

INTRODUCTION TO WRITING A WINNING GRANT PROPOSAL

Presented for NACFLM by Dennis Stoica, from the Catholic Marriage Initiatives Fund
October 28, 2021 Dennis@CatholicMarriageFund.org

Application Summary Information for 1st Round of Funding from the CMI Fund

Single Purpose: Empower
Dioceses to implement
National Pastoral Framework
for Marriage and Family Life
Ministry

For more information:
CatholicMarriageFund.org

Due Date

December 10, 2021

Eligible Applicants

U.S. Catholic Dioceses (and archdioceses)

Max # Of pages

10 – excluding required attachments

Award Amounts

\$10,000 to \$50,000, with match required

Planned length of grant

2 to 4 years

Target Audiences

- 1) Prospective Applicants for 1st round of funding from the CMI Fund
- 2) Prospective Applicants for later rounds of funding from the CMI Fund
- 3) Anybody who wants to learn more about successful grant-writing

This presentation assumes this is your first grant application

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL GRANT-WRITING

1) There are two important qualities of a high quality grant application:

- A well-designed project/intervention;
- A well-written application

A surprisingly low percentage of grant applications contain both.

2) Understand the Request For Proposal (RFP) (aka Funding Announcement or FA)

– and give them what they are asking for in it:

- This could be the most important point you will ever hear about grant-writing.
 - In theory at least, EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW SHOULD BE IN THE RFP – or pointed to in it.
- Become an EXPERT on the RFP/FA.

3) Get into the world of the author of the RFP

- Understand what it is that they are really looking for – and then deliver it.
 - “Just give ‘em what they are asking for...”
 - “...And make it easy for them to find it”
 - You may want to consider organizing your Narrative in the order of the Criteria sections (but you don’t have to.)
 - Within each section, provide the information in the order that the information is asked (within reason, and when practical)
 - Use “Sign-Posts” the reviewers will easily recognize:
 - i. Start sentences with key words or phrases pulled exactly from the criteria;
 - ii. Consider bolding those key words or phrases (use your judgment here)
 - Note: this is more important in longer/more complicated applications

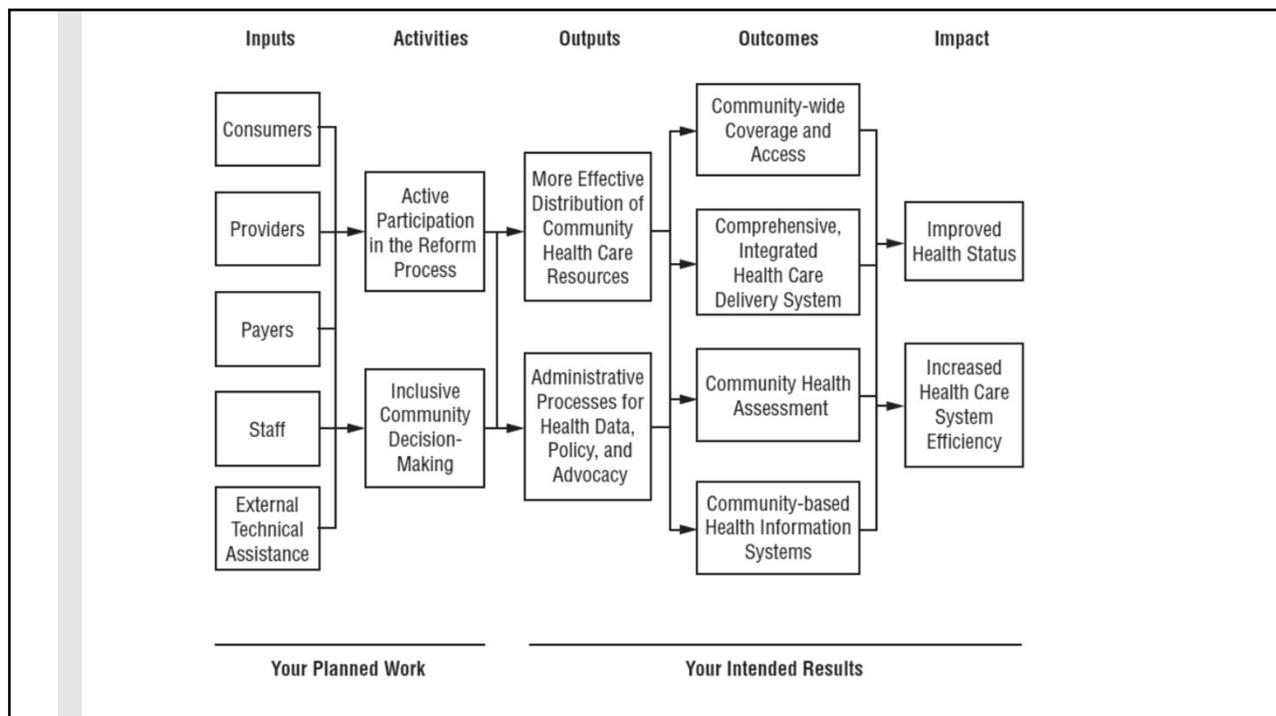
4) Rule of thumb - understand the scoring (which is clearly spelled out), then weight your pages accordingly.

5) One suggestion - Bold everything that the Funding Announcement says they are looking for (or other key points), then concentrate on the Bolded parts as you are preparing your grant and/or discussing the Grant with others (this makes the process SOOOO much easier to get a handle on).

- Note: this suggestion is appropriate for more complicated RFP's

6) Consider starting with a logic model - this is a great way to summarize your entire application on one page

- Note: a logic model is NOT required for the CMI Fund grant application.



7) A suggestion for more complicated applications - copy each "Criteria Section" onto its own page or section in a Word document, then break each "item" into separate bullets

- Try to estimate the point value of each bullet – this really gives you a good perspective on where you need to spend your time (and helps you get into the mindset of the future grant reviewer since that is likely going to be how their "scoring sheet" is going to look)
- Write an appropriate response to each and every bullet – answer each one completely, in a "space-sensitive way" (see #4, above)

8) Assume no pre-existing knowledge on the part of the reviewers. Explain everything. The reviewers will NOT visit any websites you refer to, so include in your application everything you want your reviewers to consider.

9) Clear your schedules to allow time for grant writing. It is a very time-consuming process – especially the "figuring it out" part – you have to allocate enough time to both create a great intervention and then write it up into a well-written grant application (see item #1, above)

- People often confuse those two elements.....first you have to design a great intervention.....before you start writing a well-written grant application

10) Good (and bad) grant applications are really easy to identify – consider having yours "practice scored" by two or three of your friends/associates.

11) How much reliance should you place upon diocese's Development Office? – We suggest you consider the possibility of using a hybrid approach.

- You write out a first (rough) draft or a detailed outline – which contains all the information that the RFP is looking for;
- Let the Development Office clean up the structure, format, and grammar, if they are willing to
- Major mistake many small organizations make – putting too much of the grant-writing responsibilities on an outside grant writer:
 - How are they supposed to design your intervention?
 - They don't have your vision
 - They don't have your passion
- The Development Office may also be of major assistance in helping to find the match

12) Letters of Support

- How important are Letters of Support?
 - That answer will vary from grant to grant. What does the specific RFP say about it?
 - “Rookies” use Letters of Support as “fillers” or “have to’s”; the “Pro’s” use Letters of Support to make or support key elements of the grant proposal – as well as to build support for their project
- Also consider the “communication value” of asking for Letters of Support
 - It gives you a legitimate reason for you to be having conversations and exposing your organization to “important people” that you probably want your organization to be exposed to
 - In this case (CMI Fund), what value within your diocese might be obtained by what your Bishop says about this project in his Letter of Support?
- You may offer to help write the first draft of the LOS.

13) Make sure you are satisfying all of the “Technical Requirements” of the Grant Application:

- Are you a “Qualified Applicant”? If not, who do you know that could be, that you could partner with on this grant?
- Pay particularly close attention to such “details” as:
 - Page count limitations;
 - Font size
 - Margins
 - Page numbering requirements (Yes? No? Which ones?)
- The deadline is the deadline is the deadline – don’t mess around with it

14) Be very careful of the COW Factor (“Can of Worms” Factor) when tempted to make last-minute revisions to your grant application.

15) Understand what YOU want to get out of the project, and make sure the final version of the project includes this.

- Don’t get caught up in just chasing dollars.
- Make sure you really want the grant you are applying for. Really!

16) If you are going to get involved in grant-writing, play full-out

- “100 points is the only acceptable target to be going after”
 - Why would you “try for” anything less?

