



It's a work product

How to build a grant proposal to federal agency specifications

Assembly Line



Surgery Room



Whether on an assembly line or in a surgery room, there are job specifications.

On the assembly line, total quality project management matters.

Specifications must be met for consumer safety.



Project specifications matter.

In the operating room, surgical protocols matter.

Specifications must be met in surgical procedures for successful patient outcomes.



Project specifications matter.

In preparation for grant applications, performance measures and selection criteria matter.

Specifications must be met on applications to pass the peer review with maximum points.



Project specifications matter.

THE REVIEWER'S JOB

The job of a reviewer is to read a proposal and critically analyze the merit of a project based strictly on what is presented in the application to fulfill grant program requirements.

Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed project

- Federal funding agency priorities
- Grant program specifications
- Defined evaluation criteria

Assign numerical scores to a series of program selection criteria

Project specifications matter.

THE REVIEWER'S REALITY

Reviewers are paid between \$75 and \$200 per application. Some programs pay a flat fee.

They have 7 to 10 days to review up to 15 applications.

If they have to search for information; if the application is lacking clarity; if content is undocumented—points are lost.

Points are critical—Nevada lost out on \$20 million by 0.33 point.

Project specifications matter.

THE APPLICANT'S JOB

The job of the applicant is to prepare an application that precisely responds to funding agency priorities, grant program specifications, defined evaluation criteria, and effectively communicates the Nevada story.

Common courtesies that make it easy on the reviewer

- FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS (sign up for updates)
- Include a table of contents and use evaluation as criteria headers
- Avoid repetitive content, unnecessary jargon or abbreviations that are unfamiliar to the reviewer
- Assume the reviewer lives east of the Mississippi

Project specifications matter.

TARGET THE SPECIFICATIONS

A well-written request for applications (RFA) should provide the basic specifications, but sometimes you will need to explore the funding agency's website or the Federal Register for details.

- Due date for the application and anticipated award date
- Funding allocation and cycles, eligibility
- Number of awards to be granted (do the math)
- Supplement not supplant—match as % of project, 1:1, 2:1
- Application forms and supplemental documents
- Narrative content format—type size, spacing, number of pages
- Scoring criteria

Project specifications matter.

TARGET THE SPECIFICATIONS

Read, highlight, and tab pages

Create a checklist

- Standard forms
- Supplemental documents
- Agency specific documents

Develop an outline

- Selection criteria as headers
- Scoring percentages to page count



Project specifications matter.

TARGET THE SPECIFICATIONS

1. Read, highlight, and tab pages

2. Contact your program officer

- Program clarification
- Multi-year budget or match
- Project pre-review

3. Create a checklist

- Standard forms
- Supplemental documents

4. Develop an outline

- Selection criteria to headers
- Scoring percentages to page count



Project specifications matter.

TARGET THE SPECIFICATIONS

Create a checklist

(Sample from Nevada Dept. of Education)

- Standard forms
- Supplemental forms
- Required content
 - Abstract
 - Table of Contents
 - Narrative
 - Budget
 - Appendices



Project specifications matter.

TARGET THE SPECIFICATIONS

Develop a narrative outline

- Review criteria headers
- Percentages to page count

Writing the narrative

- Use program language

Methods of outreach to eligible small business concerns will include radio advertising, direct mail, and social media.

- Journalism 101



Project specifications matter.

TARGET THE SPECIFICATIONS

Write the narrative

- Journalism 101
 - Clear, concise, coherent
 - Your meaning should be understood without leaving room for doubt
 - Who, what, where, when, why, how, so what?
 - The mayor of Las Vegas (who) planted a tree (what) on Tuesday, May 10, 2011 (when) at Desert Breeze Park (where) to commemorate a brave man who died saving a child from drowning (why).
- Inverted style, conclusions first, follow with detail

Project specifications matter.

TARGET THE SPECIFICATIONS

From outline to TOC

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TARGET THE SPECIFICATIONS

Construct the budget narrative: follow funding agency directions

- Activities mentioned in the proposal narrative should be aligned to budget narrative cost items
- Use Journalism 101 principles with cost basis
 - Mayor's Commemorative Tree Planting Program (\$905)
 - Round trip travel from City Hall to Desert Breeze Park for mayor (\$9.57=17.4 miles @ \$0.55/mi.)
 - 10-foot tall Blue Oak Tree @ \$395
 - City arborist and 2 crew (2 hrs. @ \$500)
- Include all bids, memoranda of understanding, contracts as cost basis

Project specifications matter.

TARGET THE SPECIFICATIONS

Construct the budget narrative: build the spreadsheet

- Follow funding agency directions
- Understand allowable program costs
- Think beyond the minimum—personnel costs
- Build budget for ease of scalability
- Do not include cents, round costs up to next whole dollar
- Do not put \$ signs in each cell, budgets are dollars
- Include all bids, memoranda of understanding, contracts as cost basis

Project specifications matter.

TARGET THE SPECIFICATIONS

Budget Information Resources

- State of Nevada, State Administrative Manual (SAM)
 - <http://budget.nv.gov>
- General Services Administration (GSA)
 - <http://www.gsa.gov>
- Federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB)
 - <http://whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars>

Project specifications matter.

Contact Information

Kimberly Elliott
Chief of Grant Management
kpelliott@admin.nv.gov
(775) 684-0155

Nevada Grants Office Website
<http://grant.nv.gov>
Training Documents

“Write for Review, Not You”
“Budgets and All That Jazz”

Bette Hartnett, Nevada Dept. of Education

Project specifications matter.
