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Grant Writing Dictionary

ABSOLUTE PRIORITY: Conditions that must be met for a grant application to be considered for funding.

ABSTRACT: A written summary of the grant program from one paragraph to one page in length, usually written by the applicant. The Abstract, also known as an “Executive Summary,” is sometimes used by the funding source as a press release to describe the funded program.

ACTIVITIES: Actions identified to achieve the objectives identified in a grant program. Several activities may be required to achieve an objective.

AGENCY: Organization providing services to clients or consumers, usually delivered by professional providers.

ALLOWABLE ACTIVITIES or COSTS: Project activities and expenses described in the program guidelines that can be included in the proposed budget.

ANNUAL REPORT: A report produced by a corporation or foundation presenting financial data and business or grant activities during the year.

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT: A report required by the funding agency and prepared by the grantee that can include a description of program accomplishments, progress towards program objectives, and budget information.

APPLICATION: The formal document submitted to a funding source describing the program and budget to be funded and often accompanied by supporting documentation. The application is generally the most complete presentation of the project and is often the basis for the grant agreement.

APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE: See Uniform Application Form.

APPROPRIATIONS LEGISLATION: A law passed by Congress to provide a certain level of funding for a grant program in a given year.

ASSETS: Individual, association, and organizational skills, talents, gifts, resources, and strengths that are shared with the community and listed in the grant application.

ASSET-BASED INITIATIVE: An initiative based on the strengths of individuals and organizations that build a community's and grant project's capacity to thrive.

ASSET MAPPING: A process whereby a community's individual, association, and organization assets are identified and documented for community and grant building uses. A visual map of resources is usually created from the identification process.

AUDIT, FINANCIAL: An examination of an agency's accounting documents by an outside expert for the purpose of rendering an opinion as to fairness, consistency, and conformity within generally accepted accounting principals. Audits are generally conducted after the end of the fiscal year. Some grant programs require an audit of grant funds at the end of the project.

AUDIT: Program: A review of the accomplishments of a grant-funded program by the staff of the funding agency. A program audit may be mandatory or random; also known as “program monitoring.”

AUTHORIZING LEGISLATION: A law passed by Congress that establishes or continues a government grant program; sometimes known as “enabling legislation.”

AWARD: The formal, written document from the funding source informing an applicant that it will receive grant funding. Also, agreements including grants, subgrants, cooperative agreements, and contracts.

AWARDING AGENCY: The organization administering a discretionary grant award. See grantor.

BENEFICIARY: A member of the target population for whom the grant was prepared. For example, a student attending adult literacy classes would be the beneficiary of a grant, while the school district would be the grantee. See also target population, grantee, and sub-grantee.

BLOCK GRANTS: Grants from formula funds that are not allocated according to specific categories and are more flexibly distributed than formula grants. See formula grant.

BOILERPLATE: An informal term referring to mass-produced materials or proposal components copied from other grant proposals. A word of advice: As the use of boilerplate material increases, chance of success decreases. Use of agency-written descriptions of common application components, however, is an effective time-saving technique and may be appropriate, for example, for an agency description or staff qualifications.

BRICKS AND MORTAR: An informal term generally referring to capital funds used for building renovation or construction.

BUDGET: The estimated cost of project activities.

CAPACITY: The potential for sharing assets, resources, gifts, and talents. To reach capacity, people and organizations recognize they are willing to share assets for community building and grant implementation.

CAPACITY BUILDING: Describes grants sought for the purpose of increasing or enhancing the scope of the recipient agency, e.g, funding new staff positions.

CBO: See community-based organization.

CDBG: See Community Development Block Grant.

CFDA (Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance): Lists the domestic assistance programs of all federal

agencies. CFDA gives information about a program's authorization, fiscal details, accomplishments, regulations, guidelines, eligibility requirements, information contacts, and application and award process.

CFDA NUMBER: Identifying number for a federal assistance program, composed of a unique two-digit prefix to identify the federal agency, followed by a period and a unique three-digit code for each authorized program. For example, all U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) grants are 93.XXX.

CHALLENGE GRANT: Grant used to stimulate additional fundraising by committing payment only if the grantee raises funds from other sources.

COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATION (CBO): Nonprofit, non-governmental agency designed to work on a community-based project, need, or problem.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG): The backbone of improvement efforts in many communities nationwide. CDBG monies fund activities that serve each community's development priorities, provided that these projects either benefit low- and moderate-income persons; prevent or eliminate slums or blight; or meet other urgent community development needs. CDBG is administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION: A publicly supported organization that awards charitable grants in a specific community or region. In general, community foundations receive funds from many donors, hold them in an endowment, and use the endowment income to award grants.

COMMUNITY SERVICE BLOCK GRANT (CSBG): Grant program providing states and Native American tribes with funds to provide a range of services to address the needs of low-income individuals to ameliorate the causes and conditions of poverty. CSBG is administered by the Office of Community Services (OCS) under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

COMPANY-SPONSORED FOUNDATION: A private foundation funded by a for-profit business but usually independent from the corporation and with its own endowment, e.g., BellSouth Foundation. See private foundation.

COMPETITIVE GRANT: The program in which eligible applicants submit proposals. The proposals are then rated and ranked by the funding agency, and the highest ranked proposals receive awards.

COMPETITIVE REVIEW PROCESS: The process used to select discretionary grant applications for funding. Applications are scored by experts and those receiving the highest scores are considered for funding.

CONCEPT PAPER: An abbreviated form of the grant application, typically two to three pages, often used in seeking corporate or foundation funding. At the minimum, this paper should include a problem statement, program narrative, and budget.

CONTINUATION GRANT: Additional funding awarded for budget periods following the initial budget period of a multiyear discretionary grant.

CORPORATE FOUNDATION: See company-sponsored foundation.

CORPORATE GIVING PROGRAM: A grant-making program endowed and administered by a for-profit business; for example, BellSouth Corporate Giving Program.

CSAP (The Center for Substance Abuse Prevention): Provides national leadership in the federal effort to

prevent alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drug problems.

DEADLINE: The due date for proposal submission. Funding agencies will specify the deadline as the date by which the proposal must be either received by the funder or certifiably in the hands of the Postal Service or other approved commercial carrier.

DEMONSTRATION PROJECT: A type of grant project intended to establish or demonstrate the feasibility of new methods or new types of services.

DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS: Forty internal and external experiences, opportunities, and qualities that young people need to be responsible, caring, and successful; developed by the Search Institute.

DIRECT COSTS: Costs directly associated with operating a grant program that are reimbursed by the funding agency. Direct costs typically include staff, consultants or contractual expenses, equipment, travel, and supplies.

DIRECTORY: A compilation of information about non-governmental funding sources including contact information, assets, restrictions, and application information.

DISCRETIONARY GRANTS: Grants awarded at the discretion of or based on the judgment of the funding agency to recipients selected in a competitive process. Discretionary grants usually involve a large number of competitive applications with limited available funding.

DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION: The practice of sharing program outcomes with other impacted audiences. Dissemination is viewed favorably by potential funders since it allows their funding dollars to reach larger populations than the original project's target audience.

DIVERSITY: The many differences that make up communities and individuals, such as economics, culture, race, background, size of families, country of birth, talents/skills, and land natural environment.

DRAW-DOWN: The method by which a grantee requests payment from the funding agency. Frequency of draw-downs, also known as draws, ranges from weekly electronic wire-transfers to a single, lump-sum payment at the end of the project. Quarterly draw-downs are very common. Note: The verb is "draw down."

DUNS NUMBER: The Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number required for every applicant to apply for a grant with the federal government. The DUNS number is a unique nine-character identification number provided (at no charge) by the commercial company, Dun & Bradstreet.

E-APPLICATION: An electronic application system, allowing the applicant to apply for grant funding online.

ED: The U.S. Department of Education.

EDGAR: The Education Department General Administrative Regulations issued by the Grants Policy and Oversight Staff to provide ED discretionary grantees guidance in implementing program requirements with respect to program and budget issues.

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES: Specific activities authorized by legislation and for which government grant programs can use available funds.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS: Entities or organizations permitted to apply for grant funding.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: Standards that an applicant must meet to qualify as a grant recipient.

EMPOWERMENT: Recognizing and utilizing the power inherent in all people; usually means identifying and mobilizing this power for positive community change through a grant program.

ENABLING LEGISLATION: See authorizing legislation.

ENDOWMENT FUNDS: Funds intended to be invested in perpetuity to provide income for the continued support of nonprofit organizations. Endowment funds are generally held by foundations.

ESL: English as a Second Language.
Executive Summary: See abstract.

FAMILY FOUNDATION: An independent, private foundation funded by members of one family. See private foundation.

FEDERAL REGISTER: Daily publication of the U.S. Congress providing, among other entries, public notice of all grants once they are approved by Congress.

FEDERATED GIVING PROGRAM: A joint fundraising effort usually administered by a nonprofit "umbrella" organization (e.g., the United Way) that in turn distributes the contributed funds to several nonprofit agencies.

FISCAL YEAR (FY): An accounting period (usually 12 months) at the end of which the books are closed for an agency, foundation, or governmental unit. Agency-wide financial audits are conducted after the end of each fiscal year. The federal fiscal year is October 1 to September 30.

FORM 990-PF: The IRS form required annually from all private foundations that provides for a public record of financial and grants information. Form 990 is the equivalent of a tax return for foundations.

FORMULA GRANT: A grant that Congress directs a federal department to make to grantees. The grant amount is established by a formula based on criteria written into legislation and program regulations, and awarded and administered directly by the department's program offices. For example, a formula grant from the US Department of Justice may require a state to allocate 75 percent of the grant to local law enforcement agencies and 25 percent to state agencies.

FR: See Federal Register.

FTE: See full-time equivalent

Full Time Equivalent: The accounting term for the financial obligation for one full-time employee. Two half-time employees may appear in the budget as one full-time equivalent.

FUNDER: See Grantor.

FUNDING AGENCY: See Grantor.

FUNDING CYCLE: The schedule of events starting with the announcement of the availability of funds, followed by the deadline for submission of applications, review of applications, award of grants, issuance of contract documents, and release of funds. The cycle may repeat if funds are re appropriated or remain on hand after the first funding round.

FUNDING OFFER: A proposal by a federal agency, oral or written, to award a successful applicant a level of

funding less than requested. This occurs when the agency either does not accept certain items of cost in the proposed budget or does not have sufficient appropriations to fund the project at the requested level.

FUNDING PRIORITIES or PREFERENCES: Objective factors used to award extra rating points to grant applicants who meet the established criteria. Also refers to considerations in funding decisions ensuring equitable geographic distribution of grant recipients.

GENERAL/OPERATING SUPPORT: A grant made to underwrite the general operating expenses or "good works" of an agency rather than for a specific project, for example, to pay rent and utilities.

GRANT: An award of money or direct assistance to perform an activity or project whose outcome is less certain than that from a contract.

GRANT AGREEMENT: A contract entered into by a grantee and a grantor. Typically based on the application submitted by the grantee, the grant agreement commits the grantee to carry out certain activities, within a stipulated time frame, for a specific amount of money. It often incorporates regulations that govern the use of grant funds. The Grant Agreement may include more restrictive conditions than were proposed in the application (or are required by law) and may be for less money than originally sought.

GRANTEE: The agency receiving the grant funds and the responsibilities of administering the program and fiscally managing the grant. Also known as the recipient. See grantor and sub-grantee.

GRANTOR: The agency, corporation, foundation, or governmental unit that awards grants. Also known as the funder, funding agency, or grant maker.

GRASSROOTS: An overused term usually referring to community organizations run by people without professional expertise.

GUIDELINES: The directions explaining what activities an agency wants to fund, what applications must contain, how applications must be prepared, and how proposals will be reviewed. See Request for Proposals.

HHS: The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

HUD: The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

IN-KIND Contribution: A non-cash donation of labor, facilities, or equipment to carry out a project. Typically, skilled and professional labor can be valued at the prevailing rate for the field. However, volunteer work performed by a professional or skilled laborer outside of their field is generally computed at some standard or minimum wage. See matching funds.

INDIRECT COST: Costs not readily identifiable with operating a grant program (also known as "overhead"). These are usually expenses related to administration and facilities; for example, the percentage of time that the Executive Director spends on a grant. Generally, indirect costs are reimbursed by the funding source only if an indirect cost rate has been negotiated and approved by the grantor.

INDIRECT COST RATE: A percentage established by a federal department or agency for a grantee organization, which the grantee uses in computing the amount it charges to the grant to reimburse itself for indirect costs incurred in doing the work of the grant project for example, the amount of time a bookkeeper funded by local funds spends providing payroll support to grant-paid staff).

IRC CODE: Internal Revenue Code.

INVITATIONAL PRIORITY: Areas of special focus the funder would prefer the applicant address in the proposal; e.g., emphasis on closing academic gaps between student subgroups. Typically, invitational priorities do not yield additional points for the applicant during review.

IRS: The U.S. Internal Revenue Service.

LEA: Local Education Agency.

LEAD AGENCY (Applicant): Represents a coalition or partnership of agencies joined to provide a grant program and serves as applicant and grantee. As applicant, the lead agency has the primary responsibility for submitting the proposal. As grantee, the lead agency is legally responsible for the program and has primary responsibility for administration and submitting all required reports.

LEAD AGENCY (Funder): The agency with the primary responsibility for approving or funding a project. The lead agency conducts the review, notifies other involved agencies, and issues the determination of the proposed action.

LETTER OF COMMITMENT: A letter that expresses the willingness of a community partner to commit resources to a grant project. The letter should offer specifics regarding the exact resources being offered, the terms of commitment, and the value of the services.

LETTER OF INTENT: A letter from a grant applicant to a funding organization expressing interest in a grant and summarizing a proposed program. The organization will use the letter of intent to determine whether to request that the applicant make a formal application for the grant.

LETTER OF SUPPORT: A letter that expresses the endorsement and encouragement of a community partner for a proposed grant program.

LEVERAGING RATIO: The proportion of grant funds to funds or non-cash donations or funds from other sources. For example, a leveraging ratio of 1:1 means that for every grant dollar awarded to a project, the grantee will secure one dollar from another source. The term implies that grant dollars are used to "leverage" other dollars. See matching funds.

MANDATORY GRANTS: See Formula Grant.

MATCH: See matching funds.

MATCHING FUNDS: The recipient share of the project costs and may be "in-kind" (the value of donated services) or "cash" (actual cash spent). Many funding sources will provide grant funds for only a percentage of the actual cost of a project; the grantee is required to pay the difference with money or non-cash donations from other sources. The non-grant funds are known as matching funds or the match. See in-kind contribution and leveraging ratio.

MATCHING GRANT: A grant awarded for the purpose of matching funds from another donor. See challenge grant.

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT (MOA): A document providing the details of an agreement or understanding between two or more entities, signed and dated by authorized representatives of each participating entity. Often used interchangeably with Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

MOA: See Memorandum of Agreement.

MONITORING, PROGRAM: See audit, program.

MOU: Memorandum of Understanding. See Memorandum of Agreement.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT: Determination of the needs of individuals, organizations, and communities, typically including those arising from poverty, adolescent pregnancy, drug abuse, depression, suicidal behavior, criminal activity, etc. They are almost always used to determine the need for new programs.

NOFA: See Notice of Funds Available.

NON-COMPETITIVE GRANT: Grant in which eligible applicants, pre-identified by the funding source, must simply complete necessary administrative or paperwork requirements to receive the award.

NONPROFIT: An incorporated organization in which stock-holders and trustees do not share in profits. The designated IRS tax status for nonprofits is 501(c)3. Nonprofits are usually established to accomplish some charitable, humanitarian, or educational purpose.

NOT FOR PROFIT: See nonprofit.

NOTICE OF FUNDS AVAILABLE (NOFA): Describes the amount of funds that are available and the conditions for award under a grant program. See request for proposals.

NOVICE APPLICANT: Those applicants who have not received a discretionary grant directly from the federal government within the last five years. (Note: Discretionary awards of federal funds competitively awarded as subgrants by states or other entities are not considered as discretionary for this purpose.)

OBJECTIVES: What is to be accomplished during the time of the grant project to move towards achievement of a goal, expressed in specific measurable terms.

ON SPEC: Informal for "on speculation." Consultants, including grantwriters, may do preliminary work "on the speculation" that if the project is funded more work will follow. The on-spec portion may be done for free in the hopes of securing additional work. This arrangement may raise ethical concerns with funding agencies.

OPERATING FOUNDATION: An organization whose primary purpose is to conduct research, promote social welfare, or sponsor other programs determined by its governing body. An operating foundation may make grants, but the sum is generally small compared to the foundation's own programs.

OUTCOME EVALUATION: Project evaluation that describes the extent of the immediate effects of project components, including what changes occurred. For example, measuring young people's knowledge of the dangers of drugs following their participation in an alcohol and drug curriculum.

OUTCOME MEASURES: Indicators that focus on the direct results of a proposed grant program on its target population.

OVERHEAD: See indirect cost.

PARTNERSHIP: Two or more groups, organizations, or individuals joining together in a shared and mutually beneficial relationship working toward a common goal.

PASS THROUGH: The act whereby a grantee receives grant funds and disperses those same funds to a sub-

grantee; generally a state sharing a percentage of grant funds received with local governments or other groups. It is common for the grantee to perform the program audit of the sub-grantee. A portion of the grant funds are often retained by the grantee to cover the cost of administration. See audit (program), grantee, and sub-grantee.

PIPELINE: An informal term for grant applications that score well but fall just short of being awarded. If additional money is allocated to the program, or if funded projects do not materialize, a grant application "in the pipeline" may be funded.

PRE-APPLICATION: A condensed version of a grant application. A pre-application is submitted before a full application is prepared. It is often used by grantors to determine which applicants will be invited to submit a full application. See application.

PRELIMINARY PROPOSAL: A condensed version of a full proposal. This may also be referred to as a pre-application. See concept paper.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: This title is used most often in research grants for the person who will direct a grant project. See project director.

PRIVATE FOUNDATION: A nonprofit organization (usually funded from a single source) with directors or trustees that manage its programs. Private foundations typically award grants for programs that provide social, educational, religious, or other charitable activities.

PROCESS EVALUATION: Describes and documents what was actually done, how much, when, for whom, and by whom during the grant program.

PRO FORMA: Latin for "as a matter of form." The term is used to describe projected, proposed, or hypothetical numbers for a project, typically the budget.

PROGRAM INCOME: Gross income or revenue generated by a project. This may include fees, interest earned, funds collected through special assessments, and fundraising efforts. Program income may be subject to all of the conditions of the original grant award.

PROGRAM OFFICE: Conducts and/or coordinates the daily work of administering the grant program, including the review and ranking of applications.

PROGRAM OFFICER: An employee of a funder (government or private) who manages a specific program of grant funding and oversees grant competitions. Program officers also supervise and provide technical assistance to a particular funded grant.

PROGRAM REGULATIONS: See regulations.

PROJECT: The proposed program or plan for which grant funds are being requested.

PROJECT DIRECTOR: The person who oversees the grant activity and is responsible for assuring the grant is conducted in accordance with all conditions and Federal regulations. Project Director typically describes a person directing a demonstration, training, or educational grant. See principal investigator.

PROJECT INCOME: See program income.

PROJECT PERIOD: The total time for which support of a discretionary project has been approved, usually in a series of one-year budget periods.

PROPOSAL: A written application submitted to a funding source describing a program and requesting funding for its support. Government proposals are more formal and are written according to the terms described in the request for proposals. Corporate and foundation proposals are less structured and may follow a preliminary letter of inquiry.

RECIPIENT: See grantee.

REGS: See regulations.

REGULATIONS: For government grants, the documents containing the actual funding authorization and programmatic parameters established by Congress or state legislatures. Regulations include applicant and participant eligibility, nature of activities funded, permitted costs, selection criteria under which applications will be selected for funding, and other relevant requirements.

REPLICABILITY: The ability of a demonstration project to be successfully replicated (or repeated with positive results) in other settings.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP): A formal solicitation by a grantor seeking applications from potential grantees. RFPs describe what groups are eligible to apply (e.g., nonprofits and states); the background of the program; recent research; what each applicant is required to include in its application; how much money the grantor plans to award and to how many groups; the dollar amount in terms of the range of the awards; and other relevant information.

REVIEW CRITERIA: The standards and parameters used in the rating system employed to determine which proposals will be funded. Reviewers award points based on the applicant's ability to effectively, clearly, and creatively address the criteria.

REVIEW PANEL: A group of peers or experts selected by the funder to evaluate grant proposals in a grant competition and make recommendations to the funder on which should be funded.

RFA: Request for Applications. See Request for Proposals.

RFP: See Request for Proposals.

SECONDARY POPULATION: An identified group that may benefit from the grant program but is not the primary target. For example, a program serving high-risk youth may also provide some services for their families.

SEED MONEY: Informal term referring to one-time funds issued to start a new project, either as a grant or a contribution.

SERVICE PROVIDERS: Individuals and organizations that provide professional expertise to others as part of their jobs.

SOFT COSTS: Costs associated with a project exclusive of the personnel, equipment, and supplies cost of the project. Typical soft costs include consultant and legal fees, permits, etc.

SOFT FUNDS: Informal term referring to grant funds because they are not secure; that is, they are usually short-term and not repeating.

SPOC: Single Point of Contact; the state contact that an applicant must inform when applying for federal grants.

SUB-GRANTEE: A recipient of pass-through grant funds from a grantee and not directly from the grantor. A sub-grantee is held to all of the regulations of the original grant plus any conditions added by the grantee. Also known as “sub-recipient.”

SUB-RECIPIENT: See sub-grantee.

SUPPLANTING: Deliberately reducing state or local funds because of the existence of federal funds. This practice is generally unacceptable in federally funded programs. For example, if an agency pays an employee from local funds for performing a certain job, but then receives a federal grant and begins to pay that employee from federal funds to perform the same job, this would be supplanting.

SUSTAINABILITY: The ability of program planners and managers to provide for program funding beyond the life of the current grant application. Funders often prefer to fund programs that exhibit this potential.

TARGET DATE: See deadline.

TARGET POPULATION: The identified, intended beneficiaries (persons, organizations, communities, or other groups) of the services of the grant project.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE: An activity, generally utilizing the services of an expert, aimed at enhancing capacity or improving programs and systems or solving specific problems.

TRIPLE NET LEASE: A lease requiring the tenant to pay utilities, taxes, and insurance.

TURNKEY: An informal term generally referring to a project for which everything has been developed by a single source and which is ready for action or implementation. For example, in a turnkey grantwriting effort, a single grants consultant or organization provides all of the grants-development work for the client agency (i.e., locates a grantor, conducts a needs assessment, creates a research-based program, and writes the grant proposal application). The customer has only to "turn the key" to apply for funding.

UNIFORM APPLICATION FORM (SF-424): The standard, one-page form that accompanies all federal grant applications and which all applicants are required to fill out with basic information (e.g., name of organization, address, and contact person). The 500 series of federal forms include detailed budget information.

UNRESTRICTED GRANT: See general/operating support.

WHITE PAPER: An informal term referring to a literature review or research paper, often presented at conferences.