

Grant Documentation Review Questions

Original document from Riverside Community College District; adapted Summer 2024 with permission.

Proposal Review Questions

1. What are the start and end dates of the grant award?
Do these dates align with the timeline outlined in the proposal? If there are discrepancies, the Project Lead will need to adjust the work plan accordingly, as funding availability is often uncertain during the pre-award phase.
2. What need prompted the proposal?
Identify the student, faculty, program, employer, or community need that the proposal addresses. What actions are currently being taken to meet this need? Keep in mind that changes may have occurred between the proposal submission and funding approval, and minor adjustments are usually acceptable. However, significant changes may require revisions to the plan and pre-approvals from the Supervising Administrator and the funding agency's Program Officer, with the Grants Manager facilitating these discussions.
3. Who is responsible for achieving grant objectives?
Determine if the Project Lead and grant-funded project staff will be solely responsible or if collaboration with other departments is needed. Identify key contacts within those departments and confirm their awareness of the grant.
4. What results were promised to the funding agency?
Understand how the grant will demonstrate that these results have been achieved. These commitments are generally non-negotiable without solid justification and prior approval from the Program Officer.
5. What special populations will the project serve?
Consider whether the project will benefit students from traditionally underrepresented racial/ethnic groups, women, individuals with disabilities, the unemployed, or economically disadvantaged individuals, as well as employers, community partners, or K-12 systems. How will participants be selected, and are there any groups that cannot be served? This is crucial, as some grants prohibit funding for ineligible participants, potentially leading to financial repercussions for the college.
6. What personnel are authorized in the grant?

Identify the roles and responsibilities of key personnel. Will new staff need to be hired, or will existing staff be reassigned? Since hiring can take considerable time, the Project Lead should work with the Supervising Administrator to initiate this process promptly. Note on the Personnel Action Request (PAR) that the position is grant-funded and include the date the award was Governing Board approved, the award number, and start date.

7. Does the grant proposal include external partners or collaborators?
Confirm whether these relationships are already established. If not, what steps will the Project Lead need to take to build these partnerships? Are the partners aware of the funding? If they will receive grant funds, is there a subcontract agreement in place? Many funding sources require partnerships for the grant's success.
8. Does the Project Lead understand all technical terms or jargon used in the proposal?
If clarification is needed, refer to the funding regulations, the Grants Manager, or the grant proposal development team for assistance.

Budget Review Questions

1. Is the negotiated budget the same as the budget proposed in the initial grant application?
If there are differences, has a revised budget been submitted to the funding source? Keep in mind that the funding source has the discretion to reduce the grant award amount. If this occurs, we may need to negotiate changes in scope, outcomes, or activities to align with the reduced funding. However, do not contact the funding source without first consulting the Supervising Administrator and the Grants Manager.
2. Does the grant require an institutional match?
If so, where will the matching funds be sourced from, and how will the college document this match?
3. Have the activity timelines or objectives changed?
If so, will these changes affect the budget? It's important to assess any potential impacts on funding and resource allocation.

Regulation Review Questions

Understanding the state and federal regulations that apply to the project is crucial for the Project Lead. These regulations may be outlined in the Federal Register announcement, the authorizing legislation that approved the grant, the Request for Proposal, or department-specific rules, such as the U.S. Department of Education's General Administrative Regulations

(EDGAR) and the National Science Foundation's Proposals and Awards Policies and Procedures Guide (PAPPG). Additionally, grant regulations are sometimes attached to the award letter, especially for state and local grants. New grantee orientations conducted by the funding source also provide valuable information.

1. What are the eligibility criteria for participation in this program?
Confirm that all participants meet the required qualifications.
2. What activities are allowable and unallowable?
Clearly define which project activities are permitted under the grant.
3. What costs are allowable and unallowable?
Identify which expenses can be funded through the grant and which cannot.
4. Is travel authorized?
Are there any limitations on out-of-state travel that need to be considered?
5. Can the grant fund equipment?
Are there any restrictions on equipment purchases, and who will own the equipment?
6. Are there any special guidelines for procurement?
Understand any specific procurement processes or regulations that must be followed.

Notice of Award Review Questions:

The award notice authorizes the expenditure of grant funds. Without an award notice or fully executed agreement, Fiscal Services cannot set up a project number in PeopleSoft Financials. The award notice may include a separate contract that outlines the responsibilities of the grantee and the grantor. If the award notice does not include a separate contract, then the initial grant proposal is the contract of performance. Other items to remember:

1. What is the grant number?
You will need to include this number on all communications with the Program Officer.
2. What is the name and phone number of the Program Officer?
3. What is the total amount of the grant?
Confirm this aligns with your budget proposal.
4. What is the start and end date of the grant?

5. Are there any specific compliance requirements mentioned?
Be sure to review any federal, state, or institutional compliance obligations)
6. Are there specific conditions or milestones that must be met for disbursement of funds?
7. What are the required reporting schedules and formats?
Clarify when and how reports must be submitted.
8. What specific assurances have been provided in the award notice?
Identify all the commitments made by the grantee regarding compliance and performance.
9. What are the cost-sharing or matching fund requirements, if any?
Determine your financial obligations related to the grant.
10. Are there any restrictions on the types of expenditures allowed?
Identify any non-allowable costs that could impact your budget.
11. Is there a specific evaluation or assessment process outlined in the award?
Understand expectations for measuring project outcomes.
12. What are the procedures for requesting budget modifications or no-cost extensions?
Know the process for managing changes to the project scope or timeline.
13. Is there a contact for grant administration or compliance questions?
Identify additional resources for support during the grant period.

Closing Thoughts:

The Project Lead is the institution's expert on this grant. While the Institutional Research, Planning, and Grants (IRP&G) office and Fiscal Services are available to provide support, it is ultimately the Project Lead's responsibility to understand the intricacies of their grant and ensure compliance with all federal, state, local, and institutional rules, regulations, and requirements. This includes staying updated on any changes to regulations, effectively communicating with stakeholders, and proactively addressing potential compliance issues. The Project Lead should also familiarize themselves with the resources and training available through the funding agency and leverage these to enhance project outcomes. By taking ownership of these responsibilities, the Project Lead can facilitate a successful grant experience for all involved.