Basics of Applying to Federal Grant Programs

Children's Environmental Health Symposium
Protecting Children's Environmental Health in the U.S.-Mexico Border Region
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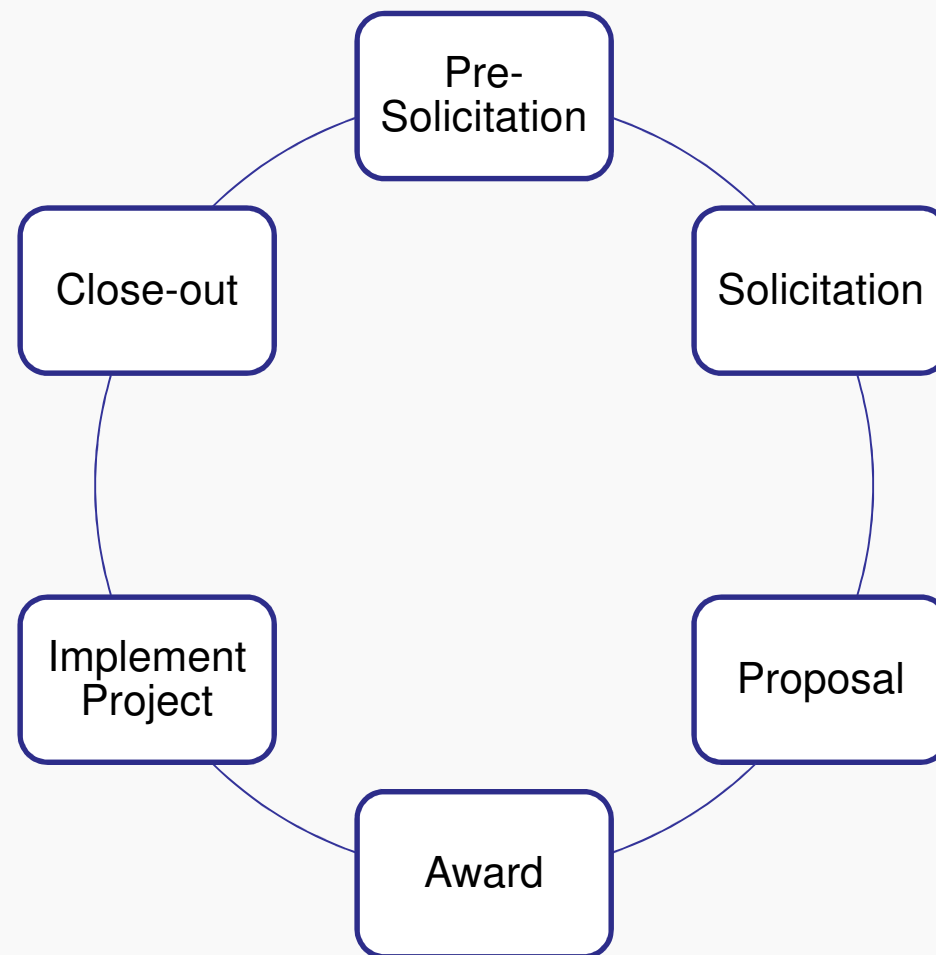U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Agenda

- Overview of Federal Grants
- Grant Proposal Fundamentals and Best Practices
- Questions
- Class Exercise
- Upcoming RFPs and Additional Information
- Questions

OVERVIEW OF FEDERAL GRANTS

Grants Cycle

Federal Grants Process

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

Communications with Applicants

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

Communications with Applicants

- ## EPA cannot
  - Offer to write proposals for applicants
  - Review or comment on draft proposals
  - Provide information on the Agency's approach to evaluating proposals beyond what is described in Section V of the announcement
  - Provide a competitive advantage to any applicant

GRANT PROPOSAL FUNDAMENTALS

Win More – Pursue Less

Determine Viability of Applying

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

"Pursue-Don't Pursue"

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

Successful Projects Ask Questions

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

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

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

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

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

- **What project activity will cause the behavior change?**
  - Train residents? Train business owners? Inform lawmakers? Inform consumers? Train community leaders? Develop information?

Proposal Big Picture

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

Common Proposal Components

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

Tips for writing a good Statement of Need:

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

Goals   vs.   Objectives

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

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

SMART Objectives

- **S**pecific - clearly defined and identifiable

- **M**easurable- quantifiable outputs of the program

- **A**chievable - project is able to reach or attain

- **R**ealistic – a practical idea of what can be achieved

- **T**ime bound – target date of when finished
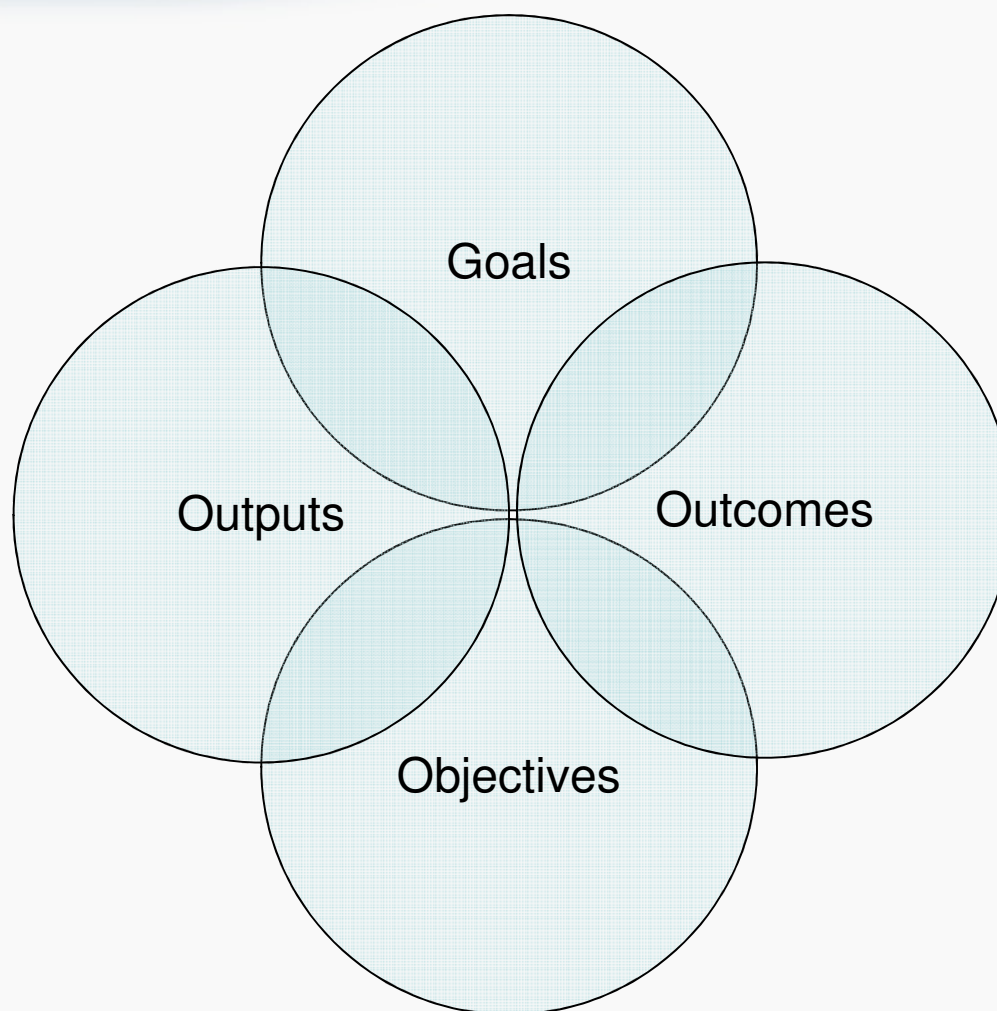
Outputs and Outcomes

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

- Outcomes - the way a thing turns out; a consequence *i.e.* a mangrove-planting event will be a change in perception of the participants who now understand the importance of mangroves.

Tips for Goals, Objectives, Outputs, and Outcomes

- Don't confuse the goals, objectives, outputs and outcomes.

- Use action verbs for objectives such as "*increase, decrease*, and *reduce*."

- Remember objectives are different than activities.

Scope and Task Descriptions

- This section should clarify:

  - What does the proposal include? What is not included?

  - How many (events, people, items, etc.)?

  - How often?

- Should align with RFP and with goals, objectives, outputs, and outcomes

Team Description

Schedule

Budget

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

Monitoring and Evaluation

How will I know if my project is successful?

Project Sustainability

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

Letters of Commitment

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

CLASS EXERCISE

Contact Information

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