Section 5.6: Review and Edit of Final Draft Application Documents

PURPOSE AND POLICY

The first rule of written communication is be kind to the reader! This is especially true when the reader (in this case, the grant application reviewer(s)) will determine whether an applicant is granted an award. It is imperative that grant applications are professionally prepared and error-free. To ensure that the application is well-written, addresses all requirements of the solicitation and includes the required documentation, it is essential that the grant program manager follows procedures for a review and edit of the final draft application documents prior to submitting the application. The Office of Grants and Federal Resources (GFR) encourages the use of eCivis for researching and pursuing grants as the grant program manager can assign tasks to team members within the system, including reviewing the application documents.

PROCEDURE

To manage the review and edit of the final draft application, the grant program manager should create a review/editing schedule and assign the reviews to the team members (with deadlines). To facilitate the process, the grant program manager should:

Review the grant application checklist. Some grant solicitation and guideline documents will include a grant application checklist. If this is not included, the grant program manager should have developed this at the outset of application development. The grant application checklist will guide the final review of the application document. The grant program manager should compare the checklist to the compiled application documents and ensure that all required documents are in the application folder (preferably in an automated system, such as eCivis). Once the grant program manager has confirmed that all required documents are in the application folder, he/she should share the grant application checklist with the review team.

Assign tasks to the review team. Ideally, the review team will include the application development team. Persons who should be included are program subject matter experts (SMEs), who can affirm the content is accurate and complete; the agency's financial representative, who can ensure the budget and supporting documentation is accurate and complete; and agency leadership, who must sign off on the application. The grant program manager would make the final review before sending the documents to an editor or proof reader for editing.

Have an editor/proofreader review the documents. Once the review team has completed their review, the final edit should be completed by the agency's communications staff (if the agency does not have someone who performs this function, the grant program manager should look for this expertise outside the agency). An editor will go through the documents, which may have been drafted by multiple people, and edit to ensure the grant has "one voice," meaning it was written by one person. Specifically, an editor will check:

Content. The editor will ensure that the content is unambiguous, reads easily (doesn't overuse jargon), stays on topic and makes a compelling case for funding. The editor will flag inconsistencies, inaccuracies, errors, and missing information.

Style. The editor will ensure the language in document adheres to an accepted professional style guide, which provides rules on grammar, punctuation, citations, etc. The most frequently used style guides are Associated Press (AP), Government Printing Office (GPO), Chicago Manual of Style, Modern Language Association (MLA) and American Psychological Association (APA). Some grants may have a specific style that is required or inferred (university research applications would likely follow MLA as this is the preferred style guide for scholarly writing or APA as this style guide was developed for scientific publishing).

Point of View. This is the perspective from which the grant proposal is written. Many grant writers prefer first person narrative ("We will implement the program"). This is a more informal style. Other writers prefer a more formal third-party point of view ("Agency XYZ will implement the program"). Whichever point of view is selected, the application must use this perspective consistently.

Voice. Voice indicates active vs. passive language structure. A statement in active voice would be, "The XYZ Agency will implement the program." In passive voice, the statement would read, "The program will be implemented by the XYZ Agency." In general terms, passive voice is alway as it implies--weak. In grant writing, particularly for research projects, passive voice is unacceptable (especially when it's vague, such as "The program will be implemented."). Grant proposals must be written in a declarative voice that indicates the applicant is authoritative and can manage the program.

Structure. The editor also will check the structure of the document. Many grant solicitations provide specific information for the document structure: page and/or word count, font size and style, headers, footers, footnotes, citations, and section headings. The editor will review these elements and compare them to the table of contents, ensuring that the pagination is correct. Likewise, the editor will check that narrative references to appendix material or other referenced documents are accurate. The editor will also check to see that budget numbers align correctly across the elements of the grant application (i.e., that personnel costs stated in the program narrative section are the same as the personnel costs included in the budget worksheet and budget narrative).

Evaluation Criteria. Most grant applications will include the evaluation criteria in the solicitation and/or accompanying guidelines. The editor will review the grant application against the evaluation criteria to ensure that all required elements are included and adequately addressed in the application.

Once the editor has completed the final edit, the grant program manager will finalize the application and obtain approval to submit the application.