

TOOL C

Preparation Checklist: Common Pitfalls to Look Out For Federal Proposal Development

1. Failure to Review Eligibility Requirements

- Not confirming that the organization meets the basic eligibility criteria.
- Overlooking specific eligibility conditions for funding, such as location, type of organization, or project scope

2. Misalignment with Grant Priorities

- Proposing a project that doesn't clearly align with the funding agency's stated priorities or objectives.
- Failing to highlight how the project addresses the NOFO's merit rating criteria

3. Inadequate Planning and Preparation

- Waiting until the last minute to start preparing the proposal, leading to rushed or incomplete submissions.
- Neglecting to hold internal planning meetings to gather essential information and consensus on the project scope and associated budget.

4. Incomplete or Incorrect Budget

- Failing to prepare a detailed, accurate, and realistic budget that covers all necessary expenses.
- Overlooking indirect costs, fringe benefits, or matching fund requirements.
- Forgetting to adhere to federal cost principles or not providing necessary justifications for budget items.
- Miscategorizing expenses, in-kind, or match; fail to use proper indirect cost rate
- Overlooking the need for matching funds or in-kind contributions and failing to provide the required documentation.

5. Weak or Unclear Project Narrative

- Writing a vague or overly general project description that lacks specific goals, objectives, and measurable outcomes.
- Failing to clearly define the problem the project aims to solve and how the project will address it.
- Lacking a logical, well-organized structure or writing too much without focusing on key points.

6. Inadequate Stakeholder Involvement

- Neglecting to secure and document commitments from partners, collaborators, or key stakeholders.
- Failing to outline clear roles and responsibilities for all involved parties in the project.

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- Including under-qualified personnel to execute the proposed project
- Failing to standardize required support letters and resumes, cv's or biosketches

7. Overlooking Evaluation and Sustainability Plans

- Failing to include a robust evaluation plan with measurable outcomes.
- Not addressing how the project will be sustained after the grant period ends or if additional funding will be needed.

8. Ignoring Compliance and Regulatory Requirements

- Not addressing how the organization will meet federal grant compliance requirements, such as financial reporting, audits, and procurement standards.
- Overlooking regulations like environmental reviews, human subjects protection, personally identifying information (PII) or procurement rules for federal funding.

9. Weak Grant Writing Style

- Using overly technical or jargon-filled language that makes the proposal difficult to understand.
- Lacking a compelling story or not clearly demonstrating the need for funding.
- Submitting a proposal with spelling, grammar, or formatting errors.

10. Failure to Follow Application Guidelines

- Missing critical components such as required forms, letters of support, or documentation.
- Not adhering to page limits, font size, or formatting instructions outlined in the grant notice.
- Submitting attachments that are not requested or relevant.

11. Unrealistic Timelines or Objectives

- Proposing timelines or scopes that are too ambitious or unrealistic for the grant period.
- Failing to identify clear milestones or phases for completing the project.

12. Failure to Register or Complete System Requirements

- Not registering or updating accounts in systems such as Grants.gov, SAM.gov, or other required portals in a timely manner.
- Neglecting to verify all system registrations are current before the application deadline.

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13. Inadequate Attention to Deadlines

- Misinterpreting submission deadlines, including time zones and cutoff times.
- Forgetting to factor in the time needed for approvals and internal reviews before submission.

14. Lack of Internal Review or Collaboration

- Not conducting an internal review of the proposal by colleagues or experts before submission.
- Failing to collaborate with finance, legal, or compliance teams to ensure accuracy and completeness.

Avoiding these common pitfalls can significantly increase the chances of preparing and submitting a competitive and successful federal grant proposal.

Struggling with government funding proposals? WE CAN HELP!

Bynes Consulting Group is available to assist nonprofit and public sector organizations assess their internal capacity to conceptualize, write and submit a federal grant, as well as their capacity to implement the project once awarded. Bynes Consulting Group is also available to write federal grant proposals and manage their submission. In any role, we can help your organization put together a competitive funding proposal, and avoid the pitfalls that can make the proposal development and submission process frustrating and overwhelming. We hope you'll consider partnering with us!