

## PREPARING SUCCESSFUL GRANT PROPOSALS

The following guidelines for preparing a grant proposal are based on a format the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends Alaska Native villages and tribes follow when developing grant proposals or applying for funding for solid waste management activities from EPA. Any rural community or organization preparing a grant proposal can use these guidelines. EPA developed these guidelines because the agency recognized that the lack of adequate funding is an obstacle to effective solid waste management on reservations and in Alaska Native villages.

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### PREPARING FOR THE PROPOSAL

Grants are sums of money awarded to finance a particular project. Federal, state, and private organizations all sponsor grant programs for various projects and programs. Since organizations base their funding decisions on an applicant's ability to meet the goals and objectives of their specific grant program, you should have a thorough understanding of those goals before developing your proposal. If possible, contact the agency or organization to discuss their program goals before you prepare your grant application. ***Remember, the basic requirements, application forms, information, deadlines, and procedures will vary from one grant program to another. To ensure that you have the correct information and use the proper forms and format, you should contact to granting agency or organization before preparing your application.***

### WRITING THE GRANT PROPOSAL

Successful grant proposals are thoughtfully planned, well prepared, and concisely packaged. More important, they are written to meet the requirements and objectives of the grantor's program. In general, a solid grant proposal package contains the following ten (10) basic components:

#### ***1. Proposal Summary***

Present a brief outline of the project for which you are seeking funding. It can take the form of a cover letter or a separate page, but it should be no longer than two or three paragraphs. Write your summary after preparing the rest of your proposal, so that all key points and objectives of your project are sure to be included. This summary provides an initial impression of your community, village, tribe, and/or organization. It may be the only part of your application that the grantor carefully reviews before deciding whether or not to consider your proposed project or request for funding. Typically, your summary will include a concise description of your project and its participants, how it meets the objectives of the grant program, and how it will benefit or improve your community.

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### **2. Title**

Provide a descriptive name for your project. Do not make your title too long. You want it to catch the attention of the grantor and interest them in your proposal.

### **3. Background**

This section of your proposal includes information about your community, village, tribe or organization and a general description of your project. Some features to consider for this part of your proposal are a brief history of your community, tribe, and/or organization; resumes or related work experience of key staff members for the proposed project; goals of your community and how they relate to the grantor's program; track record and summary of experience with other grants or similar types of projects; and any success stories you have had over the years. The idea of the background section is to give the grantor information that will help them to understand your community and what it is trying to achieve with your proposed project or why you need this particular source of funding.

### **4. Problem Statement or Needs Assessment**

In this section of your proposal you will provide the grantor with a clear, concise and well-supported statement of your problem that will be overcome using the grant funds you are requesting from the agency or funding organization. Typically a problem statement is no more than two or three sentences long. Your problem statement should state what your problem is, why you need to solve it, and how you will do it.

### **5. Goals**

In this section of your proposal you will describe the goals of your project in detail and how the funds you are requesting will help you accomplish them. Be sure to describe the expected results and benefits for each of your objectives (remember an objective is what you will do to reach your goal). You should also list the specific criteria of the grant program, and describe how your proposed goals, objectives and activities meet each of the criterion established for the funding program. Your goals should show how your project will meet all of the funding agency's or organization's objectives for its grant program. There should be a clear link between the goals of the funding agency or organization and your proposed project.

### **6. Activities**

Be sure to provide a step-by-step list of tasks that will be completed so that you can meet the goals of your project. Break larger tasks into smaller ones and present them in a timeline. This breakdown provides you with an opportunity to consider staff, materials, and other resource needs for your project.

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### ***7. Methodology for Measuring Success***

Describe what the project will accomplish and how you will measure the progress made under the grant. For example, the section could describe how your community would determine whether the project made an impact on the problems you sought to correct or whether or not it achieved your stated objectives. You might want to include a description of what you could do to improve your program in the future. Methods of measuring success can be in the form of an evaluation of the project, a chart comparing what was achieved to what was proposed under the grant or a comparison of conditions before and after by using pictures showing before and after the project was completed or program implemented.

### ***8. Timeline***

Describe approximately when each activity will be completed in terms of the timeframe for your project (e.g., Month 1 to Month 24) rather than specific dates. The activities identified on your timeline should correspond to those activities proposed in your grant. Typically activities are shown on a monthly basis on most timelines.

### ***9. Sustainability***

List anticipated sources of continued funding to be used when the proposed grant ends. You also may be required to list other current sources and amounts of funding that you have obtained for use on your proposed project. This section focuses on describing how you will keep the project going in the future, as well as future activities you may undertake that are related to your proposed project.

### ***10. Budget Detail***

This section describes how the grant funds will be spent. At a minimum, your budget detail should be divided into the following categories: personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, and other expenses. "Other" can be divided into telephone, rent, photocopying, and mailing costs, etc. If the grantor requires applicants to provide matching funds or in-kind contributions, use separate columns for requested funds, matching funds/in-kind contributions, and total project costs. You should also include a brief narrative for each item in your budget. Be sure to explain any unusual expenses identified in your budget.

**CHECKLIST FOR PROPOSALS**

- The proposal clearly describes how the project will meet the criteria outlined for the particular grant program.
- There is a clear identification and background description of the population to be served by the grant.
- The proposal mentions other groups with whom the community will partner. The application includes letters of commitment from these groups.
- The proposal adequately outlines the problem and the approach to solving it.
- The proposal clearly links the goals of the particular project to those of the agency or organization providing the funding.
- The application identifies specific tasks, objectives, and timeframes.
- The methods for evaluating or measuring the success of the project are clear, and success is achievable.
- The project can be completed in the specified funding period. Include a timeline showing activities when activities will be completed.
- The budget figures add up and the budget is included in the proposal.
- The basic requirements (e.g., correct number of pages and copies, etc.) have been met. Be sure all required forms and any required signatures are also included.
- The application includes all the information specifically requested by the funding organization or agency.
- The proposal has been checked for spelling, grammar, and typographical errors, as well as for format consistency.
- The proposal is submitted or postmarked by the due date for application. Be sure to check on whether the grantor has to actually receive the proposal by the closing date or that a postmark is acceptable for showing that the proposal was submitted by the closing date.

Source: Adapted from *Preparing Successful Grant Proposals*, EPA Office of Solid Waste & Emergency Response, December 1997.

**WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW TO RECEIVE FUNDING  
FOR YOUR COMMUNITY**

*“Lessons Learned by Already-Funded Villages”*

1. **KEEP TRYING.** It may take three or four attempts at applying for a variety of different grants before your community gets anything. However, each time your community applies for a grant, your community’s name is going into the agency’s records, and you will be remembered the next time you apply for funding. Different agencies share information with one another. Sooner or later, you will get your funding...the key is just to keep trying and be patient, eventually you will get funding for your community.
2. **KEEP CALLING.** An old saying goes, “The squeaky wheel gets the grease.” This means that when agencies don’t have enough money or time for every community, they are often more likely to help those communities that keep contacting them for help. By calling an agency repeatedly it lets them know you are serious about your project, your community is dedicated to what it is doing and it stays focused. This all helps with getting discretionary funding.
3. **TALK WITH YOUR COMMUNITY.** Agencies tend to award grants to those communities that have the full support of the community. Whenever possible, get letters of support from local community groups, your city or tribal council, and other agencies. Form a work group to look at ways to deal with your problem. Have community members sign a community petition supporting your proposed project and request for funding. The more you can show that your community supports what you are doing, the better your chances of receiving funding for your project or program.
4. **TALK WITH OTHER COMMUNITIES.** You may be able to find out really useful ways to stretch your money or get funding from a different source. Agencies tend to favor funding projects where two or more communities work together with one another.
5. **TALK WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENTS.** Agencies tend to favor projects where different governments and community groups cooperate. For example, a project that will be done jointly by the city and tribal councils and Village Corporation may receive more favorable consideration than a project being proposed by just your city council.
6. **CONSIDER SMALL STEPS.** You may not be able to fund your planning, open dump closure, and set-up a community collection system all at once. It is often much easier to get smaller grants, so consider doing your project or program in stages. For example, get funding to do your planning for closing your open dump, and then while you are doing your planning apply for funding to actually do your open dump closure, and while you are doing your closure project you can search and apply for funding to set up a collection system for your community. A simple, straightforward, and small project such as carrying out a community waste assessment or constructing a burn box will have a better chance of being funded than a single, big multi-million dollar project. Agencies tend to fund projects in communities that are receiving grants from several different sources. The fact a community is receiving several grants for a project shows agencies that a community is committed to what it is doing and will most likely succeed at completing their project.

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7. **GET YOUR COMMUNITY NOTICED.** Some communities receive funding by publicizing how bad their problem is within their community or compared to other communities. If you can, get agency representatives to visit your community to see the problems you are trying to solve. They may not realize just how bad a problem is in your community. If you can't get agency representatives to visit, then take pictures and send them in with your request for funding or grant proposal. It is said "that a picture is worth a thousand words" and it is the next best thing to being there. Most state agencies are familiar with the problems rural communities in Alaska must deal with on a regular basis. However, agencies in Washington, D.C. aren't always as familiar with Alaska's situation. They are used to dealing with communities, reservations, and tribes in the lower 48 where problems are of a completely different nature. So take pictures or make a video or bring agency representatives to your community – pictures or a visit can tell a story that words alone cannot do.
8. **INTEGRATE YOUR PLANNING and FUNDING.** Determine if there are ways to fund part of your solid waste project with money from non-solid waste management funds and grants. For example, you might be able to build a road to your landfill by including it in another construction project or as part of a road project in your community. You might be able to use heavy equipment that is being used for other projects in your community. Or you might be able to have a barge company that would normally have left your community empty haul out old vehicles after it delivers freight to your community. The more you can combine activities and funding to benefit more than one project, again, the better your chances of receiving funding.

*Sources: Adapted from Tlingit Haida Open Dump Closure Report, Zender Engineering, 2002 and Draft Solid Waste Management Guide for Tribes, 2003.*