, notices, program announcements and RFPs or RFAs.

As mentioned above, Federal, state and local agencies often offer technical assistance workshop opportunities to talk to program staff directly. They 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. Announcement of workshops are included in grant notices, press releases, newspaper advertise-

ments and RFPs. If a technical assistance workshop is offered for a grant program you are interested in, attend if possible, or at least request the workshop materials so that you can review them.

If you still have questions about a program, contact the agency's program office. Federal, state and local agencies have program officers who work with potential applicants to answer questions and discuss program requirements. See the contact information listed in brochures, on websites, in program announcements and RFPs.

These sources will provide you with information about:

- who can apply (eligibility).
- what partners you will need if any.
- target populations (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.

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 not consistent with your mission could also be harmful to 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?
- How will getting the grant impact your organization now and in the future?
- Will you be willing and able 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 (board members, staff, clients, other organizations doing similar work, 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 who you are?
- 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? (For more information, see the *Managing Public Grants* guidebook, part of the National Resource Center's *Intermediary Development Series*.)

- Can you manage the growth that may occur as a result of the 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? (For more information, see the *Establishing Partnerships* guidebook, part of the National Resource Center's *Intermediary Development Series* for help answering these questions.)

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, www.census.gov. 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 prepare for the grant seeking process as grant programs often require partnerships.

All proposals must include 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 and distinguish your programs from others. How will it 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 them (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. The outcomes are the changes that will take place as a result of program activities. You must understand and clearly articulate how you will evaluate/measure your program outcomes and explain how the proposed measures relate to your activities. (For more information, see the *Measuring Outcomes* guidebook, part of the National Resource Center's *Intermediary Development Series* to learn more about defining and measuring program outcomes.)

Questions about Program Objectives/Using the 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 describe serve your client population and share an interest in the problem you want to address, then you are ready to begin searching for specific funding opportunities.

All Federal grant opportunities must be announced to the public through the Federal Register. In addition to the RFPs and RFAs we have mentioned, these announcements may also be called Program Announcements, Notices of Fund 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:

- 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, the Federal government's primary grant program listing
- Summary: gives 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
- Mailing and Delivery Instructions: gives the address to deliver 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 and generally contains the following sections:
 - Background: includes the authority for the grant funding, the purpose of 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

A good example of all the various components of the grant announcement is the 2003 Compassion Capital Fund announcement that can be accessed at the HHS Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (CFBCI) website, www.hhs.gov/fbci/. After you have found the program and funding source that meets your needs, read the program announcement or RFP carefully and become thoroughly familiar with all of the requirements. (Once you decide to apply, you may even want to create a comprehensive checklist to ensure your application is complete.) Also, review any associated rules and regulations that are referenced in the RFP or announcement. You will need to review the applicable sections of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) as published in the Federal Register. This is where the government-wide and agency grant requirements are published. A partial list of these regulations is included in the Resources section of the Appendix.

Know 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 "Announcements of Grants Awarded" available on 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 the (FOIA) to disclose records, with some exceptions, that are requested in writing by any person. (More information on the FOIA is available at www.usdoj.gov/04foia/.) Each agency has a point of contact responsible for responding to such requests. The FOIA points of contact can be found at their respective agency's website.

Making the Decision to Apply

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

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 to increase the possibilities of writing a successful application.

If you are new to grant writing, consider attending a technical assistance workshop or taking a grant writing class, 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. Online resources are available at www.tgci.com/.

You can also visit the CFDA website and review its guide, *Developing and Writing Grant Proposals*, at www.cfda.gov/public/cat-writing.htm for step-by-step instructions about 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 on your staff, 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 your organization may be a good choice if you or your staff lacks 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 carry out their regular duties.

Here are some tips on hiring consultants:¹

- 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 principals and rules.
- 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 one 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 senior staff support hiring a consultant and are willing to make the financial investment in the service.
- Be clear about deadlines and other specifics. It is important to have 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.
- Contingency fees are generally not a good idea and are usually unallowable costs. The Association of Fundraising Professionals ethics statement notes its members should not be compensated based on a percentage of funds raised. Most funders will not fund this cost as part of the grant.
- Consultants are 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 help with designing your evaluation, but they cannot determine your target population, staff requirements or budget. You must develop this information.

¹ Vanderburg, Janine, “Outsourcing: Ten Rules for Working with a Fundraising Consultant,” JVA Consulting, LLC, accessed at www.janinevanderburg.com, June 30, 2003.

- 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.

3. A Team Approach

If you do not hire a consultant, it is generally not advised to have one person “do” the whole process, from planning to final proposal. 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.²

More Helpful Resources About Grant Writing

- ❑ Visit the HUD’s Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives Toolkit Match webpage at www.hud.gov/offices/fbci/tkmatch.cfm. This page has links to a variety of grant writing and organization capacity-building resources.
- ❑ Assistance may also be available from one of the 21 organizations funded by the Department of Health and Human Services’ Compassion Capital Fund in 2002. These organizations provide technical assistance for small faith-based and community organizations and can help with the grant writing process at no cost.
- ❑ You can learn more about the Compassion Capital Fund and the technical assistance organizations it funds at www.hhs.gov/fbci.

The one-person approach can also lead to implementation difficulties. Typically, the person who writes the grant is not the person solely 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. The 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, the organizations who will be partners in delivering the program, the person responsible for evaluation and the financial person responsible for developing the budget. The team can provide information, ideas and perspective that will support the grant writer’s effort and review the proposal as it is developed to help ensure that it is concise, logical, accurate, complete and realistic.

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

² Nelson, Ralph, “A Few Ideas about Pursuing Federal Funding,” accessed at www.col-ed.org/fund/ideas.html. June 24, 2003.

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 the needs assessment, 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. They 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 and Results Act (**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. (For more information, see the *Measuring Outcomes* guidebook, part of the National Resource Center's *Intermediary Development Series*.)

- **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 the 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 checklist is discussed in more detail below.

If the grant requires a **technical assistance** and **training (TTA)** or **sub-award** plan, develop outlines for those elements as well. (For more information, see the *Designing Sub-Award Programs* and *Delivering Training and Technical Assistance* guidebooks, part of the National Resource Center's *Intermediary Development Series*.)

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 needs assessment and build the case for your program. A review of current literature will be required to document your familiarity of current research findings and support your approach to working with your target population. Sources of statistics include the Federal agency websites, state and local government websites, the U.S. Census bureau (www.census.gov), 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 necessary to exhibit 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 or, better stated, **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 suffice. (For more information, see the *Building Multiple Revenue Sources* guidebook, part of the National Resource Center's *Intermediary Development Series*.)
- **Create a work plan:** Make assignments to team members to help gather support letters, provide partnership agreements, solicit bids for equipment and 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 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 it and make allowances for regular work to continue.
- **Gather attachments and fill out forms early:** All Federal grant applications require a **standard form** SF424, Application for Federal Assistance or some variation of it. This form provides basic information about your organization and the program being proposed. 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. Federal program forms can be found at www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/grants_forms.html. Gather organization 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 documents needed to support your proposal).
- **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 and relate all proposed expenditures to the goals, activities and objectives of your program.

See the Appendix for a **Sample Grant Writing Work Plan/Checklist** that you can modify 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.

These are some of the questions grant reviewers ask:³

- Does the application provide complete responses to the criteria specifically listed in the RFP?
- Are the applicant's intentions clear and specific rather than obscured by meaningless jargon?
- Do the presented ideas 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 described activities 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 they are, how will success (or failure) be evaluated?
- How will the skills, experience and education levels of the key staff help to achieve the program's objectives?
- To what extent does the applicant demonstrate a solid 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.

³ Morison, Karen A., *A Guidebook for Federal Grant Reviewers*, Heritage Foundation, Washington, D.C. 2002, p.8.

The Program Narrative

Most funders, public or private, look for the same basic elements in proposals: (1) the executive summary; (2) introduction of organization or organization background; (3) the 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. Specifically, it summarizes 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, descriptive and persuasive (one to three pages) and should convince 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.

Needs Assessment: This section should describe the needs you plan to address from the point of view of your community. It should describe the needs of your target population—not your agency. Needs must be documented with statistical and other evidence and 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 must be stated in clear and measurable terms and focused on results. Goals and objectives should be clearly related to the goals, objectives and priorities of the Federal program.

Program Design and Methods: The methods section describes the specific activities that will take place to achieve the objectives and enables the reader to visualize the implementation of the project. It should convince the reader your agency knows what it is doing, thereby further establishing its credibility. This section should also describe the activities you plan, 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 as well as any information about your experience with similar projects. Cite the qualifications and experience of key staff and consultants and the level of effort to be devoted to the grant (attach job descriptions and resumes of key staff). If you are using consultants, include their scope of work and their resumes. 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 design your evaluation plan based on them. There are two types of formal evaluation: one 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 and when and how it will be collected. Finally, explain how the evaluation information will be analyzed and reported.

Future Funding: Sometimes called “sustainability,” this part of the proposal focuses on what will happen to the program after funding ends. Explain what parts of the program will end and those you will sustain with other funding. Identify other 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 the budget. The RFP or RFA will describe allowable cost categories for the program budget.

Tips for Writing a Great Grant Proposal

- Review the proposal early and often.
- Have staff and 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.

The line item budget describes the specific categories of program funding (including matching funds) and expenses and their amounts. It also requires both public and non-public sources to be delineated. You will need to complete Standard Form (SF) 424A-Budget Information (available online at www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/grants_forms.html). This is the standard, two-page Federal budget form for non-construction projects (a different form is required for construction projects). Its purpose is to summarize and describe the requested financial assistance. Other forms may be required by the agency and by government-wide rules. In contrast, the budget narrative is an explanation and justification of those 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.

The Office of Management and Budget (**OMB**) Circular A-122 addresses issues of costs and budgeting for Federal grants to nonprofit organizations and is available at www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/grants_circulars.html. Understanding the cost principals and allowable costs for grant programs is critical to creating a budget that can be approved. Finally, be sure the requested budget amount is within the allowable range of the grant amounts described in the RFP.

Review, Package and Mail

Agencies will provide guidance as to 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 a half-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 your 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.

In most cases, applications must 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 or other means of “guaranteed delivery” as it is worth the extra cost. Faxed or electronic applications are generally not accepted, but check the announcement details to be sure. 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.

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

How Will You Know If You Are Funded?

The grant announcement, RFP or RFA, may include information about the timeframes for grant review and announcement. This information may or may not be provided depending on the agency or program. If it 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.

Notice of grant awards are provided in writing to the grant recipients, and recipients are listed in Federal agency announcements and on their websites. 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 program announcement or RFP or RFA) 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 get copies of successful proposals to guide future efforts.

Remember that it is a competitive process and many organizations apply for each grant. In some cases, there may be 20 to 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 prepare a successful 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.
- **Deadlines are firm.** 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 to serve families in need. This information can position you to be among the top ranks in the armies of compassion that are partnering with the Federal government to make a difference in the lives of families and communities in need.

Appendix

Resources

Grant Writing

“*Developing and Writing Grant Proposals*,” Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance at www.cfda.gov/public/cat-writing.htm. This guide outlines the process and elements of Federal grant proposal writing.

The Foundation Center's Proposal Writing Short Course, <http://fdncenter.org/learn/short-course/prop1.html>. This two-part course provides 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, www.tgci.com. Provides proposal writing workshops held across the United States and online grant writing guidance.

A Guide to Proposal Planning and Writing, www.oryxpress.com/miner.htm. Guidelines and tips on planning and writing a grant proposal written by Jeremy T. and Lynn E. Miner.

Help with Grant Proposals, <http://nonprofit.about.com/cs/cs/helpwithgrants/index.html>, (Oryx Press). Links to information about all aspects of proposal writing and development. Hosted by About.com.

HUD's *Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives Toolkit Match* webpage at www.hud.gov/offices/fbci/tkmatch.cfm. This webpage has links to a variety of grant writing and organization capacity building resources.

"*Where Can I Find Examples of Grant Proposals?*" The Foundation Center. www.fdncenter.org/learn/faqs/html/propsample.html. This Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) in the Foundation Center's Learning Lab provides links to web sites that feature sample proposals.

Federal Agency Centers on Faith-Based and Community Initiatives

White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, www.fbci.gov

Department of Justice, www.ojpp.usdoj.gov/fbci

Department of Labor, www.dol.gov/cfbci

Department of Health and Human Services, www.hhs.gov/fbci

Department of Housing and Urban Development, www.hud.gov/offices/fbci

Department of Education, www.ed.gov/faithandcommunity

Department of Agriculture, www.usda.gov/fbci

U. S. Agency for International Development, www.usaid.gov

Regulations, OMB Circulars and Forms

The **Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)** may be accessed at www.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/index.html to find key rules and regulations governing grant programs. See the following section references for the agencies with Faith-based and Community Initiatives that may be of interest to grassroots FBOs and CBOs.

Department	CFR Section
Department of Education	34 CFR 74
Department of Health and Human Services	45 CFR 74
Department of Housing and Urban Development	24 CFR 84
Department of Justice	28 CFR 70
Department of Labor	29 CFR 95
Department of Agriculture	7 CFR 3019

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issues circulars that govern government-wide standards and requirements for programs. Following is a list of the circulars that govern non-profit Federal grants acquisition and management. These circulars may be accessed at www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/.

OMB Circular	Name/Purpose
A-110	Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Other Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Nonprofit Organizations
A-122	Cost Principles for Nonprofit Organizations
A-133	Audits of States, Local Governments, and Nonprofit Organizations

At least two standard forms are required for all Federal grant programs, SF 424 – Application for Federal Assistance and/or SF 424-A – Budget Information-Non-construction programs. Some agencies may use variations of these forms. These forms may be accessed at www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/grants_forms.html.

Summary of Other Resources

Compassion Capital Fund, www.hhs.gov/fbci.

2003 Compassion Capital Fund Announcement, accessed at www.hhs.gov/fbci/.

“Federal Funding Opportunities for Organizations That Help Those in Need,” www.fbci.gov.

Federal grant program forms, accessed at www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/grants_forms.html.

FedGrants, accessed at www.fedgrants.gov. Register at this Federal grants notification service site to be notified of program announcements, deadlines and changes in grant programs.

Federal Register, accessed at www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html. All Federal program announcements, rules and regulations are published in the Federal Register. Updated daily, this publication should be monitored regularly for program announcements and regulations that apply to programs.

Get Ready, Get Set, accessed at www.cnmsocal.org/Services/p_grgs.html. This is a free guidebook about starting a nonprofit organization available from The Center for Nonprofit Management.

Guidance to Faith-Based and Community Organizations on Partnering with the Federal Government, accessed at www.whitehouse.gov/government/fbci/. This is a booklet available on the White House Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (FBCI) website.

Department of Health and Human Services Grants Guide, accessed at www.hhs.gov/fbci/guide/. Lists grant opportunities for faith-based and community-based organizations. Each program has been rated according to the type of opportunity it presents to small, grassroots organizations.

Internal Revenue Service, The IRS provides guidance on the process of getting the 501 (c)(3) designation on its website at www.irs.gov/charities/charitable/index.html.

OMB Circulars and Forms, accessed at www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/grants_circulars.html. These are sources of guidance, forms and compliance for costs, budgeting and other important aspects of Federal grants to nonprofit organizations.

U.S. Census Bureau, accessed at www.census.gov. The Census Bureau is an excellent source for statistics and other information about populations in local communities, states and national trends.

Glossary

Sources: 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.

Budget period – The time intervals 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 your capacity-building activities, the 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

CCF – Compassion Capital Fund

Community Development (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.

CFDA – Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance

Cooperative agreement – An award agreement for financial assistance between the grant recipient and the Federal government that outlines the terms 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

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.

FBCI – Faith-Based and Community Initiatives

FBO – Faith-Based Organization

Grantee – The organization receiving grant funds

GPRA – Government Performance and Results Act

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.

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 Fund Availability

OMB – Office of Management and Budget

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 an 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

Sub-award – 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 subrecipient or by a subrecipient to a lower tier subrecipient.

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

Training – The imparting of knowledge and skills to people in a group setting. Training includes behavioral objectives, opportunities to practice, and results in improved performance.

TTA – Training and Technical Assistance

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) – Title I of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-193) creates the TANF program that 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) program, Emergency Assistance (EA) and Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) programs and replaces them 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

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 by-laws		
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 indicate whether or not FBO/CBO has been delinquent on grant activities, report or audit requirements		
Description of activities in area receiving funds		
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, 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		

References

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