

## Section 5.5.2: Narrative

The grant proposal narrative is the portion of the grant application that informs the funder about the applicant's need, how the applicant will address the identified need (problem), the applicant's ability to execute the program that addresses the need, how the applicant will measure program outcomes and how the applicant will expend the funds necessary for the successful completion of the grant-funded program and related activities. Elements of the grant narrative include, at a minimum:

**Scope of Work (SOW).** When writing the SOW, the grant program manager must ensure that the proposed work aligns with the criteria established in the solicitation packet. First, the scope of work must include the problem/need that the grant program manager (applicant) is proposing to address through the grant-funded program or project. The grant program manager should indicate how his/her agency is able to perform the work and include past successes with similar types of projects (this establishes the agency's capability). The SOW should provide details about the specific activities that the agency will undertake to accomplish the goals of the program or project.

**Goals and Objectives.** The narrative must include measurable goals and objectives for the program or project. The goals and objective should directly support the purpose of the grant as outlined in the solicitation. For example, if a grant solicitation calls for proposals to address homelessness in a community, the grant program manager should include this as the goal in the narrative. The grant program manager should follow up with specific objectives (with deliverables) for meeting the goal (i.e., work in collaboration with Habitat for Humanity to build 15 houses in a year for homeless families in Tucson).

**Project Timeline.** The grant program manager must develop a realistic timeline for the project, which should align with the grant lifecycle and should track in increments (monthly or quarterly). This is the project schedule, so the primary grant activities required to meet the goals and objectives should be included on the timeline. The timeline should include milestones and other methods for measuring the progress of the program or project. This will provide the basis for programmatic and financial reporting to demonstrate progress and final success of the program or project. The grant program manager should be prepared to demonstrate that programmatic progress aligns with grant expenditures on financial reports; the timeline should be designed in a manner that facilitates this type of evaluation.

**Evaluation Plan.** The evaluation plan is the agency's blueprint for determining whether the program or project is meeting the goals and objectives as stated in the proposal. As with the rest of the proposal, the evaluation plan should be written to align with the funder's solicitation and guidelines. The evaluation plan must include what data is being collected; how the data will be analyzed (and by whom); how the data analysis will inform the program/project; and how the evaluation will measure the effectiveness of the project. The evaluation plan should align with the timeline and indicate whether data analysis will be ongoing throughout the project or will be administered pre-project and post-project. For complex, multi-year programs, a grant program manager may choose to contract with an outside entity, such as a university department or think tank, to develop and implement an evaluation plan (some funders explicitly require a research partner to perform this function). The evaluation might include a plan for disseminating the results of the program or project.

**Key project personnel.** Grantors will want to know who is undertaking the primary program work, the qualifications of key personnel, and how they support the success of the project. The grant program manager should have resumes or curriculum vitae (CV) for essential personnel as source material for completing this section. Some grant solicitations will require resumes for key personnel included with the application.

**Collaborative Elements.** More and more frequently, funders are requiring grantees to engage in collaborative efforts when funding a program or project. Ideally, the grant program manager can draw upon existing relationships to build a collaborative partnership for his/her grant proposal. Such collaborations may include other government agencies with intersecting missions (such as the Department of Health Services collaborating with the Department of Economic Security to pilot a program to improve health outcomes for low-income children). Other collaborative partnerships may include a government agency working with a community or faith-based organization to reach those organizations' constituents or leverage the service infrastructure established by those organizations. As mentioned earlier, collaborations may also include a research partner that will evaluate the program or project. Collaborations exponentially expand reach, include a wider array of expertise and can address intersecting issues facing a community more effectively. Collaborative efforts may be supported by gaining and submitting letters of supports or memorandums of understanding, (MOUs). The partnerships created through collaborating on a grant-funded program or project also contribute to sustaining the project after the grant has been closed out.

**Sustainability Plan.** The final element of the grant proposal narrative is the sustainability plan. This demonstrates to the funder that the applicant has the ability to continue the program once the grant funding has run out; this is particularly true with funders who offer "seed money" for program start-up. The depth of the sustainability plan would depend upon the complexity and size of the program. At a minimum, the sustainability should include:

Vision for the future of the program or project: this should be a high-level vision that builds upon the expected outcomes and success of the grant-funded program. It should include anticipated needs after the grant cycle ends (or a plan to capture that information during the grant lifecycle); any expected growth of the program, particularly if this is a pilot project;

Stakeholder support: Building upon the collaborative partnerships, the sustainability plan should include support and/or commitment from key program/project stakeholders. This should include any in-kind or financial support they can offer the program after the grant has ended; activities that contribute to furthering the mission of the program; and ability to "sell" the program to community leaders.

Financial support: The sustainability plan must demonstrate how the agency will ensure financial support and stability for the program once the grant cycle has concluded. This should include an estimated budget that details established funding sources (and in-kind support), identifies funding gaps (need) and provides a plan for meeting the funding need. The plan to meet the need would ideally have a dedicated revenue stream (i.e., a fee for service), but this will not always be possible. As such, the grant program manager should detail how the program funding needs will be met (i.e., annual fundraiser, sponsorships, grant writing, funding from their local or state government, etc.).