Grants Life Cycle

Applicants’ Perspective
The Cycle in a Nutshell

- Grants cycle or process is a series of sequential steps involved in the pre-award and post-award phases of grants administration or management.

- The steps are planning, announcement, application, negotiation, award, post-award monitoring, closeout.

- Familiarity with the various steps is definitely helpful for applicants in knowing what to expect, writing competitive applications/proposals and after an award, implementing a grant program as stated in their proposal and in accordance with all terms and conditions.
Diagram of Grant Cycle

HHS Grant Management Process
Planning

- Keep your organization’s mission and goals in mind
- Identify the federal agencies that have programs that align with your goals and mission
- Search Grants.gov/CFDA for current funding opportunity announcements
- Take stock of your organizations strengths and challenges towards a successful application
Planning Continued

- Conduct an internal needs assessment
- Would you need a proposal committee?, a project director?, writers?, designate an authorized organization representative, etc
- Map out assignments for completing your application. Set completion dates
- Obtain and review past successful grant application packages
- Get registered on Grants.gov
Grant opportunity announcements are sometimes called funding opportunity announcements (FOA), request for proposals (RFP), request for application (RFA).

HHS FOAs can be found on Grants.gov, Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) and on the HHS Forecast website.

You can also contact any HHS agency for current funding opportunities.
Application

- Assuming you find a funding opportunity of interest, read it thoroughly, discuss it as a team, map out a strategy for tackling the application and writing the proposal.

- A typical grant application has multiple sections including abstract or summary, organization background, problem description, goals and objectives, project design or methodology, evaluation, methods, etc.
Application Continued

- Follow the instructions for each section in the funding opportunity announcement. Special attention to all technical requirements.
- Have more than two persons screen your application for errors and adherence to the instructions.
- Make sure that your proposal is vividly descriptive. Remember you will not be there to explain any ideas that do not come across to reviewers.
Application Continued

- When your application is received by the awarding agency, it will be reviewed for completeness and eligibility.
- It will be evaluated by experts based on an objective review process, scored according to the stated criteria in the announcement, and rank ordered according to merit.
- Application review is a fair and objective process. No secrets; No favors.
The application review process further includes the business management capabilities of the applicant.

A strict examination of whether the applicant has a system in place to comply with applicable regulatory or statutory requirements.

It also involves a detailed cost analysis of the proposed budget to determine what is allowable, and reasonable.
The awarding agency may call the applicant to negotiate a modification of some or all aspects of the contents of the application to bring them in line with regulations or enabling legislation.

Usually it has to do with scope of work and budgets but may extend to other pertinent areas including terms and conditions of an award.

Either way, negotiation is a good sign that an applicant may indeed receive a grant award.
Award

- The awarding agency will notify successful applicants via a document called Notice of Award (NOA).
- The NOA describes all terms and conditions, including reporting requirements.
- The NOA also implies that the awarding agency considers the applicant fit to enter into a business agreement with the government, and will comply with legal and policy requirements.
Monitoring

- Awards have to be monitored for progress or deficiencies
- This includes site-visits, telephone contacts, progress and financial report reviews, etc
- Grantee and awarding agency should maintain all communication records including telephone contacts, and formal correspondences
- Maintain all documents related to amendments
If monitoring identifies non-compliance or deficiencies, the awarding agency may take actions to correct the issues.

Such actions may include technical assistance, termination, suspension and debarment, audit resolution, and conflict resolution.

Even when issues have been corrected, there still might be follow-up site visits to ensure the program is being implemented as required.
Closeout

- Closeout involves reviewing expiring grants to ensure requirements are met.
- Grantees will submit final progress and financial or budget reports to the awarding agency.
- All funds must have been spent or obligated by the formal date when the grant ends.
- If an extension is needed to tidy up the closeout process, grantee must request and obtain the permission in writing.
Summary

- The grant cycle or process is intended to ensure
  - Transparency
  - Grants are properly planned
  - Fair competition
  - Grantees are provided the support they need to succeed
  - Taxpayer dollars are used only for the intended purpose