Rural Health Grant Writing Toolkit

The *Rural Health Grant Writing Toolkit* was developed by the Kansas Office of Rural Health to assist rural partners in preparing and writing successful grant proposals.

In this Toolkit you will find the following information:

Why apply for a grant
Building community support
Forming a working group
Using successful models
Important parts of an application
Steps for applying
Tips for writing/submitting grants
Rural Health Care Services Outreach Grant Program
Additional resources

Before You Begin…

There are several steps you should take to prepare. Take a step back and look at the big picture. Why are you applying for a grant? What should you be doing now to prepare?

Why Apply?

A grant is funding awarded to support a specific purpose, project or program. Grants allow communities and organizations to do work that might otherwise be out of reach due to time and resources. Though some work can be accomplished with very little or no funding at all, few organizations are capable of such work without the help from additional funding. Grants are often vital to the success of a community/organization.

Before applying, ask yourself these questions:

- What are our long-term program goals?
- Can we do the same work as well, or almost as well, without grant money?
- What will we actually use the dollars for?
- Are we applying simply because grant funds are potentially available?
- Is a grant the only way (or the best way) to do what we want to do?
- Are there other (and perhaps better) ways of obtaining the money we need?
- Are we clear on our realistic chances of success?
- Are we prepared to put in the work to produce a top-quality grant proposal?

(Adapted from The Community Tool Box)

Be sure you can answer "yes" to the following questions:

- You have read the Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) completely and carefully.
- All stakeholders in your organization are supportive of applying for this grant
- Your organization is prepared to do what it takes to successfully implement the project within the proposed budget
- You want to start a new project or expand an existing one
- You know that you meet the eligibility standards
- You have the time and capacity necessary for the grant-writing process
- You understand when *not* to apply for a grant: when you can do excellent work with little or no money; when money can be a drawback; other ways to obtain money

(Adapted from HRSA)

Build Community Support

Building community support before you begin writing a grant is very beneficial because a common piece of the funder's mission is to serve the community. Most funders will want to know that your ideas for the grant funds have community backing.

So how do you go about building this support? Sometimes the support will already be in place. Other times, you'll need to ask for support. One way to build support is to distribute a draft outline of your grant proposal ideas and request feedback directly from the community. This helps validate community interest in the idea, engages the group, and provides different viewpoints you may not have considered.

Form a Working Group

It is helpful to gather the input of others while planning your grant application. It is recommended to form a working group to discuss content for the application and provide the support needed to complete the work. Group members will be able to suggest ideas for content and provide specialized knowledge. Though this group may not actually write the application, asking for their feedback on grant draft material is essential. Working groups are also a great opportunity to allocate some of the grant preparation tasks.

(Adapted from The Community Tool Box)

"I was close to a breakthrough when the grant money ran out."

Use a Successful Model

Using a successful grant application as a model, particularly one that was awarded by your chosen funder, can be very beneficial. If you have a list of grants previously made by that funder, ask to see a proposal copy from one of the awardees. Alternatively, you can find an example on a related topic that was selected or at least a partial example from successful grant applications.

What did they say and how did they say it? How was the application organized? What details were included in each section? A model is not meant to be followed exactly, but it can be a valuable reference when you're just getting started or need guidance on how to proceed with a particular topic.

(Adapted from [The Community Tool Box](#))

> **Click here to search for Rural Health Care Services Outreach grantees with active projects**

Successful Rural Health Care Services Outreach Grantee: 2014 Abstract

Healthy Early Learning Project
Unified School District No 498, Marshall County, Kansas – Contact: John Bergkamp

Within Marshall and Nemaha County Kansas preschools, almost 28% of 3-5 year old students are considered overweight/obese. This creates an immediate need for health care partners to take action in the promotion of healthy habits that will reduce health risks and increase children's chances for longer, healthier, more productive lives. Valley Heights, USD #498, formed a partnership with USD # 113 Prairie Hills, USD #380 Vermillion, USD #115 Nemaha Central, Nemaha and Marshall County Head Starts, Nemaha Valley Community Hospital, Community Memorial Hospital, Community Healthcare System Inc., the Marshall County Health Department, Nemaha County Community Health and Blue Valley Telecommunications in an initiative called the *Healthy Early Learning Project (HELP).* These partners make up a network called the Health Education Action Partnership (HEAP) and serve 17 small rural communities in NE Kansas. They collaboratively applied for the Outreach Grant to ultimately **prevent the onset of early childhood obesity and chronic disease**. The grant application will help provide activities that benefit partners and the communities served by the grant to increase access to health opportunities while improving the health status of rural residents.

Goal 1: To promote/strengthen early learning policies & standards that creates healthy learning environments for consortium preschools.
Goal 2: To create healthy sustainable learning environments that encourages increased physical activity and good nutrition habits.
Goal 3: To engage and empower families and communities in the prevention of childhood obesity and the onset of chronic disease.

Important Parts of the Application

Grant applications will be rated and scored by a team of objective reviewers with expertise in the topic area. FOAs include specific criteria that will be used for evaluating all of the submitted proposals. As you prepare your proposal, pay close attention to these criteria.

Be concise and precise in describing:

- Goals and objectives, which should be clearly defined and specific;
- Need, which includes both the need for the service or activity that the grant will support and also your organization's track record in fulfilling that need;
- Response and impact, which clearly shows how you plan to achieve the purpose of the grant program and includes supporting data whenever possible;
- Resources and capabilities, which outlines the knowledge, staffing and fiscal stability that you have to carry out your proposal and meet the goals of the grant program;
- Budget, which is a realistic plan that matches your goals and objectives and includes a narrative that justifies the costs.   (HRSA)

Steps for Applying:

___You are clear about your reason for applying

___You know the types of support available

___You are focusing on the type of support you want

___You have searched/narrowed the field

___You have investigated your leading prospects

___You know and have followed the guidelines

___You have asked questions, as needed

___You have built community support

___You have formed a working group

___You have gotten expert advice

___You used a successful model

___You have learned from rejection

Writing the Proposal

A quality proposal (one that gets funded) conveys a message that is logical and consistent with the evaluation criteria outlined in the FOA, involves a well-qualified team for the proposed work and includes an appropriate budget. You need to demonstrate to the reviewers that you have all the grant components in place. If you are willing to put in the time and work, you can write a successful grant proposal.

Tips for Writing and Submitting Grants

DO

- Read the FOA carefully.
- Look at your fiscal infrastructure. Do you have the capacity to meet the financial reporting requirements and related tasks?
- Know the focus/subject matter of the funding agency.
- Use the terminology of the funding source to show that you understand the intentions of the funding source and for consistency for the reviewers.
- Write succinctly. Say what needs to be said and nothing more. Write clearly and concisely.
- Ask questions. Every FOA includes contact information for questions.
- Participate in technical assistance calls and webinars listed in the FOA.
- When you have completed your proposal, review it thoroughly. Have you responded to every ask? Have you adhered to page limits and file types?
- Focus on outcomes or deliverables- what the grant is hoping to produce and/or achieve.
- Talk more about solutions than problems. Show familiarity with the issues but focus on what you are going to do about it.
- Read the proposal again. Ask a colleague outside your organization to give it a critical review.

DON'T

- Assume the funder knows your organization and the impact you've had in the topic area.
- Address a specific need with a general solution. Provide a clear picture of what you will do to address the issue.
- Use acronyms without first introducing them.
- Use jargon.

(Adapted from the Federal Grant Writing Manual and HRSA)

The next competitive grant Request for Proposal for the Office of Rural Health Policy's *Rural Health Care Services Outreach Grant Program* is expected to be available Fall/Winter 2014 with a May 1, 2015 start day.

Rural Health Care Services Outreach Grant Program

Program Overview: The purpose of the Rural Health Care Services Outreach (Outreach) Program is to promote rural health care services outreach by expanding health care delivery to include new or enhanced services in rural areas.

Funding may be used to conduct health screenings, health fairs, education and training of providing and any other health service delivery activity that does not involve inpatient care. Projects are based on evidence-based or promising practice models and demonstrate health status improvement in rural communities. The community being served must be involved in the development and ongoing operations of the program, to appropriately address the needs of the population. This is a 3 year grant program with individual grant awards limited to a maximum of $150,000 a year.

Eligibility: Lead applicants must be:

- Located in a Rural County *or* Eligible Rural Census Tract within an urban county; *and*
- Public and non-profit entities including faith-based and community organizations; *and*
- In a consortium with at least two additional, separate organizations. These two other organizations can be rural, urban, non-profit or for-profit. The consortium should include three

"O.K., let's slowly lower in the grant money."
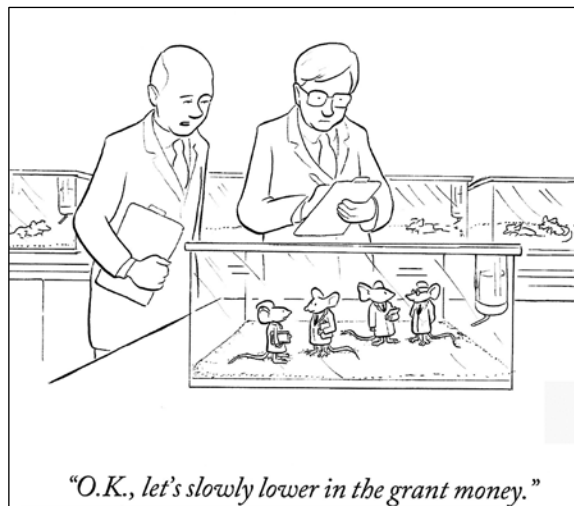
Additional Grant Writing/Funding Resources

- **The Community Tool Box**
  Writing a Grant Application for Funding

- **The Foundation Center**
  Proposal Writing Short Course
  Funding Directory

- **The Grantsmanship Center**
  Funding State by State

- **Department of Health and Human Services**
  Grant Application Tips
  How to Apply for a Grant
  Tips for Writing/Submitting Good Grant Proposals

- **Kansas Health Matters**
  Funding Opportunities

- **National Rural Health Resource Center**
  Federal Grant Writing Manual

- **Rural Assistance Center**
  Funding & Opportunities
  Grant writing

For questions or further technical assistance, please contact:

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