Grant Proposal Checklist

This document is intended to serve as an evolving grant application checklist based on the experiences of MFH staff, MoCAP customers, and consultants. Program officials at various federal funding organizations have referred to these steps as "characteristics of winning grants." Some of these steps may be less critical for non-federal funders. Compliance with grant guidelines supersedes any of these suggestions.

Initial Overview

☐ Complete grants.gov **registration**.

☐ Review grant **eligibility** requirements to ensure fit.

☐ Refine your new programmatic **idea**.

☐ If allowable, approach the **project officer** and seek feedback on your concept paper, programmatic idea, or any questions you have about the opportunity. MoCAP recommends emailing a list of questions and requesting a telephone appointment to discuss ideas. Study the guidelines and funder before contacting.

Grant Production

☐ Create a realistic grant production **work plan**, including assignments and a timeline, with a plan to submit prior than the stated deadline.

☐ Set-up an **external review** of a full draft of the proposal, ideally conducted by someone who has experience with your target funder.

☐ Assemble a cross-functional **grant production team** at your organization. One staff member should not bear full responsibility for production of a grant proposal.

☐ See copies of **sample** proposals funded by your target funder. Study them as a potential model.

Proposed Project Team

☐ Ensure existing resources and relationships are **leveraged** to strengthen the proposal.

☐ Make sure the proposal includes collaborations with community partners. Any **prior relationships** among the partners should be described. Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) describing roles and responsibilities should also be included.

☐ **Notify interested** parties (state government, elected officials, and other community providers) of your intention to submit a grant proposal.

☐ Solicit **letters of support**—consider the best sources for letters. Focus on organizations that have made actionable commitments to the proposed initiative, not just those that have sent "fan mail."

Statement of Need

☐ **Show** that the need is strong, compelling, and backed by reliable, publicly available data and research findings. National, state, and local comparisons should be used whenever possible.

☐ Make sure reviewers will understand the **social/regional context** in which you deliver services. Reviewers may lack accurate information about Missouri and your community.

☐ Ensure that your proposal defines fit with local, regional, and state priorities and initiatives.

☐ Be sure that the **public health impact** of the project objectives and goals are explicit—how will the world/your community be better and by what indicators?

☐ Make sure your proposal clearly describes the **public policy impact** of your project (if applicable).

Description of the Initiative

☐ Be sure the proposed initiative is perceived as **doable**—do not overpromise.

☐ Ensure the knowledge base and **evidence** upon which you built your proposed initiative is clearly defined.

☐ Define the **experience** of the organization(s) implementing the proposed initiative. Prior work or pilot projects that demonstrate feasibility and capacity can be briefly discussed.

☐ Show how your services are **innovative** or distinct from similar service provisions.

☐ Describe the potential for **replication** and contributions to the general knowledgebase for service delivery in related areas.

☐ Identify potential barriers to the success of your initiative and discuss how you plan to overcome them.

☐ Include **charts, graphs, figures**, and/or maps to help clarify your narrative.

☐ Consider including "call out" **case studies** to show reviewers specifics, e.g.,:

- How your proposed staff would serve a typical client ; OR
- A current client who has the need for your proposed program and the gap that exists without this service.

Budget

☐ Develop a **draft budget** to which your early project scope is scaled accordingly.

☐ Make sure the budget is **appropriate** to project goals and will allow you to meet stated grant deliverables.

☐ Ensure that items requested in the budget are **allowable** under federal guidelines and are cost-effective.

☐ Make sure budget numbers and service delivery units **match** the budget justification text and proposal narrative.

☐ Be sure that the proposal describes your **fiscal management** infrastructure and indicates your capacity to manage a grant of the size for which you are applying.

Project Implementation

☐ Make sure your **evaluation plan** and outcome measures are appropriate for the proposed initiative, and are feasible within the budget and proposed timeline.

☐ State how the project fits with the organization's **mission** and will contribute to future work.

☐ Include a realistic **sustainability plan** that preferably does not rely on continued federal funding.

☐ Consider the **health literacy** needs of our clients, families, and para-professional staff (visit Health Literacy Missouri for more information).

Prior to Submission

☐ Confirm that you have responded to the **freshest iteration** of the grant guidelines.

☐ Make sure that the grant is completely guideline **compliant**—all questions are answered and the fonts, page lengths, and margins meet requirements.

☐ Ensure that all requested **forms** are included in the application (recent tax forms, 990s, audit reports, etc.).

☐ Review the proposal for **grammatical** errors and punctuation.

☐ Print the application and visually review it.

☐ Carefully select a project title that is compelling and descriptive of the project proposed—it could impact review committee assignment.

☐ Ensure that the **abstract and first page** of the proposal are especially well written and compelling. The reviewer should quickly understand the need, the goal of the proposed project, and what makes it innovative.

Post Submission

☐ **Ensure receipt** by the funder. A confirmation email will be sent by grants.gov.

☐ Schedule a **post-production debrief** with the project team (ideally one to two weeks after submission). Use this time to consider the grant production experience and what you can learn from it.

Resubmission, if the proposal is not funded and you are resubmitting to the same (or a different) funder

- [ ] **Study the reviewer comments** and learn from the experience. Make an itemized, enumerated list of every reviewer-identified strength and weakness. A strong resubmission addresses EVERY reviewer comment. A numbered list helps the team avoid missing a comment.

- [ ] Ask the **project officer** if they can give you and constructive feedback and/or help to interpret reviewer comments, if reviewer comments are provided.

- [ ] Convene a "debrief" meeting of grant production participants and ideally a consultant to assist you in **interpreting** the reviewers' comments and brainstorming ways to address the issues raised.

- [ ] Decide if you will resubmit to the same **funder** or a different one in the future.

- [ ] Be VERY tactful in your resubmission in how you reference the reviewer critiques. **Fully respond** to critiques from prior submissions, even critiques with which you don't agree.

- [ ] In text, **remind** reviewers what they liked about your prior submission.