MAC
MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

THE ART & SCIENCE OF GRANT WRITING

Basics, Techniques & Strategies

By Flo McCormack

MAC Director of Special Projects

- Basic Tips for Writing a Grant Proposal

- Defining Your Needs

- Writing the Problem Statement

- Demonstrating Organizational Credibility

- Goals vs. Objectives

- Project Design

- Project Evaluation

- The Budget

- Learn all you can about the program

- Lay the groundwork – do your "homework"

- Plan ahead – if you need the money now, it's too late!

- Be concise and precise – short and to the point

- Who, What, When, Where and How Much – PLUS "How" you will accomplish your goals

- Don't make them hunt

- One size <u>does not</u> fit all

DEFINING YOUR NEEDS

(a.k.a. - THE PROBLEM STATEMENT)

- DEFINING YOUR NEEDS

  - Explanation 101 – Don't Assume the reviewer knows anything about you or your community!

 - Make a strong connection between your issue(s) and the funding priorities

PROBLEM STATEMENT

- Write a statement of the problem supported by verifiable data

- Explain how the money will help solve the problem

- Identify all of the elements of the project or initiative

PROBLEM STATEMENT

- Demonstrate your knowledge of the issue or problem

- What is the role of your organization

- Identify your goals and establish a project timeline with anticipated deliverables

- Stick to "Just the Facts" relevant to the application

WRITING THE APPLICATION

WRITING THE APPLICATION
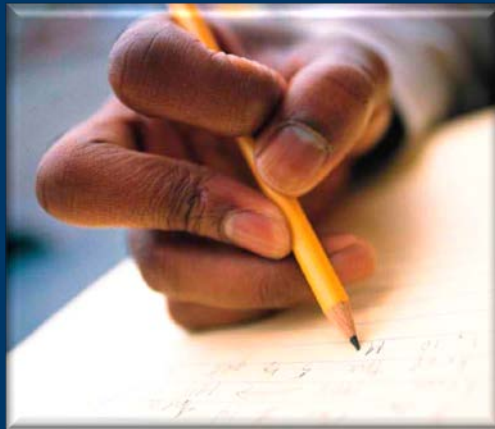
- Before you start writing

    o Match goals and objectives with funding priorities

    o Talk to staff at the funding agency or organization

    o Talk to prior awardees

WRITING THE APPLICATION

o Read the entire Request for Proposals (RFP) carefully, take notes, highlight key points

o Organize your proposal according to the RFP

  - Repeat headings from the RFP

  - Present information in the same order as found in the RFP

  - Use the same number system provided in the RFP

WRITING THE APPLICATION

- Pay attention to the point allocation - use your time wisely

- Provide succinct explanations

- Write about how "bad" things are due to the lack of funding – NOT how wonderful your community is

- Do include positive aspects of your community that support implementation of the grant

WRITING THE APPLICATION

- Avoid jargon and acronyms

- Don't simply reiterate THEIR buzzwords – use them wisely

- Most importantly - be passionate – tap into your inner salesperson

WRITING THE APPLICATION

- Use each of the criterion of the RFP as a section title

- Describe how the proposal meets each criterion – DO NOT SKIP ANYTHING!

- If a particular criterion does not apply to use – keep it in the application and indicate that it does not apply

WRITING THE APPLICATION

- Proposal Summary – this is the last thing you write!

  o Appears at the beginning of the proposal

  o Outlines the project proposal with all key elements

  o Think of it as the text on the jacket of a book you're considering for purchase – it's meant to grab your interest

- Proposal Summary

  o Meet the requirements of the RFP

    − Can be a cover letter or a separate page

    − Don't include extraneous information – use the limited space wisely

   − DO INCLUDE why you want, need and should receive the grant

- Proposal Summary (cont'd)

  o Be brief – 2 or 3 paragraphs – if you can't do that, rethink your proposal

  o Include all key points

  o Remember – first impressions are critical to success

  o Sets the tone for review of the rest of the application

WRITING THE APPLICATION

- Describe your organization

  - o Build credibility

  - o Describe past and present capabilities/experience

  - o Explain how proposed activities fit into the organization

WRITING THE APPLICATION

o Include a brief biography of key individuals involved in the project

o Include a general description of success stories related to the relevant goals of the project and the funding organization

BREAKING IT INTO PIECES
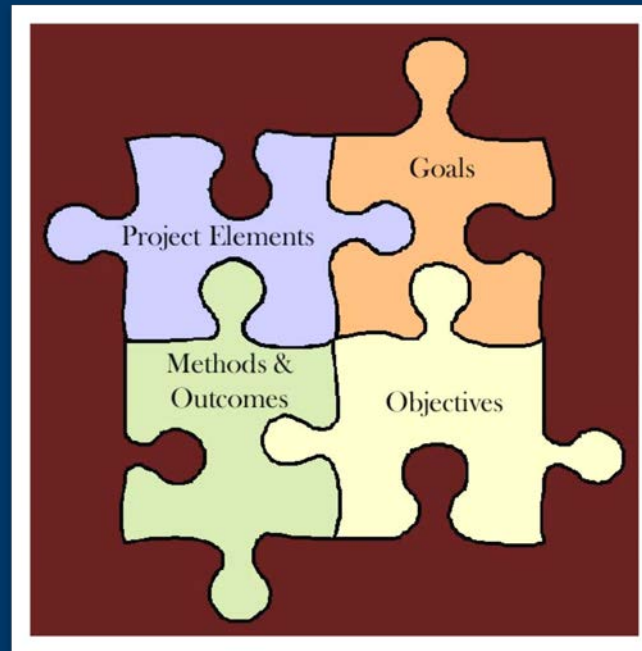
- Project Elements

- Goals

- Objectives
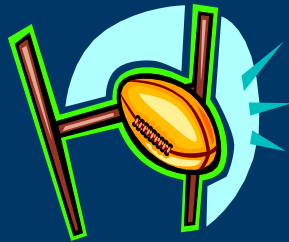
- Methods and Outcomes

- Describe each part of the project

  o List and describe each of the items or activities that will be funded under the grant

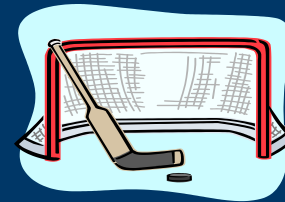 o Identify what additional items or activities are necessary for success and how they will be funded

GOALS

YOURS versus THEIRS
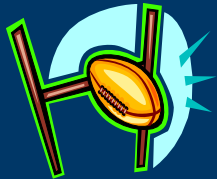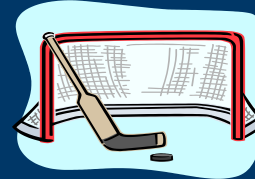
?

- Be sure you're in the right arena (grant program)!

versus

- Are your goals consistent/compatible with the grant program goals?

- Be sure to check – funding program goals often change from one year to the next

BREAKING IT INTO PIECES
Goals

- Describe your goals for the project

- Explain how they support the goals of the funding agency

BREAKING IT INTO PIECES
Goals and Objectives

- GOALS are general and offer the evaluator an understanding of the thrust of your program

- OBJECTIVES are specific, measurable outcomes. They should be realistic and attainable
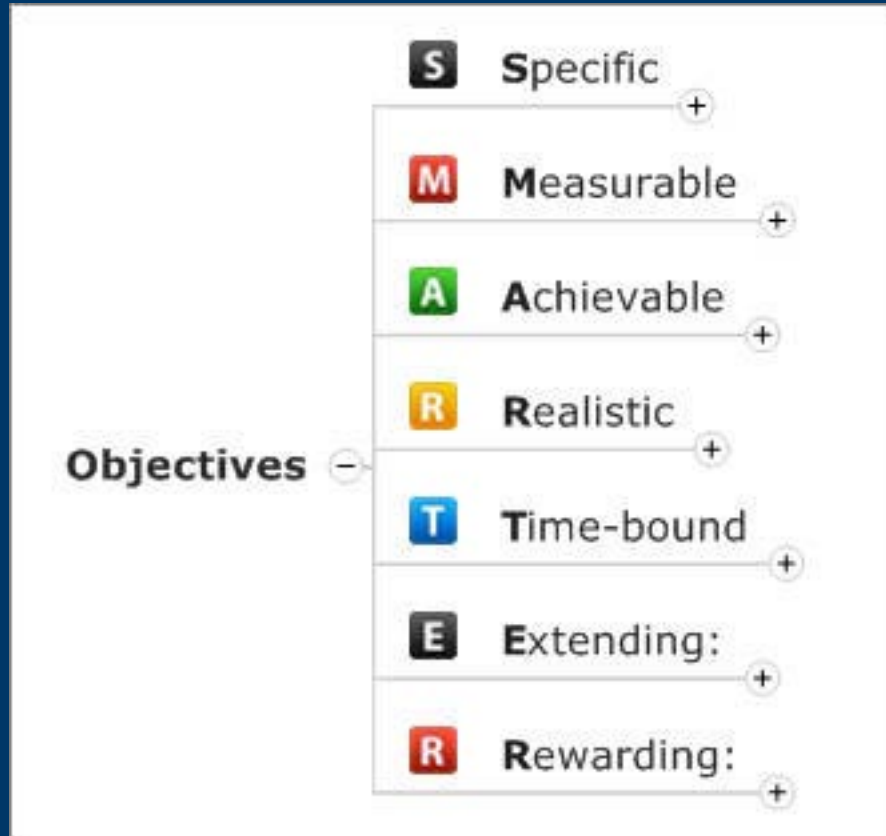
BREAKING IT INTO PIECES
Goals and Objectives

	GOAL	OBJECTIVE
PLAN	Broad Plan	Narrow Plan
ACTION	Generic Plan	Specific Action
MEASURE	Not strictly measurable or tangible	Measurable & Tangible
TIME FRAME	Longer Term	Short to Medium Term
MEANING	What endeavors are directed toward	What actions will accomplish
PRINCIPLE	Based on ideas	Based on Fact
		http://www.diffen.com/difference/Goal_vs_Objective

Objectives
- **S**pecific
- **M**easurable
- **A**chievable
- **R**ealistic
- **T**ime-bound
- **E**xtending:
- **R**ewarding:

BREAKING IT INTO PIECES
Objectives

- Objectives help solve the problem or address the issue

- They are <u>HOW</u> you will achieve your goals

- If your objectives refer to a specific number of deliverables – make sure it's doable

  - Two successful results are much better than 10 mediocre or failed attempts

BREAKING IT INTO PIECES
Methods & Outcomes

- Outline the tasks that will be accomplished

- Structure the project method as a timeline

- Provide a narrative description of all the activities needed to achieve the desired results

  - Include information about the personnel, materials and other resources needed

BREAKING IT INTO PIECES
Methods & Outcomes

- Describe <u>WHY</u> you have chosen these activities

- Justify your strategy over all other approaches you could have taken

- Identify major milestones

BREAKING IT INTO PIECES
Methods & Outcomes

- Develop evaluation criteria

- Identify times where you evaluate progress towards project goals

- Describe precisely how success will be determined

- Identify what will be different once the project will be complete

BREAKING IT INTO PIECES
Methods & Outcomes

- If you're having trouble developing your evaluation process, take another look at your objects – you may need to rethink them

- Be ready to do ongoing evaluation and adjust as needed

- Don't wait until the end to evaluate your efforts – by then it's too late to make needed changes to ensure success

- Divide the budget into appropriate categories – for example:

  - Personnel – costs that cover all or part of the salary of an employee in your organization

  - Travel

  - Equipment

  - Supplies

  - Contractual – funds used to hire engineers or consultants

PROJECT BUDGET

- Costs should be tied to tasks

- Justify requests for salaries – check to determine if overhead costs are eligible

- If you plan to hire someone with the funding, include a position description

- Matching funds or in-kind services show a commitment on the part of the applicant

- Plan carefully

- Be sure to consider all potential costs

- Check on the "going rate" for anything you intend to buy or contract for

- Remember the formula for "total project cost": Grant Request Amount + Matching Funds = Total Project Cost

- Partners have a defined role in implementing the project

- Letters of support – are a form of endorsement, they speak to your worthiness but are not from an entity involved in implementation

- Keep it simple

- Follow the format

- Do your homework in advance

- Construct your best compelling argument

MAC CONTACTS

Gabriel Zawadzki
Email: zawadzki@micounties.org
Cell Phone: 517-712-7131

Office Phone: 517-482-4599
Toll Free: (800) 336-2018