Criminal Justice Division
Office of the Governor

Developing a Good ~~Narrative~~ Project

Guidance and information for applicants

May 2019

Why thoughtful applications are important
CJD has a growing focus on quality and performance

- We have an obligation to fund projects that are well thought out, demonstrate good practices, and are well-articulated.

- We can only meet the trust of the people we serve if we seek to make sure that the projects we fund are *useful and successful*.

- CJD is placing a growing emphasis on the quality of application we receive, the evidence or basis for the approach proposed, and the demonstrated ability to assess and share performance.

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Grant application writing tips

A few dos and don'ts of grant writing

Do This...

- Follow the instructions precisely
- Use data and research to back up what you say
- Know what the evidence says about your approach and share it
- Ask someone outside of your organization for feedback
- Submit your application on time
- Figure out your match in advance
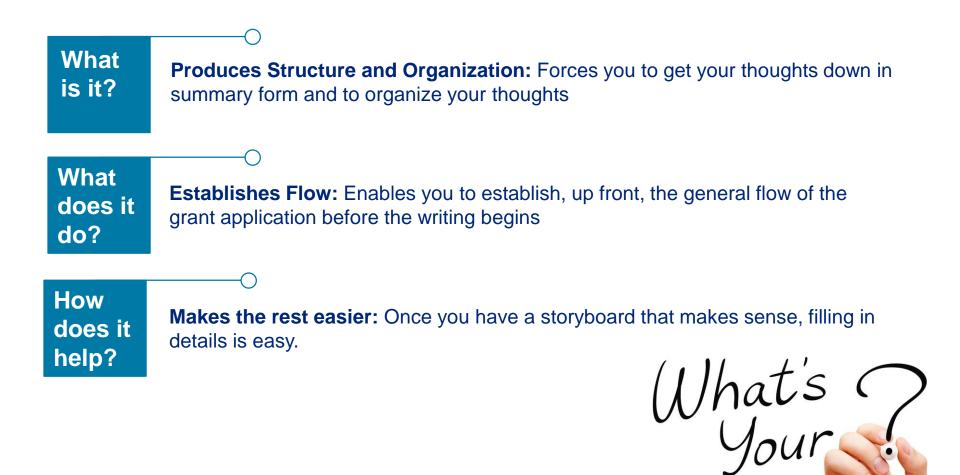- Tie your budget to your narrative

Not This...

- Gloss over the instructions and get straight to writing
- Copy and paste from last year
- Fail to draw a clear connection between the problem, the activities, and the goals
- Submit an application that contains easy-to-fix errors
- Confuse passionate for compelling

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Storyboarding

Storyboarding helps you organize your thoughts, ideas, and messages

What is it?

Produces Structure and Organization: Forces you to get your thoughts down in summary form and to organize your thoughts

What does it do?

Establishes Flow: Enables you to establish, up front, the general flow of the grant application before the writing begins

How does it help?

Makes the rest easier: Once you have a storyboard that makes sense, filling in details is easy.

What's Your Story?

Storyboarding
A simple way to sketch out the application so that it flows and makes sense

WHAT?
Problem? _____
Who to help? _____
Goal 1 _____
 -Objectives _____
 _____
Goal 2
 -Objectives _____
 _____
How will we measure success? _____

HOW?
What works? _____
 _____
What should we do?
 _____
 _____
 _____
What capabilities do we need?
 _____
 _____

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How to build a grant PROJECT
A good application must first be a well-thought-out project

Problem Statement
- What problem do we want to solve?

Evidence
- What practices, or research tell us what is likely to work?

Target Population
- Who do we want to help?

Success

Approach
- What specifically are we going to do to solve the problem?

Performance
- What specifically do we want to accomplish?
- How to measure it?

Capabilities
- What skills, expertise, and bandwidth do we need to succeed?

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How to build a grant APPLICATION
Each part of the planning process maps to the eGrants application

WHAT?

HOW?

Problem
Problem Statement
- What problem do we want to solve?

Supporting Data

Target
- Who do we want to help?

Target Group

Success

Performance
- What specifically do we want to accomplish?
- How to measure it?

Performance Management

Evidence
Evidence-Based Practices
- What practices, or research tell us what is likely to work?

Approach
Project Approach & Activities
- What specifically are we going to do to solve the problem?

Capabilities
Capacity & Capabilities
- What skills, expertise, and bandwidth do we need to succeed?

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The Problem Statement
What are you trying to solve?

The problem statement should:

- Clearly define the <u>root problem</u> and the need

- Be of <u>reasonable</u> dimensions and scale

- Be <u>supportable</u> by statistical and anecdotal evidence (supporting data section)

- Be stated in terms of the people to be <u>served</u> - not the applicant

- Not be a <u>lack</u> of something

- Make a <u>compelling</u> case

Supporting Data
Can you prove that your problem is real?

The supporting data should:

- Use cited, verifiable, trustworthy <u>sources</u>

- Be <u>right sized</u> – Don't use national data for a state problem or state data for a local problem

- Clearly <u>support</u> the problem statement

- Only include information that is <u>of value</u> in verifying the problem statement

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Target Group
Who are you trying to help or affect?

Target group should:

- Describe the population the project will include or focus on using clear descriptors such as <u>population size, geographic boundaries, demographics</u>.

- Define the target population to include any <u>special characteristics</u>. For example, "at-risk", "former offenders", "victims of domestic violence".

- Clearly <u>tie</u> to the problem statement and the approach and activities.

- Use <u>data</u> to support the size and description of the target group

- Demonstrate the applicant's knowledge of the target group and its <u>needs</u>

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Performance management
Supports the problem statement by explaining what success looks like

Performance management section should:

- Provide a clear understanding of how the project will <u>measure success</u>

- Clearly state the <u>goals and measurable objectives</u> of the project

- Explain how the goals and objectives <u>tie</u> to the problem statement

- Provide <u>specific measures</u>, including BOTH outcome and output measures

- Explain what the baseline, or current state is, and what <u>progress</u> in the measures we can expect to see during the performance/project period

- Explain the internal methods used to <u>review performance</u> information, and how the information is used to make project decisions

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Measuring success

Supports the problem statement by explaining what success looks like

Goals are broad statements that indicate the general intentions of the project to achieve some outcome.

Objectives are clear, tangible, and specific. To [reduce/increase/enhance/etc.] [something], by [x amount], by [dd/mm/yy date]. A project can have multiple objectives.

Measures use data to provide verifiable, numeric information that indicate progress toward achievement of objectives.

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Objectives

Objectives provide clear actions for what you are trying to achieve and allow you to measure your progress

Specific   Identifies a specific action or event that will take place.

Measurable   Is clear about what success looks like.

Achievable   Is achievable after completing manageable steps.

Realistic   Ambitious enough to challenge while still being achievable.

Time-Bound   Related to a timeline.

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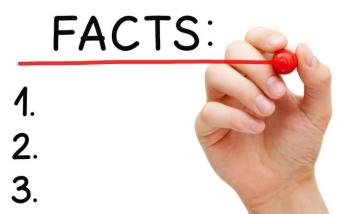
Evidence-Based Practices

Funded projects should be based on science and evidence

Evidence-based practices should:

- Provide the <u>basis</u> for the methods, approaches, and activities used

- Specifically <u>cite</u> the best practice guides, research studies, etc. being followed

- If not following existing best practice or research, then provide a full explanation of the basis for the belief that this approach is <u>promising</u>

Note: This section is less critical for equipment-only grants unless the equipment is cutting edge technology.

FACTS:
1.
2.
3.

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Project Approach & Activities

The approach and activities are how the applicant plans to solve the problem and meet their objectives. It is the central core of the application.

The project approach and activities section should:

- Clearly describe, in detail, <u>what the project does</u> so that a lay person could understand

- Address how this project approach will <u>affect the stated problem</u>

- Provide enough context to understand how the approach <u>ties</u> to capabilities, evidence-based practices, and performance management

- Explain <u>why</u> the applicant has chosen the approach

- Include any relevant <u>timelines</u>

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Capacity & Capabilities
What is needed for success?

Capacity and capabilities section should:

- Describe the organizational qualifications and performance history of the applicant in a way that explains why they are capable of the work

- Describe organization in a way that indicates that it has the capacity to handle the volume of work

- Describe special qualifications or experience of staff members, contractors, or partners who add value and increase the likelihood of success

- Tie to the project activities in way that allows the reader to see the connection between the qualifications and what the project will actually be doing

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Final Checklist
Does the narrative meet these standards?

☐ **Problem Statement**: Is our problem/need statement clear and backed up with trustworthy data?

☐ **Target Population**: Does our target population make sense with our problem and is it as narrowly and clearly defined as possible?

☐ **Performance Management**: Are our objectives specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time bound? Will the objectives, when met, address our problem statement? Do we have clear measures that show progress towards objectives?

☐ **Approach & Activities**: Is it clear that our activities will advance our objectives?

☐ **Evidence-Based Practices**: Do we prove that our activities are based in available evidence?

☐ **Capacity & Capabilities**: Do we demonstrate that our organization and our staff or contractors are qualified to do this work?