Grant Writing Under the Uniform Guidance

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Maryland

Learning Objectives

- Raise awareness of federal requirements, priorities, and selection criteria.

- Recognize the difference between merit and risk reviews.

- Increase opportunities through state, local, and private funding.

- Identify some grant writing resources.

A Few Words

A Few Words

- Current fiscal climate signals shrinking budgets, greater needs, and a growing trend to seek external funding.

- While grants provide resources, there are always strings attached.
  - Applying takes knowledge and skill.
  - More responsibilities if awarded.

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Raise awareness of federal requirements, priorities, and selection criteria.

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Federal Regulations

1 Program statute (USC)

A Public law

B Authorization

2 Federal agency regulation

3 Uniform Guidance

Program Statute

- Creates the federal grant program.

- Establishes program priorities.

- Identifies any restrictions:
  - Eligibility.
  - Cost sharing.

Federal Priorities

- Absolute.

- Competitive.

- Invitational.

Absolute Priorities

- Must be addressed.

- Originate from the program statute.

- Sometimes simply stated in the guidelines.

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Competitive Priorities

- Provide extra points.
  - Poverty.
  - Veteran.
  - Rural.
  - New recipient.
- Some applicants may/may not be able to address the competitive points.

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Invitational Priorities

- Provide no points.

- Often described with great detail.

- Key phrases:
  - The agency may also be interested in …
  - The agency invites applications that also address…

- Beneficial to include, but secondary to absolute and competitive priorities which are scored.

Before You Begin

- Think about context, priorities, needs, impact, and sustainability.

- Share your thoughts with leadership.

- Gain approval to pursue.

Writing Begins with Selection Criteria

- Read the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).
  - Program announcement.
  - Solicitation.
  - Application package.
- Find the absolute priorities/purpose.
- Find the list of selection criteria that will be scored.
- Base the narrative outline on the selection criteria.

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Typical Federal Selection Criteria for Research Grants

- Intellectual merit.
  - Potential to advance knowledge.
  - Focus on one field or across different fields.

- Broader impact.
  - Potential to benefit society.
  - Contribution to desired societal outcomes.

Typical Federal Selection Criteria for Program Grants

- Purpose.

- Extent of need.

- Plan of operation.

- Quality of key personnel.

- Budget.

- Evaluation.

- Adequacy of resources.

Purpose

- Meet the needs of the authorizing statute.

- Address the absolute priorities.

- Correlate grantor's priorities to project's priorities.

- Focus on anticipated outcomes, results, deliverables.

Extent of Need

- Include local statistics and data.

- Compare local data to national data.

- Conduct a needs assessment, like a SWOT analysis.
    - Strengths.
    - Weaknesses.
    - Opportunities.
    - Threats.

Plan of Operation

- Goals and objectives.

- Activities.

- Methods or strategies.

- Timeline.

- Management plan.

What is promised in the proposal becomes deliverables or outcomes in the award agreement.

Types of Objectives

- Process objectives.

- Outcome objectives.

- SMART objectives.

Example of a Process Objective

- We will create a new skills lab that includes the latest equipment designed to help participants learn lifelong fitness (*assumes improvement takes place*).

- Or

Example of an Outcome Objective

- Participants enrolled in recreational classes during the Fall who complete 30 hours with a trainer in the skills lab will reflect an improvement rate 10% higher than a comparable cohort of participants who did not have access to the skills lab (*documents that improvement takes place*).

Which objective sounds more worthy of funding?

SMART Objective

- Specific.

- Measurable.

- Achievable.

- Realistic.

- Time-dependent.

Quality of Key Personnel

- Quality is key.
  - Who is responsible.
  - What prior experience do they have.
  - What positions are needed.

Budget and Cost Effectiveness

- A good budget does more than add correctly.
  - Is the project a good investment?
  - Are there existing resources to support the project?
  - Do requested costs match the narrative?
  - Will the investment make a difference?

Evaluation

- What will be evaluated?

- Who will be responsible?

- What methods will ensure collection of data?

- What instruments will be used?

  - Surveys.

  - Pre- and post-tests.

  - Interviews.

- Is there baseline data?

Evaluation Purpose

- What will change once measured?

- How do you demonstrate success?
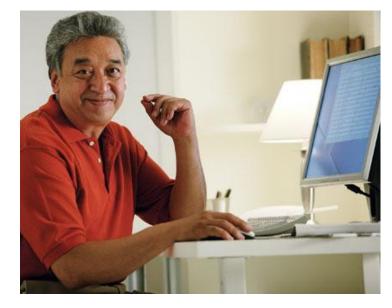
Adequacy of Resources

- Are there existing resources to contribute toward the project?
    - Meeting rooms.
    - Internet.
    - Labs.
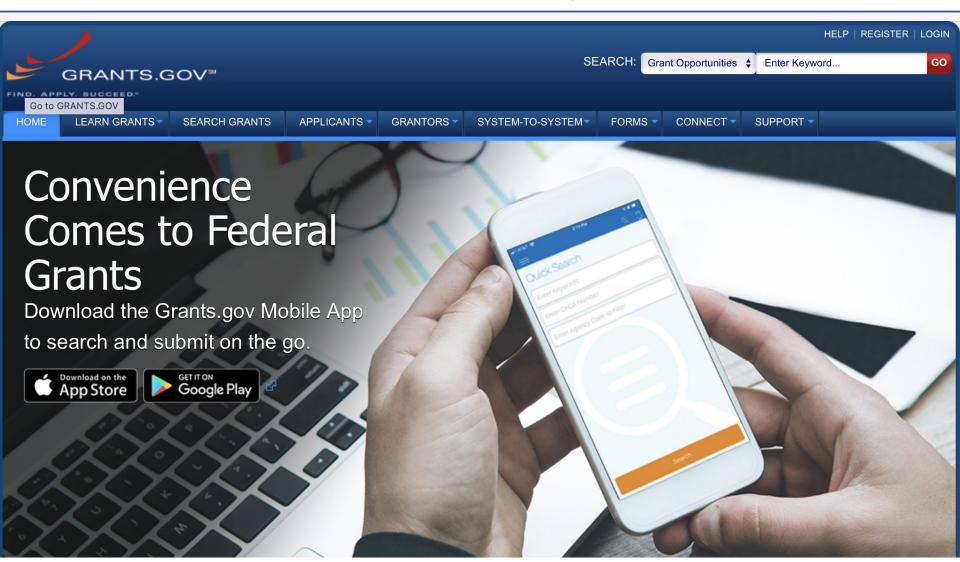   - Ball fields.
    - Staff time?

Submission

- Most federal grants are submitted through www.grants.gov.

- Website requires registration.
  - UEI number.
  - EIN number.
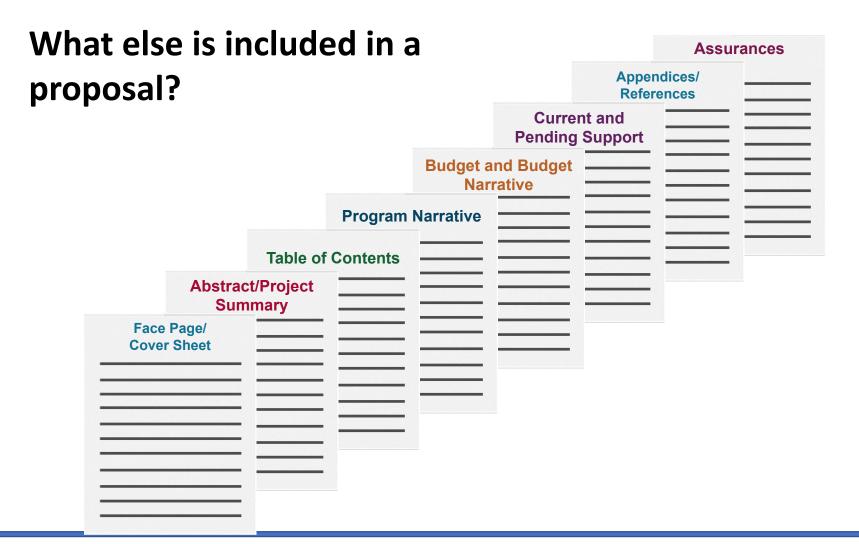 - 501(c)(3) letter if nonprofit.
  - More – check site requirements.

LO1: Federal Requirements

Federal Review

- How are the selection criteria scored?

- Who are the reviewers?

FUND FOR THE IMPROVEMENT AND REFORM OF SCHOOLS AND TEACHING
TECHNICAL REVIEW FORM

SCHOOL-LEVEL PROGRAM (CFDA NO. 84.211A)
SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS PROGRAM (CFDA NO. 84.211B)

APPLICANT _____

_____

APPLICATION NO.   R211   _____

SELECTION CRITERIA	MAXIMUM POINTS	ASSIGNED POINTS
I. Need for the Project	15	_____
II. Plan of Operation	20	_____
III. Quality of Key Personnel	10	_____
IV. Educational Value	20	_____
V. Budget and Cost Effectiveness	10	_____
VI. Evaluation Plan	10	_____
VII. National Significance	15	_____
Competitive Preference	25	_____
TOTAL:	125	_____

OVERALL COMMENTS:

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Reviewer's Name (PRINT) _____   Phone ( )_____

Signature: _____   Date _____

Reviewer Score Sheet

What else is included in a proposal?

Face Page/Cover Sheet

Abstract/Project Summary

Table of Contents

Program Narrative

Budget and Budget Narrative

Current and Pending Support

Appendices/References

Assurances

Partners

- Many grants benefits from partners.
    - What happens beyond the project?
    - Agreements?
    - Resources?
    - Commitments?

Literature Search

- Have you conducted a literature search while developing your ideas?

- Is your idea consistent with the advice of noted authorities?

- Have you incorporated best practices?

- Can your idea be replicated elsewhere?

Sustainability

- Lasting change.

- Impact.

- Long-term outcomes.

Sustainability – Sample Language

While all the objectives of the project strive to build capacity, it is important to develop with purpose an initiative that will be sustained over time. Several factors contribute to the sustainability of the program. The level of support may not replace 100% of the grantor contribution; however, sustainable components include: 1) the relationships forged among the partners; 2) the business community networks created; 3) the project infrastructure including existing personnel, leadership, training programs, and facilities; 4) the knowledge gained through the extensive outreach efforts; and 5) the development and refinement of curriculum and course offerings.

Difference Between Merit and Risk Reviews

Merit Reviews

- All about the proposal.

- Absolute priorities.

- Selection criteria.

- Reviewer score sheet.

- Higher scores considered for funding.

Risk Reviews

- All about the applicant.

- Past performance.

- Prior experience.

- Weaknesses in financial systems.

- Disputes, audit findings, recovery of funds.

- Applicant with higher risk may not be eligible for funding.

The Rationale for Risk Reviews

- Lower the risk, the less likely there will be waste, fraud, and abuse.

- The higher the risk, the more likely there sill be waste, fraud, and abuse.

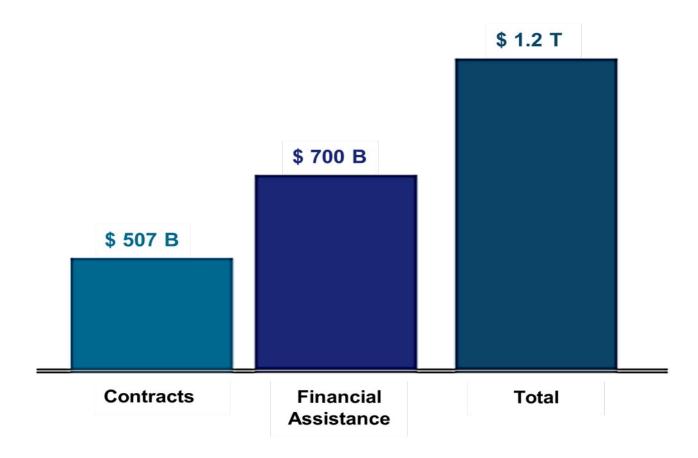**Uniform Guidance and Risk Reviews**

- Uniform guidance has two over-riding priorities.
  - Reduce administrative burden.
  - Prevent waste, fraud, and abuse.

Why the Attention on Risk (Pre-COVID numbers)?

COVID Funding

- COVID funding significantly increased grant funding to $5T, with greater scrutiny relating to improper payments.

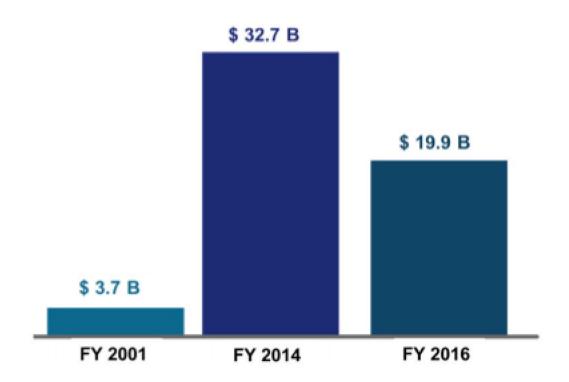- Pandemic Response Accountability Committee (PRAC) at www.pandemicoversight.gov.

Here's the Issue: Improper Payments

Year	Improper Payments
2012	$108 billion
2013	$106 billion
2014	$125 billion
2015	$137 billion
2016	$144 billion
2017	$141 billion
2018	$151 billion
2019	$175 billion
2020	$206 billion
	GAO Reports 20-344 and A210016

Recovery of Improper Payments

Bar chart:
- FY 2001: $ 3.7 B
- FY 2014: $ 32.7 B
- FY 2016: $ 19.9 B

- Council of the Inspector General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) report.

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Risk Reviews

- Greater scrutiny of applications and applicants.

- Focus on stewardship of funds.

- Risk reviews can disqualify an applicant.

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Today's Proposals Must

- Include language about the merit criteria (200.205).

- Include language about the applicant risk (200.206).

- Include language about the applicant's capacity to manage federal funds, if awarded (200.206).

State, Local, and Private Funding

State/Local Grants

- States and local governments often receive federal funding awards.
  - They can pass-through some of the federal funds to subrecipients.
  - Federal requirements flow down from the federal government to the pass-through recipient to the subrecipients (200.101).

- State and local governments also have local funding.
  - Applicants should clarify source of funding for any awards.

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Corporate and Foundation Grants

- Alternative to federal, state, tribal, and local grants.

- Some require a Letter of Inquiry (LOI).

- Some provide an applicant form.

- Some require submission through their own portal.

- Some just request a descriptive letter.

Descriptive Letter

- In absence of guidelines, grant writers can use the federal selection criteria.

- Creates a professional presentation.

- Be mindful of any page limits.

LOIs or Preliminary Applications

- Purpose of grant.

- State of need.

- Population served.

- Amount requested with budget.

- Strategy to secure full funding (sustainability).

- Plan of action including milestones.

- Evaluation plan.

Some Foundations Also Request

- Annual report.

- Most recent financials.

- Copy of IRS 501(c)(3) predetermination letter.

- List of Board of Directors.

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Digital Submissions

Many private funders use their own digital submission systems.

Most require registration.

Be mindful of fonts, bold, italic, underline, symbols, skipped fields.

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Funding Resources

Professional Associations

- Grant Professionals Association at www.grantprofessionals.org.

- National Grants Management Association at www.ngma.org.

- Association of Fundraising Professionals at https://afpglobal.org.

Professional Associations

- Center for Nonprofit Excellence at www.thence.org/engage/grants.

- Guidestar at https://www2.guidestar.org.

- American Grant Writers Association at http://www.agwa.us.

Searching for Public Grants

- www.grants.gov.

- Federal agency websites.

- State agency websites.

- Local government websites.

Searching for Private Grants

- Foundation Center at www.foundationcenter.org.

- Regional area grantmakers at www.givingforum.org.

- Community foundations at www.cof.org/community-foundation-locator.

In Maryland

- Maryland Governor's Grants Office at https://grants.maryland.gov.

- Maryland Nonprofits at https://www.marylandnonprofits.org.
  - 32,000 nonprofits in Maryland.
  - $5.3 billion given annually by Md residents to charity.

In Maryland

- Maryland Department of Planning/Maryland InfoPortal at https://planning.maryland.gov/Pages/OurWork/Maryland-InfoPortal.aspx.

A Digital Catalog of State Assistance Programs

Summary

- Uniform guidance focuses on performance, not just compliance.

- Priority to reduce fraud, waste, and abuse.

- Risk assessments of applicants are required in addition to merit review of proposals.

- Applicants must focus on absolute priorities and selection criteria.

Summary

- Promises made in the proposal as objectives and activities become required outcomes in the award agreement.

- Financial and program performance should align.

- Federal selection criteria may also be used in private funding applications.

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Q & A

Friendly Disclaimer

Please be reminded:

This presentation is intended to provide general information and does not constitute legal or financial advice. Please consult with your legal and financial advisors. I hope, however, that the information helps provide some insights as you further pursue your work in the grants community.

Prepared For

- Maryland Governor's Grants Office.

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