

Workshop Abstract

Track: Leadership

Presentation title: Mentoring Future Grant Writers to Develop Applications that Win Funding

Level: Intermediate

Abstract Format: Format 2: Addressing a broader issue area, problem or community need

Workshop Description:

Your CEO either writes the grant applications for your agency, or hires outside grant writers. How do you make sure that your suggestions to serve your target community make it into a grant proposal? And who is going to keep your program or agency funded when the CEO retires? Agencies must groom younger staff, by giving them a role practicing in the grant writing process. This highly interactive workshop includes hands-on activities to help early and mid-level staff develop grant applications that will win scarce funding. The facilitators will reveal tricks of the trade that make some grant applications more likely to win funding. Participants will review and discuss actual grant narrative samples, learning to identify the strengths and shortcomings in each. Another activity will demonstrate how to break a grant project into pieces that can be split amongst team members and coordinated in order to meet grant due dates.

Methods/Issues:

Staff at most agencies have not had learning opportunities to identify where their grant applications could be improved. Younger staff members are often denied a place “in the room,” where they could learn how funding intersects with programs. Grant writing seems a mysterious and intimidating process. As funding requirements become ever more complex, HIV agencies around the nation that build their staff members’ skills incrementally will be more sustainable when current senior staff retire. Rather than throwing up-and-coming staff into the deep end of the pool, agencies can provide hands on training through several cycles, giving younger leaders practice with progressively more detailed sections of a grant proposal’s development.

Results/ Learning Objectives:

By the end of the session, participants will be able to

1. Assess the composition of their current grant writing teams, and start building in voices that have been excluded from the process,
2. Develop a process to onboard younger leaders in the complexities of grant writing, by mentoring in progressively more complex sections of a grant proposal, over progressively more substantial projects;
3. Draft sections of a grant application that align with scoring criteria, and utilize the “skeptical eye”

framework to weed out non-sequiturs and assumptions;

4. Frame epidemiological data in ways that will be most clear and convincing to readers.

Conclusions/ Strategies, Methods, Models, Examples:

This hands-on session will aim to develop young leaders within agencies, and ensure that their plans and proposals are presented in the most convincing light for reviewers. The lead facilitator has won foundation, county, state, and federal grants for agencies large and small in dozens of states. The session will present a road map that develops younger leaders' skills in grant writing over several years, so that they will be ready to sustain major funding when current leaders retire. They will focus especially on: recognizing the two key elements that justify need for a project; developing realistic Work Plans with measurable outcomes; and most importantly, taking a coordinated and scheduled team approach to meet grant deadlines on time.