INTRODUCTION

Whether you are a seasoned grants professional, preparing to take the Grant Professional Certification Exam or someone newer to the profession, hoping to fine tune your skills, we hope that this article will be of value to you.

We are a group of four Study Buddies who came to be great friends as we prepared to take the GPCI exam in November 2010. We began preparing in June, meeting twice a month until early fall, when we decided to meet weekly right up until test time. We can't stress enough how preparation helps. We studied with the aid of two Study Guides, one from the American Association of Grant Professionals Broward County Chapter and the other from the Grant Professionals Certification Institute's Indianapolis Exam Study Sessions, held from February 4th to March 4th, 2010. We are deeply indebted to these Grant Professionals Certified for the hard work they put into preparing these materials, and we vowed as a group to do the same, to help others prepare for the exam.

This article is based upon the first four of nine Competencies a successful Grant Professional must master both to pass the credentialing exam and particularly to excel in his or her field. The Competencies and their headings were created by the Grant Professionals Certification Institute (Copyright 2007). Regardless of whether or not you choose to take the credentialing exam, these set the tone for success as a grants professional.

A second article covering the remaining Competencies will be available on November 1, 2011.

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COMPETENCY 1: Knowledge of how to research, identify and match funding resources to meet specific needs

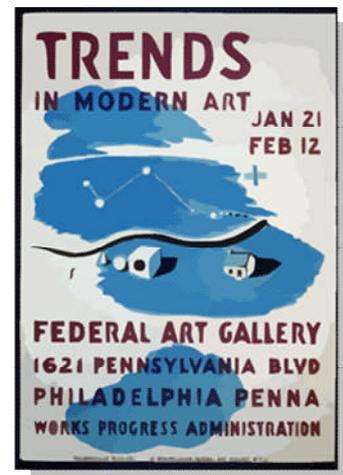**01. Identify major trends in public funding and public policy.**

Federal, state, county and city funding trends include: Trends in public funding and public policy include declining revenues, unfunded mandates, and cuts in social services. Included with that is increased accountability, increased evaluation and required Government Performance & Results Act (GPRA) reporting. There have been many technology changes resulting from internet (grants.gov) including online application submissions and an increased number of funders monitoring reports being submitted online. Changes in technology and the digital divide have created both opportunities and barriers especially as it relates to marginalized communities. In recent times we have also seen an increased number of government funders migrating to the use of cooperative agreements, procurement contracts, discretionary, entitlement and formula grants as a core strategy that comprises their funding.

The requirement to use evidence-based models is more present now than in years previous. Funds are more competitive as government and private funders now wish to support only the best organizations to accomplish the grantmaker's particular goals. Grant applications include requirements to state the purposes of a project as outcomes and include a logic model. Outcome-based evaluation is now standard in many governmental and private funding sources. A growing number of grantmakers only want to support projects that show appropriate collaboration with various partners in both funding and implementation. There is an increased requirement for collaboration, history of organization, matching requirements, cost sharing, capacity building and how each of these areas is defined.

A major public policy change was the elimination of regulatory and policy barriers by the White House to enable faith-based organizations to compete on an equal basis for funding with certain safeguards like separation of church and state. However they cannot push their religion as a part of their process, with secured funds.

Some other major trends in public funding and public policy include:
- Increased regulation of nonprofits by IRS as a result of Sarbanes Oxley (Whistle blower policies)
- Grantsmanship now considered its own profession, with the emergence of Grants Professional Association (GPA), popularity of grant writing classes now offered at many universities.
- Opportunists have emerged (hucksters).
- $400 billion annually – over 1 million applicants for 26 federal agencies.
- Requirements to state the purposes of a project as outcomes and include a logic model
- State government has become a far more appropriate site of decision on funds flowing from the federal government as well as those provided by local tax dollars.

- State and Local government funding has advantages over federal funding – more accessible program staff and less competition.

02. Identify major trends in private grant funding.

There was a time when funders used to just 'give' money away and little if any expectation was placed on the grant receiver related to outcomes. There were few if any accountability requirements and reporting on them was – less than minimal (if required at all). But wow, how the times have changed!

Some of the greatest 'trends' in grant making that have emerged in the past decade include:
- Increased accountability and competency.
- Local governments and public schools are seeking and getting private funding due to cuts in state government funding. Also competing for federal grants.
- Nonprofits are shifting from government funding to private funding.
- Wealthy people (baby boomers) are dying and creating private foundations.
- Government and private funders now wish to support only the best organizations to accomplish their particular goals. More capital and capacity-building.
- Content of proposals has evolved – common grant applications, outcome evaluations, logic models.
- Focus on emerging issues, disasters, new needs, outcome data.
- Seek greater involvement with grantees and its partners, not just giving away money.
- Greater emphasis on measurable objectives, evaluation, logic models, and best practices.
- Greater emphasis on partnerships.
- Emphasis on sustainability.

Top beneficiaries: children, youth, seniors, economically disadvantaged, nonprofit organizations with a focus on capacity building and collaboration. Not surprising program support continues to be largest type of grant support accounting for 45% of all grants funded. Funder focus areas remain as:
- 24% Education,
- 21% Health,
- 15% Human Services and,
- 13% Arts and Culture

03. Identify methods of locating funding sources.

You'll want to make certain you are signed up to receive email announcements from a wide variety of sources and continue to add to and fine tune those listing profiles that you are currently including:
- Google or other search engine to review websites
- Electronic newsletters, grant alerts
- Opportunities E-News (Charity Channel) or special focus,
- National Association of School-Based Health's Grant Alert
- Don't forget local advocacy groups and professional associations

- Listservs
- Electronic or print publications, e.g. Chronicle of Philanthropy
- Philanthropy News Digest
- Local/state publications/databases
- Database
- RFPs, RFAs, SGAs, NOFAs, NOAs

04. Identify techniques to learn about specific funders.

There is a wealth of information available through the Internet that will assist you in learning more about specific funders. However, you must also keep in mind that learning about funders means you must engage in conversation with them. This will provide you with the information you are seeking, and help to develop a relationship with them. In addition, the type of funder you are seeking will determine what information you will be able to gather and review. As you are reviewing information, be sure to have conversations with others to ask their experience with the prospective funder.

To learn about funders:
Read their grant (RFP) guidelines, annual reports, Form 990-PF, websites, industry publications and contact individuals who know board members and program staff, Foundation Directory, and agencies/colleagues who've received funding from them.
Attend funder panel presentations and workshops.

Information to gather on potential **Federal Funders**:
- Name of grant program or category, administering agency, Program Officer.
- Major purpose of legislation that authorized the program.
- Eligibility requirements for applicants and geographic areas with funding priority
- How much funding is available and earmarked for continuation vs. new awards?
- What are the latest regulations governing the program?
- Has funding already been appropriated?

Information to gather on potential **Foundation Funders**:
- Name and contact information for foundation and eligibility requirements.
- Types of organizations they have funded (grassroots, institutions).
- Types of awards they prefer (challenge, seed, capital, capacity building).
- Minimum and maximum amounts awarded and anticipated number of awards.
- Do they pay indirect?
- Name and background of donors, trustees and officers, local contact person.
- Amount of assets, amount granted last year (990 and 990-PF).
- How much of last year's awards went to continuation awards?
- Who are the reviewers? Do you have contacts that could help influence their opinion?

05. Identify methods for maintaining, tracking and updating information on potential funders.

Just start prospecting several funders and before you know it, you are trying to maintain multiple deadlines, dates, key statistics and critical information. And you will want a way to sort that information, track it have it at your finger tips in minutes. Therefore, a filing system of some kind it critical as well as developing ongoing methods to, readily update your current information. You may consider:

- Collecting and organizing data in binders, by funder or focus area.
- Database software: Excel, Access, Razors Edge, Other.
- Creating a grant calendar by date with links to funders
- Creating, files and regularly update tracking forms on funders that are most promising.
- Using rss feed, or other tracking software to alert you when sites have been updated.
- Monitoring newspapers, news releases, newsletters, and listservs.

06. Identify effects of applicants' organizational cultures, values, decision-making processes, and norms on the pursuit of grant opportunities.

As we know, organizations have their own personalities, organizational cultures and norms. These affect the grant process just like they would affect the way an organization would approach it programmatic work. Therefore, the board of directors must deem that the program is needed for the constituency, the scope and size of the program is reasonable for the organization and the program reflects the mission, vision, values and strategic plan of the organization.

Staff must look at and be able to articulate:
- How does the proposed project links to the agency's mission?
- If the project is a new activity, how does it advance the mission statement?
- What aspects of the strategic plan does this project respond to?
- How does the project complement the funder's stated interests?
- Does the funding timeline match the required implementation plan for the project?
- Who decides to pursue funding, and authorizes 'match' requirements?
- If it advances the mission, is it a priority?
- Some foundations have dirty money – oil companies, cigarettes and may not be an option based on your mission.

07. Identify fundable programs and projects for specific organizations.
So what exactly makes a project/program funding worthy? If you are able to clearly and logically present answers to the following questions then you will be in a better position to present your need and understand how it aligns with identified funding sources priorities.
- It targets a significant /documented need, service gap or problem
- The agency has a deep understanding of issues and the target audience

- The program has measurable objectives and targeted outcomes
- The program utilizes successful models/best practices tailored to address local audiences/needs
- The program collaborates with others working on the same issue
- The budget/timeline is reasonable/adequate for the scope of work
- The agency is vested in the program and contributes either cash or in-kind.
- Community is supportive.
- The program is sustainable.
- Learning can be disseminated.

08. Determine best matches between funders and specific programs.

The process of identifying potential funding sources to approach about investing in your program requires that you become somewhat of a detective and a matchmaker at the same time. You should not approach either 'occupation' as if you were running a sprint; rather approach them as if you were running a marathon.

First, familiarize yourself with the goals of your programs; know the target markets and related demographics, geographic area served, the outcomes and impact. How would additional funds be utilized? Know the assets of the program including staff, their qualifications and any awards received.

Once you have identified a prospective funding source start your detective work by attending funder panel presentations, becoming familiar with program officers in an effort to understand their mission, constituency, culture, image, and market. Qualify each prospect by:

- Reading their annual report
- Reviewing their list of grantees, and guidelines for funding.
- Reviewing their 990s -- what is their capacity to give and their average grant amount
- Reviewing their listing of annual grantees, does it vary?
- Asking if they have given to causes or projects similar to yours?
- Inquiring if anyone on your board knows someone on theirs?
- Determining what is the best method to approach the funder?

> "Your **chances for success** go up 300% when you **contact funders**."
>
> (Miller, 2002, p. 37)

Now you can change occupations and become the matchmaker. You need to look for alignment with your detective work. It may take many months to really learn an organization's culture, how they approach their work and fulfill their mission. What programs may be aligned with their mission, their goals, their past giving history, current initiatives? Who on staff has a connection to your organizations and vice versa? Funders want to make sound 'investments'. Therefore, how is your program:

- Grant-worthy of their investment?
- Aligned well with a funder's purpose, guidelines, and capacity?
- Involve partnerships with other organizations?

- Can you clearly articulate this alignment and match to the funder?

09. Determine grant application request for proposal (RFP) guidelines and requirements to accurately assess funder intent.

An RFP, also known as Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA), Request for Application (RFA), is an invitation from a funder to submit an application on a specified topic with a specified purpose. In previous years, foundations occasionally used RFPs in specific fields, and allowed the majority of proposals to be initiated by applicants. However, foundations have evolved their paradigm and now RFPs are becoming an increasingly popular vehicle for foundations, including corporate, to publicize new program initiatives. A RFP is basically your operations manual and you'll want to read it several times to make an informed decision about submitting the grant application, or not.

An RFP contains information including:
- Purpose of the initiative/project, its goals and desired outcomes
- Amount of funding award, maximum for any group, geographic focus area
- Instructions for how and when to respond, date for the bidder's conference
- Timeline for the project/acceptable begin and end dates
- Range of acceptable costs, geographic restrictions/client restrictions and targets
- Eligibility requirements; questions to be answered and their associated point value
- Formatting requirements including font size, margins, spacing, number of copies, due date and submission requirements

COMPETENCY 2: Knowledge of organizational development as it pertains to grant seeking

01. Identify methods for coordinating organizations' grants development with various available funding streams.

A grant writer is like the proverbial match maker. You identify a compatible funder, introduce it to your organization, and nurture a mutually beneficial relationship. The first step is to find funders whose objectives complement your organization's mission.

Introducing your agency requires having a comprehensive but concise organization overview readily available. This two to three page document will be required in some variation for virtually every application. It should include your organization's mission, history, legal status (501(c)3, programs, accomplishments, support, partnerships and differentiators. A differentiator is a useful tool in setting your agency apart from the competition. An example of a differentiator can involve demonstrating how your agency provides a unique service in the community.

There are numerous funding streams available, including grants from government opportunities through federal, state and local entities. There is also a plethora of foundations nationwide with specific parameters for funding. Additionally, there is a large range of corporate funding

available. Virtually every large corporation is involved in a community giving program. Some are regionally based and some are mission focused such as providing job training for young adults. Once again, identifying the most compatible objectives with your organization's mission is essential to success.

Several online resources can help facilitate your search. For example, the Foundation Center (http://foundationcenter.org/) offers help in locating suitable funders based on areas of interest, geographic regions, and type of support. GuideStar (http://www2.guidestar.org/) also provides access to useful information such as the 990 forms of potential grant makers.

02. Assess organization's capacity for grant seeking.

You need to be pragmatic in assessing your organization's capacity for grant seeking. In order to be successful in funding efforts your organization must be well managed, provide essential community services, have sound fiscal management in place and a verifiable success record.

An organization also needs the following to secure funding:
- Required legal documents (501(c)3, 990s, Audited Financials and Monitoring Reports
- An explicit connection between the purpose of the proposal and that of the agency submitting the proposal.
- A strategic plan endorsed by senior management
- A Quality Assurance program
- Professional staff with required credentials, including licensure
- A sound governing structure and Board of Trustees

03. Assess organization's readiness to obtain funding for and implement specific projects.

In determining an organization's readiness to successfully secure funding and implement projects it is helpful to view criteria from a potential funder's perspective. For example, the following factors are key decision making points that funders will employ in deciding which organization receives the grant:
- Can your organization prove it has made a positive and measurable impact on its clients?
- Is it a cost effective operation?
- Does your organization receive funding from other credible sources?
- Has it established previous positive relationships with foundations, government entities, corporations?
- Is your Board of Trustees active and vested in the organization's programs?
- Does your agency support other organizations in the community?
- Can your organization demonstrate cultural responsiveness and diversity?
- Does your organization have a history of successful collaboration?

04. Identify methods for assisting organizations to implement practices that advance grant readiness.

As the ageless scout motto advises, "Be Prepared." There are some standard practices that can vastly enhance your ability to write a winning proposal… and meet daunting

deadlines. Grant readiness requires having easily accessible content or "boilerplate" available on subjects ranging from the organization's history, mission, success stories, program overviews, surveys, audits, insurance certificates, applicable statistics, budgets, audits, etc. Some of this material can be obtained from previous (successful) grant applications.

You should also communicate with the funder as soon as possible after reading the RFP to clarify any outstanding questions. It is estimated that chances for success can increase substantially when proposal writers/managers contact funding sources to make inquiries regarding the application. Most funders are very receptive to answering questions relevant to the preparation of a proposal.

Relationship building is also key to any successful business endeavor. Meet with program directors on a regular basis to better understand the challenges their programs face and their changing financial needs. Funding once traditionally provided to certain programs may be reduced or even eliminated in these economically challenging times. Additionally, communicate with any financial professionals in your organization giving them ample time to meet deadlines requiring their input regarding budgets, etc. Grant preparation is a team sport in any medium to large organization.

05. Identify values, purposes, and goals of fund-seeking entities' overall strategic plans in the grants process.

As a grant writer, you must understand and be able to communicate the relationship between a project and your organization's overall strategic plan. If there is no relationship, or if it is only a weak one, it is better not to submit the application. In fact, submitting an application that is inappropriate can potentially damage your organization's credibility with a potential funding source for future, more appropriate opportunities.

Preliminary bid/no bid decisions also need to consider if the team can prepare a winning grant proposal within the limited time allotted, if there support from administration, and can the organization carry out the project. Your organization may also wish to conduct a Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA). This practical economic decision-making approach can help objectively determine whether a proposed project or program is sustainable. CBA involves comparing the total expected costs of each option against the total expected benefits and identifying viable funding streams for ongoing support.

06. Identify methods of conducting mission-focused planning and needs assessments with applicant organizations.

Mission focused planning requires both external assessment of the community's needs and internal knowledge of your organization's resources. Externally, you must clearly comprehend the need in your community in order to address it. Creating a "needs or problem" statement helps identify the compelling conditions, problems, or issues that are prompting you to propose a solution. An effective needs statement provides supportive evidence of the need or problem facing those you plan to help, identifies factors contributing to the need, and demonstrates current gaps in services.

Some factors to consider in creating a needs statement include:
- Focus on the need of those to be served, *not* on your organization's need for funding.
- Provide a detailed description of the population to be served (including age, sex, economic status, geographic locale, minority population, etc.)
- Whenever possible, employ differentiators and show how your project is unique.

Internally, you must assess what resources are available to implement your proposed solution. In meeting with key stakeholders, address SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) associated with this initiative. Additionally, an organization must frequently commit to providing its own resources, including staff and operating expenses when competing for funding. A decision must be made on the feasibility of this added responsibility. Requirements may also entail demonstrating the ability to match funds and sustain the project after the funding being sought is exhausted.

If your organization does not possess adequate resources to apply, consider partnering with another organization. Collaboration resonates well with the vast majority of funders today who are seeking to maximize return on their investment.

07. Identify strategies and procedures for obtaining internal institutional support and approval of decision-makers for grant-seeking activities.

Without the commitment of key stakeholders, a successful grant program is neither achievable nor sustainable. Securing internal institutional support and approval is sometimes a matter of informing the decision makers of the appropriate opportunities available and demonstrating how they match your mission.

Strategic planning is crucial to your successful grant program. Meet with senior management, board members and the Executive Director to determine which programs or projects require prioritization. You also need to be realistic about the extent of your organization's resources. Your organization may need to meet certain requirements upon being awarded funding, including extensive reporting, modifying human resource policies, making a site handicap accessible, etc. These requirements need to be addressed and agreed upon *before* submitting an application.

08. Identify appropriate methods of working with local, state, and federal agencies and stakeholders to support grant seeking.

In order to develop a mutually beneficial relationship between local, state, and federal agencies, as well as internal stakeholders, you must fully understand the funding environment of your organization. All grant makers have their own missions to fulfill. Corporations may target a specific issue such as a health insurance company supporting programs that address childhood

obesity. The corporation may have public relations, practical and altruistic stakes in their funding objectives.

Local and state funders are under increasing pressure as the amount of their funding decreases while the need for it escalates. Therefore, you should employ the following practices whenever possible:

- Open the lines of communication with local representative of foundations, or corporations. These professionals can often help you identify issues to strengthen your application and even suggest other sources of support.
- Contact officers in a federal agency where you plan to apply for information
- Join professional associations such as the Grants Professional Association for professional development, knowledge sharing and collaborative opportunities.
- Seek information from elected official and their staff who have access to valuable research and data.
- Access government and foundation opportunities via the internet.

09. Identify practices of grant seeking that are outside the boundaries of applicable laws and regulations.

Establishing and maintaining credibility is essential to the ongoing success of your organization. Grant makers

understandably want to fund the most worthy, dependable and sustainable candidates who will fulfill the stated commitments in the proposal, including providing ongoing reports as stipulated in the RFP.

Of course, it is equally important for the grant seeker to only apply to credible grant makers. Although it may appear self-evident, it is worth repeating to always avoid any potential funding source that you suspect of:

- Having policies that conflict with your agency's missions or core values
- Providing products or services that could be detrimental to the health or safety of your clients
- Associating with unethical/immoral/illegal entities.
- Expecting special treatment in return for their contribution.

COMPETENCY 3: Knowledge of strategies for effective program and project design and development

Few of us would embark on a cross-country road trip to historic or recreational points of interest without first consulting an Atlas, programming our GPS, using MapQuest or AAA. Likewise, preparing a grant application without advance leg work will leave us frustrated and possibly lost. Our efforts up front can ensure that we design and develop programs that impress the reviewers, are in line with our mission, and can be realistically implemented. With today's tight dollars and strong competition, you need to wow your reviewers while convincing them that your proposed program is well planned, realistic, that you have the capacity to achieve your stated goals and

objectives, and that you will be able to sustain the project at the completion of the funding cycle. To do all that, you definitely need to prepare.

01. Identify methods of soliciting and incorporating meaningful substantive input and contributions by stakeholders, including client groups, beginning with the development of a new concept or program.

A stakeholder is anyone with an interest in the project; this includes funders, agency staff including senior management, current or potential project participants/ consumers, community leaders, potential partners and others who have an interest in the program's success. Stakeholder input is critical to the success of your proposed project.

To gather input from project stakeholders, you can:

- Conduct focus groups, surveys and interviews, and planning meetings

  If this is a continuation project, or if a similar endeavor has been conducted in the past, determine whether or not any planning groups previously existed. Call upon their expertise and their notes to assist with the current initiative. If there is no precedent relevant to your project, look at other successful programs agency-wide or within the community and seek input regarding how they conducted their initial planning process. It can be helpful to establish a community advisory group, a planning body consisting of project administrators and staff, clients, other community service providers, community leaders, and your project evaluator.

  Consumers can identify what they need but are not receiving. Community service providers know what services are available, even if they are not being accessed by consumers. Community leaders and funders can forecast the funding outlook for needed services and how to access available financing. Your project evaluator, if you employ or contract with one, should be involved throughout the project development phase.

- Look for gaps in existing community services

  Does an existing council or body conduct a Gaps Analysis relevant to the type of services you are proposing? You do not need to reinvent the wheel, if data already exists. But you do need to access that data prior to determining whether or not there is a need for your project. You will have to thoroughly prove that need to the funder. Identifying the gaps between what consumers need and what services are available to them is a crucial step in planning a realistic project that consumers will use.

  If no one has previously identified gaps in needed services, your next step is to identify community services available to your target population and gather input from a cross section of consumers regarding whether or not they know of these services, do they know how to access them, have they used them, why or why not, how would they rate them, and is their need being met?

- Consider potential partners before you seek the funding

  When you begin to determine existing community supports, consumer needs, and existing gaps between need and available services, it will be necessary to reach out to a wide variety of stakeholders, including other service providers. As you conduct your research and gather data, you will be developing relationships with many providers who could become future collaborators.

- Determine what funding sources are a match with the ideas that have developed as a result of this process

  Questions to ask yourself:

  - Does your idea match your agency's or institution's mission?
  - Can your agency's or institution's infrastructure support this project, if it gets funded?
  - Who has "bought into" your idea so far (do you have your own agency's support)?
  - What type of funder would support this initiative?

  Research potential funding sources, including those discussed in Competency 1

  - Know the terminology
  - Use available resources
  - Attend Bidders Workshops

02. Identify methods of building partnerships and facilitating collaborations among applicants.

You might have attended a bidders' workshop prior to the organization's decision regarding whether or not to pursue a funding opportunity. Take note of who else is in attendance. Frequently, information gained at that meeting will be a determining factor regarding whether or not to apply for the funding opportunity. Should your agency or institution decide to move forward, those organizations represented at that initial meeting could be future project partners.

Consider these Questions Before Collaborating -

1. Why should we partner with each potential collaborator? What's in it for our clients/programs?
2. What type of partnership is best for this funding opportunity? Subcontract, with payment to partner? Memoranda of Agreement, with no money to partner?
3. Who would make the most effective partner(s)? Who will strengthen this proposal/our program? Is that agency's mission in line with ours? Do we have shared goals?
4. When should we form the partnership?
5. How should we structure & managing each partnership? Formal agreement? Fiscal contract?

03. Identify strategies for educating grant applicants about financial and programmatic accountability to comply with funder requirements.

Regardless of whether or not a partner is a subcontractor receiving payment for services to the project or a collaborator who receives no payment, a Memoranda of Agreement (MOA), Memoranda of Understanding (MOU), or Letter of Collaboration is essential. This document clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of both partners, and is generally signed by both Executive Directors or persons with signatory authority. All such agreements are between the Lead Agency, usually the applicant, and each individual partner. It is essential that both parties have discussed agreement content prior to preparing the document.

If a partner agency will receive funds from the Lead Agency, the amount must be clear to both parties. It is essential that the partner knows what services they are expected to provide, to how many consumers, for a specified amount of funding, over a specific period of time. The Lead Agency needs to know what services they will receive from each partner, for an agreed upon amount of money, by a designated date. It is important that both parties know how and when payment will be made, reporting requirements, and oversight of the sub-contractor's performance.

It is the Lead Agency's role to educate each partner regarding funder requirements and compliance with both programmatic and fiscal responsibilities. Many funders require the Memoranda of Agreement to be specific to that project. If a generic MOA is in place between partners where no financial responsibility is involved, agreements should be updated regularly, and immediately if either partner who has signed the agreement leaves the organization.

It is important to become familiar with Office of Management and Budget (OMB) circulars and with allowable costs. Know in advance whether or not your agency has the fiscal ability to enter into a cost-reimbursement or other arrangement that would require expenses to be paid by the agency in advance of payment from the funder. Make certain that the person who must implement the budget when funded reviews the budget prior to submitting the application. Budget Narratives must be concise, but need to explain why you need and what you will do with the requested dollar amount. Budgets and Budget Narratives need to be supported by the overall proposal narrative and vice versa.

04. Identify structures, values, and applications of logic models as they relate to elements of project design.

The Logic Model is a planning tool that provides structure for your program design. It's your project's road map that keeps it on course and sets the tone for project evaluation. You can review samples of effective Logic Models by visiting United Way, SAMHSA, and Robert Wood Johnson's web sites.

This graphic of your project's design will identify the overall project goal, the specific and measureable objectives you propose to meet during a designated period of time, what inputs (resources) you will need to meet those objectives, step-by-step actions you will take per

objective, the output (overall result) of those actions, and the measureable outcome of each stated objective.

Project Goal:

Objectives	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes

05. Identify appropriate definitions of and interrelations among elements of project design (e.g. project goals, objectives, activities, evaluation).

Goals are broad; they are your promise to the funder stating what this project will achieve. It serves as the umbrella for the overall project. *Inputs* are the resources that make the project work, such as staff, funding, planning tools, textbooks, etc. *Objectives* are SMART – Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Reasonable (realistic), and Time Limited. They state specific numbers and percentages to be achieved within a specific time frame. *Activities* are the actions you will take to meet your Objectives, such as conducting outreach, classes, etc. *Outputs* are the services provided by the project, the number of clients served, sessions or events conducted, items produced, etc. *Outcomes* are the results of your Activities; they must be realistic and measureable and determine whether or not you achieved what you said you would.

Your *Evaluation* is the methodology you will use to prove to the funder that your Outcomes match your Objectives. It assesses how valuable or cost effective the program has been, by collecting proven evidence. It determines if Outcomes were achieved, best practices attained, etc.

The ultimate Goal of Program Evaluation is to show whether an effort is having a positive or negative effect upon a targeted community. When planning a program evaluation consider what you will do with the results. Will you use the data collected to change or improve the program? Identify the decisions you might need to make as a result of the data you have gathered. Consider where the evaluation results will go, who will see or use it. Considering all of this will help you to recognize the type of data you will need to gather. You'll also need to consider who will collect the data, do project staff have the time available to do this, do you have the fiscal resources to hire an outside evaluation, what other resources do you have available to assist with your project evaluation

Here are a few useful data collection terms:

> Quantitative/Hard Data – Answers WHAT
> Qualitative/Soft Data – Answers HOW
> Cost Benefit Analysis – estimates costs and benefits of your program to society and can be translated into monetary terms.
> Cost Effectiveness Analysis – "*is a form of economic analysis that compares the relative costs and outcomes (effects) of two or more courses of action. Cost-effectiveness analysis* (CEA) *is often used in the field of health services, where it may be inappropriate to monetize health effect. Typically the CEA is expressed in terms of a ratio where the denominator is a gain in health from a measure (years of life, premature births averted,*

sight-years gained) and the numerator is the cost associated with the health gain" (Wikipedia).

06. Identify design and development decisions that are data-based (e.g. descriptive, qualitative, environmental, statistical).

The program development process should include identifying and documenting the problem or need and determining strategies needed to ensure change. The process should include developing an implementation plan as well as considering issues relevant to capacity building and sustainability. Your program plan will be based upon your community needs assessment and other relevant data from the target geographic area. When developing your project, consider:

➢ Target number of program participants
➢ Breakdown of target population by zip code, county, or other geographic identifier
➢ Percentage of persons in the targeted location who are members of the target population (e.g. HIV positive, homeless, etc)
➢ Explain how this data affects your project design

You can use the following federal data sources:

Bureau of Justice Statistics
Bureau of Labor Statistics
National Center for Health Statistics

07. Identify existing community resources that aid in developing programs and projects.

You Need a Team: You will need a team to work on the project design process. It's possible that only two or three people will fill every role, if your agency is not large. However, someone is needed to play each of a variety of roles, such as: team leader, researcher, content area experts, lead writer, reviewers/proof readers, budget preparer, needs assessment specialist, evaluator, and clerical support.

The resources you select will be dependent upon the type of information you need to collect. Local colleges and universities will prove to be one of your best resources. Frequently, experts in specific fields will be more than happy to provide you with the data you require and/or refer you to their relevant publications and those of colleagues. The United Way is another valuable resource. Divisions of local, county, or state government are storehouses of data; become familiar with their web sites and contact information. Surveillance system reports, county and state Health Departments, the Department of Juvenile Justice, health planning councils (e.g. West Central Florida Ryan White Care Councils), local funders (e.g. Hillsborough County Children's' Board, Conn Foundation; in Pinellas – the Juvenile Welfare Board, Allegany Franciscan Ministries), community groups, and many others are available sources the grant developer can use. Florida Charts is a valuable data tool for Florida grant professionals. It's wise to identify local and other resources early in the process.

08. Identify effects of accurate and defensible evaluation designs in program and project success and sustainability.

Your intended audience and the purpose for the evaluation (how results will be used) will determine which type of evaluation you will use. You must first decide what to evaluate, what information you want (or need) to collect, and how best to gather it. You will need to determine what analytical methodologies you will use based on what types of reports you want or need to produce. Determine who will conduct your evaluation and what it will cost.

Depending upon how you intend to use evaluation results, you will probably conduct one of the following types of evaluation:

- Context Evaluation – this examines how the project functions within the community
  - Assesses needs, assets, resources, and gaps within the target community
  - Identifies community strengths & weaknesses
  - Can be an internal Organizational Assessment
  - Asks will your proposed interventions/best practices be supported? By whom?
  - Identifies project's strengths and weaknesses
  - Examines the impact of changing climates, including political, on your project's success

- Implementation Evaluation – This focuses on what happened and why. It helps with planning, setting up and carrying out your project
  - Identifies and maximizes successes
  - Identifies barriers
  - Determines if project goals match the target population's needs
  - Measures community perceptions of your project
  - Monitors clients' and stakeholders' experiences with the project and their satisfaction with project services – Satisfaction Survey
  - Documents change
  - Demonstrates effectiveness and makes a case for continued funding

- Outcome Evaluation – Assesses short and long term project results.

  Focuses on:
  - What critical outcomes are you trying to achieve?
  - What impact is the project having on clients, staff, and the community?
  - Determines what outcomes you expect from this project

- Product Evaluation – evaluates results of the program and is similar to Summative Evaluation

- Summative Evaluation – asks if the project accomplished what it was designed to do. This type of evaluation is usually quantitative, using numbers/percentages (e.g. numeric scores or letter grades) to assess each objective's success.

- Process Evaluation – examines the conduct of the program and is similar to Formative Evaluation

- Formative Evaluation – is generally conducted for the purpose of program improvement. This type of evaluation helps to ensure that the project's goals are being achieved by identifying what needs to be improved and what corrective measures should be taken.

Robert Stake, Director of the Center for Instructional Research and Curriculum Evaluation (CIRCE) at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, has been quoted as saying: "*When the cook tastes the soup, that's formative; when the guests taste the soup, that's summative."*
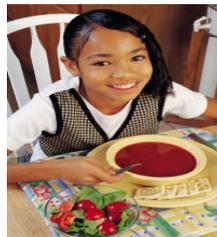
For in-depth information regarding data gathering, Logic Models, and the Evaluation process, you can refer to Carter McNamara's *Field Guide to Nonprofit Design, Marketing, and Evaluation*, 4th Edition, published by Authenticity Consulting, LLC; Minneapolis, Minnesota; 2007.

COMPETENCY 4:   Knowledge of How to Craft, Construct, and Submit an Effective Grant Application
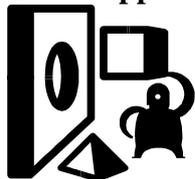
Competency 4 addresses the heart of the grant application process. 25% of the GPC exam focuses on this competency. Your ability to read and thoroughly understand application instructions/guidelines is the first step towards the construction of a successful grant application, followed by planning your strategy, then executing a thorough and polished proposal.

01. Interpret grant application request for proposal (RFP) guidelines and requirements (e.g., abstracts and summaries, problem statement and needs assessments, introductions of organizations and capability statements, reference and past performance requirements, timelines, narrative formats, budget formats, standard forms and assurances, scoring rubrics) to ensure high quality responses.

- Carefully read the request for proposal (RFP) or grant application's instructions/guidelines. No matter how tedious, read it line by line.

- Determine if your agency is even eligible to apply for funding. Some funders will not fund

agencies who receive support from the United Way; others may not fund agencies with an annual budget above a certain limit (i.e., $1 million). Many funders also require that your agency be established for a minimum amount of time, such as one year, before applying for funds.

- Does the RFP present a promising funding opportunity for your agency? If so, underline/highlight submission details such as relevant deadlines, formatting requirements, word/page limits, fatal flaw criteria, required number of copies, contact names, and/or create a checklist or "cheat sheet" listing key instructions.

- If the funder offers an application workshop, be sure you or another representative from your agency attends.

- Make sure you understand each word/phrase contained in the application. If allowed, contact the funder to request clarification of any concerns or questions and to establish a contact/rapport with the funding organization.

02. Identify elements of standard grant proposal applications (e.g., needs assessments and statements, project objectives, project designs and methods, project narratives, activities, action plans, timelines, project evaluations, budgets, dissemination plans, future funding or sustainability statements, appendices, attachments).

- Understand that there are standard sections to Federal and State funding applications. Private and corporate foundations also use similar standard sections in their grant applications. The more grants you write, the more familiar you will become with these standard sections.

- Complete all forms and follow the instructions given for each section of the proposal in the order specified and within any stipulated word/page limits. Make sure to include all required attachments.

03. Identify work strategies for submitting high-quality proposals on time.

- As is often the case with grant writers, multiple grant proposals must be juggled at the same time, so excellent time management skills are essential. It is a good idea to give yourself a personal deadline to complete each grant application before the funder's deadline.

- Realize that your application will go through multiple drafts -- have a system in place to date/save various drafts, but be sure to identify the final draft as the final version of the application.

- Investigate (either via the funder's web site or by accessing the funder's recent 990 forms through the Foundation Center online): Who has the funder funded in the past, and for what and how much?

- Outline how you or other members of the agency (according to their expertise) will address key sections of the proposal, making sure to fully answer/address each application

component (i.e., Introduction, Needs Assessment, Project Description, Evaluation, Sustainability, etc.).

- Do you need or do you have collaborative partners?

- As soon as possible, obtain appropriate signatures if required for an "Intent to Submit Application" form and for any other required assurance forms. Be aware that some funders require original signatures in blue ink only.

- If appropriate, attach current letters of support for your agency and/or project; obtain new ones if needed.

- Give yourself ample time to complete the grant proposal. Especially when working as a team, it is important to create a table of contents and timeline so that each member of the team knows what they need to do and when.

- Remember, the most important step is the very first step -- so get the proposal started! Any anxiety you may have about preparing the proposal will greatly lessen once you begin the process. Starting sooner rather than later is also an advantage should you run across any unforeseen and unavoidable delays further down the line.

04. Identify accurate and appropriate data sources to support proposal narratives.

You will want to support your narrative with the most timely, accurate, and appropriate data sources available. If you don't already have it on hand, gather organization-specific data to support the "need" section of your proposal. Utilize recent and known resources, such as the United Way's community statistics, and reputable published research relevant to your program. Make sure your back-up data is appropriate to the need you describe, as well as to your proposal's response to that need.

05. Identify appropriate, sequential, consistent and logical presentations of grant-narrative elements and ideas among or within proposal components.

- Construct your narrative in proper sequence, faithfully following the application instructions.

- Be specific. Exactly what need are you proposing to meet? What are your overall goals and objectives? (Remember SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Reasonable, Time-Based.) What activities does your program/project involve? And what methods will you utilize?

- Proof readers are important -- for content and for grammar. Whether you are a consultant or a member of the organization, be sure to have another set of eyes review your proposal to ensure that the style, tone and format of the proposal matches the organization.

06. Identify proposal writing approaches, styles, tones and formats appropriate for proposing organizations and various audiences.

- Write in a clear, interesting and compelling manner. Avoid being bland -- use power statements -- you want the reader to sit up and take notice of what you are describing.

- Do not use jargon, unexplained acronyms, or language that the average person would not understand.

- It is helpful to have ready-made boilerplates containing standard agency and program information that can be copied into or attached to the grant proposal (i.e., agency's mission, history, relevant resumés, and other commonly-requested attachments), so you do not have to recreate these sections/attachments each time you work on a new proposal.

07. Identify appropriate and accurate uses of visuals to highlight information.

Provided they are permitted, appropriate (and not too elaborate!) visuals, such as pictures, charts, text boxes, and attachments such as newsletters, etc., can highlight your proposals to foundations and other private grant makers.

08. Identify effective practices for developing realistic, accurate line-item and narrative budgets and for expressing the relationship between line-items and project activities in the budget narrative.

(Note: The following are general guidelines; government funders often require much more detailed budget information/back-up to determine allowable costs.)

- Most grant applications require you to attach the agency's current yearly budget, plus a program or project budget when you are asking for something other than general support. A program or project budget has to be customized for each grant application; after all, it includes the prospective funder's hoped-for grant award. Ask your organization's financial staff to assist you in developing this budget. It should be specific, for example, what is the cost of service per client?

- Funders often require that you include your agency's most recent Audit and/or 990 along with your grant application.

- Become familiar with the budgets you submit with your grant applications so you have at least a rudimentary understanding of how much things cost and the relationship between revenue and expenses and also understand the difference between direct (i.e. specifically attributable to the project -- personnel, supplies, etc.) and indirect costs (i.e., facilities and administration).

- Adapt a holistic view of the program/project budget in terms of how it relates to the rest of your application and be sure that the line-item budget correctly reflects what you describe in your proposal.

- The budget narrative section can provide a good opportunity to explain any significant variances, deficits or surpluses. Try to anticipate any budget red flags the grantor may be

concerned about, but not necessarily ask you about.

09. Identify sources of in-kind matches for project budgets.

Many funders either require or value a match. Identify in-kind matching from partnerships, collaborations, volunteers, in-kind goods and services, etc, on specific projects if appropriate. Also, utilize existing grants as cash match sources when appropriate to a specific program that you are requesting funds toward. Be sure to include your own agency's contribution to the project.

10. Identify factors that limit how budgets should be written (e.g., matching requirements, supplanting issues, indirect costs, prevailing rates, performance-based fees, client fees, collective bargaining, allowable versus non-allowable costs).

- Your budget should be honest and accurately correspond to your narrative.

- Does the funder require a match?

- Are there restrictions to allowable costs? (Example: Some funders will pay for a project's materials, but not labor.)

- You cannot ask a funder to support a project another funder is totally supporting, but you can ask for funds toward an unfunded portion of the project.

- Avoid asking for more than the funder typically gives.

- Many funders will offer financial assistance to launch a promising new project, especially when the need for the project is supported by evidence-based research. However, once launched, they expect you to find other money to keep the project going, rather than returning to their funding well. When relevant, include your plan for continued financial support of the project. What other future resources might be available? Be honest, if it falls upon your agency's optimistic outlook or as-yet undetermined ingenuity to keep the program running, then so state it – in an appropriate manner of course.

11. Identify evaluation methods and components appropriate to grant applications.

- Today's funders support organizations based upon successful results and outputs. Ask yourself what evaluation models or evaluation components are appropriate to the grant application at hand? Utilize the ones that enhance your application and can be properly identified and referenced throughout the document. There are two basic types of evaluations: Summative Evaluation and Process Evaluation.

  Summative Evaluation: Product Evaluation - Evaluates the results of the program, typically using quantitative measurements. It can help you answer a question such as "Did the new therapeutic model show positive behavioral results?" (i.e., was the program able to do what it was designed to do?)

Process Evaluation: a/k/a Formative Evaluation – More complex than a Summative Evaluation and more typically undertaken during the development/improvement of a program/project. This method examines the *conduct* of the program. For example: "What services were provided to alleviate homelessness among veterans?" This type of evaluation can help you identify and address any problem areas.

- Become adept at using appropriate logic models and outcome based measurement tools.

- Also useful is supporting documentation from external evaluators whose expertise can back up your organization's success with a particular population or with the administration of a certain type of program.

12. Identify methods for submitting proposals electronically.

- If you submit government grants, be sure to stay current on various government entity electronic submission methods and requirements. For example: grants.gov requires that you have a Dun and Bradstreet number or apply for one as a first step as well as follow other application registration compliances.

- Though some private foundation grants are still submitted in hard copy, many private foundations are increasingly adapting their applications to an electronic format. As with government and corporate grant submissions, their electronic submission guidelines will be included in the application instructions.

- Draft the narrative sections of all electronic grant proposals in Word and save them to your computer prior to submitting your application online.   Some standard sections will require minimal updating should you re-apply next year for the same program/project.

Suggested Reading:

The Foundation Center's Guide to Proposal Writing, 5th Edition (available via www.foundationcenter.com)

If I Were a Carpenter: The Tools of the Writer, by Roy Peter Clark (2006)