



**RDA**  
CONSULTING

# Grant Writing 101

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# Agenda

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- Housekeeping
- Reading an RFP
- Planning Your Response
- *Break/Q&A*
- Developing Your Response
- Other Writing Considerations
- Packaging & Submission
- Q&A

# READING AN RFP

# Anatomy of an RFP

Background

Scope of  
Work/Allowable  
Uses

Minimum &  
Preferred  
Qualifications

Proposal  
Requirements

Submission  
Requirements

Timeline

# Tips for Reading an RFP

- Take your time
- Read the entire RFP and any attachments
  - If it's a foundation or corporate opportunity without a single RFP document, read all of their website content very carefully
- Note what attachments you will need to complete/gather (990, audit, board roaster, forms, etc.) and begin to plan for gathering them
- If you need letters of support/agreement or MOUs, begin planning for that immediately

# Tips for Reading an RFP

- Create an outline and take notes as you read
  - I **strongly** recommend creating an outline of the required proposal components in a Word document and developing your content there, even if you're submitting each response in an online portal.
  - Set up your outline document to align to any formatting requirements (font size, margins, spacing, etc.).

# PLANNING YOUR RESPONSE

# Proposal Development Timeline

- Create an internal timeline for yourself/your team
- Work backwards from the due date
- Assume submission at least one day before deadline
- Allow for at least one round of revisions



# Before writing, you need to know...

<b>WHAT/WHERE</b>	What are you proposing to do? Where will you do it?
<b>WHO</b>	Who will do the work? What makes your team qualified to do this work?
<b>HOW</b>	How will the work get done?
<b>WHEN</b>	What is your timeline?
<b>WHY</b>	Why is this work needed? What will change as a result of this work?
<b>COST</b>	What is included in your budget?

# Before writing, you need to know...

## WHAT/WHERE

Be specific!

**Strong:** With this funding, we will provide tutoring at the Dimond Recreation Center for 200 Oakland teens ages 14-21.

**Less Strong:** With this funding, we will provide tutoring for 200 Oakland teens ages 14-21.

**Weak:** With this funding, we will provide tutoring.

# Before writing, you need to know...

## WHO

Front line staff

Supervisory staff

Partners

Target population for services

How closely does staff resemble the target population?

Have staff had cultural competency training?

# Before writing, you need to know...

## HOW/WHEN

If the program/project is new, what are all the things that must happen before you can start providing services? (*Note: For the OFCY RFP, you must have completed at least one year of programming*)

How will you find and engage the people you plan to serve? What is your outreach plan? What is your intake process? Who is responsible for each?

If program/project involves an ongoing service, how often will services occur? Are there limits per person served?

If there are partners, how will you coordinate with them? Who does the coordinating?

# Before writing, you need to know...

## HOW/WHEN

What are all the things that must happen **before** you can start providing services?  
**Recruit, hire, train staff. Purchase needed equipment. Recruit participants. Establish needed partnerships. Set up evaluation tools/systems.**

How will you find and engage the people you plan to serve? What is your outreach plan? **Referrals from partners, distribute flyers, digital advertising.**

What is your intake process? **Evidence-based assessment tool(s). Self-assessment. One-on-one meeting with new client. Group orientation sessions.** Who is responsible for each?

Is your staff from the community? **Shared experiences. Cultural competence.**

# Before writing, you need to know...

## HOW/WHEN

If program/project involves an ongoing service, how often will services occur? Are there limits per person served? **10 months of tutoring, 3 hours per week.**

If there are partners, how will you coordinate with them? Who does the coordinating? **Program manager will check in with each partner at least once every six months to assess progress and identify opportunities for improvement. Our organization will host an annual partner convening led by the Program Manager to assess progress. This meeting will also serve as an opportunity for partners to network and share resources.**

# Before writing, you need to know...

## WHY

What specific need(s) in your target community are you addressing? Why are your services needed?

So what? What will change as a result of your work? Is your program having the intended impact?

It's important to tie your outcome goals back to:

- Your mission
- Funder's overarching priorities
- Priorities of this specific grant

# Before writing, you need to know...

## MEASUREMENT

All funders want evidence that you are good stewards of their funding. To do so, you typically need to quantify and report on the WHAT and the WHY:

WHAT: Outputs/Process Measurements: What we will do. (Ex: We will provide 10 months of tutoring for 200 Oakland teens ages 14-21.)

WHY: Outcomes/Impact Measurements: What will change as a result of the what we did. (Ex: By the end of the year, 75% of teens served will demonstrate mastery of basic skills such as...)



# S.M.A.R.T. Goals

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Specific

Measurable

Achievable

Relevant

Time-bound

# Evaluation Tools

## Outputs/Process

Sign-in sheets  
Intake forms  
Case management notes  
Other staff tracking

## Outcomes/Impact

Surveys (pre/post)  
Focus groups  
Interviews  
(Staff and clients)

How will you measure your work? How will you use the information you gather to improve existing services and plan new services?

You should assume that you will be required to report on the metrics you've defined in your proposal.

# Before writing, you need to know...

## COST

Your budget should:

- Align to allowable uses of funds and any match requirements
- Align clearly to your “what” and “how”
  - Anything included in your budget must be reflected in your narrative
- Show the full cost of the program (not just costs for this request)
- Break down which costs will be covered by this request and which will be covered by other sources (demonstrate that you leverage other resources)

# Other Things to Consider...

## Scoring criteria

- What do the criteria tell you about where you should spend more time in the narrative?
- Is there anything in the scoring criteria that isn't specifically asked about in the proposal guidelines? If so, where can you work it into the narrative?

## Right-sizing your ask

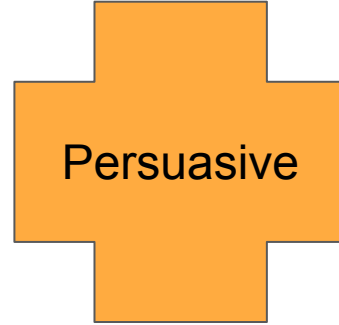
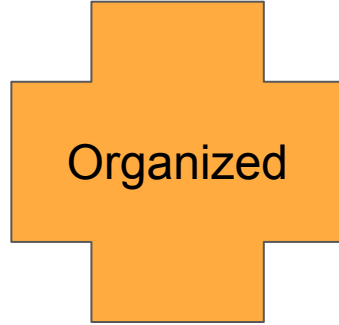
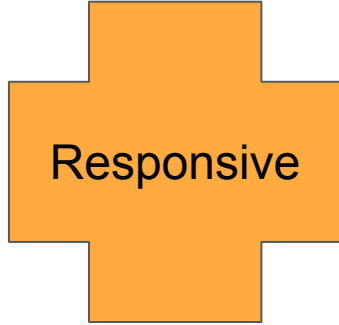
- Why not request the maximum amount allowed?
- Do your research (funder website, 990s, press releases)

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# Break

# DEVELOPING YOUR RESPONSE

# Elements of a Strong Proposal



# Responsive

When you begin writing, make sure you respond to every single thing the RFP asks for.

Why is this important?

- Skipping over required material can impact your score
- A carefully-crafted RFP response helps the funder to trust that your organization is competent and capable of being a good steward of funding.



- Describe what the successful completion of the program and services look like for the participants. How will you know your program has met its intended goals? (4,000 Character Limit)

This is presented as one prompt, but how many different things are you *actually* being asked to describe?

# Organized

- Look for opportunities to mirror the funder's language when you begin a new response
- If order isn't identified for you:
  - Present information in a logical order
  - Use transitions to move from one idea to the next
- Use paragraph breaks to make your responses easier to read

# Organized

- Mirror the funder's language: **“Describe how you plan to recruit, engage, and retain participants.” To recruit participants, our organization will...**
- Present information in a logical order: **Org mission, then history, then programs**
- Use transitions to move from one idea to the next: **Once participants are recruited...**

How can you prove that there's a need for your proposed program/project? How can you prove that your proposed work will have the impact that you say it will?

## Research and Data

- Recent and local is stronger than older and state/national
- Your own data is also great!

## Client Quotes and Stories

- A great way to bring your work to life, but should not be the primary proof of need and efficacy

How can you prove that you're the best organization to do *this* work in *this* community?

- Use sections of the narrative to make sure you're calling out cultural competence and your existing role in the community you're serving
  - Program summary and proposed services
  - Staff experience and qualifications
  - Agency information
  - Population and geography

# No Assembly Required

Don't ever leave it up to the reader to put the pieces together! Assume that they don't know anything and cannot figure anything out on their own.

There are 3 levels to this:

1. How does the proposed project connect to the funder's interests, priorities, and criteria?
2. How does your organization's mission connect to the proposed project?
3. How does the requested funding translate into specific, measurable outputs and outcomes?

# OTHER WRITING CONSIDERATIONS

# Editing Your Own Content/Receiving Feedback

- Take time away
- Reread the RFP/NOFA and check for alignment
  - Check both proposal guidelines **and** scoring criteria
- Print and edit on paper
- Check for alignment across all parts of your proposal
  - Ex: How do your projections align to your staffing and budget?



# Editing Your Own Content/Receiving Feedback

- Use spell check and character count functions
- Look for holes
- Try to put yourself in the reader's shoes; remember that they know nothing about your organization and proposed program/project
- Recognize that you are not your writing

# Projecting Competence

## Do

- Be consistent in terminology
  - **If you start with the term “client,” don’t switch to “consumer”**
- Be consistent in dates and numbers served
- Write out acronyms upon first usage
  - **Oakland Fund for Children and Youth (OFCY)**
- Use active voice
  - **I ate a delicious lunch (not “A delicious lunch was eaten by me”)**

# Projecting Competence

## Don't

- Use contractions
  - **“Isn’t” vs. “is not”**
- Use overly casual language
  - **“A lot” vs. “many,” “kid” vs. “child,” “mom” vs. “mother”**
- Be overly wordy
  - **It’s fine if you don’t use all the characters allowed!**

# PACKAGING & SUBMISSION

# Packaging and Submission

- If it's an online submission, log into the portal early in your planning process to make sure you understand what the portal looks like and how to submit
- Double-check formatting requirements (required file name, email subject, document type, font size and spacing, margins, etc.)
- Double-check that you've included all required attachments
- Submit early if at all possible! Late submissions are not accepted
- If the portal is one that times out, be sure to save work often as you're entering information

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# Questions?



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