FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Demystifying & Streamlining Proposal Writing & Submission

Melanie Emerson, PhD, MA
Senior Consultant
Bynes Consulting Group
Tucson, AZ

Maddy Bynes-Devaney, MPP
Founder & Principal
Bynes Consulting Group
Washington, DC



Starting Out Assessing Organizational Capacity Tools for Streamlining Your Process Avoiding Common Pitfalls Proposal Development Roadmap Siloing v. Synergy The Who and How of Budget Development **Iterative Review and Submission**



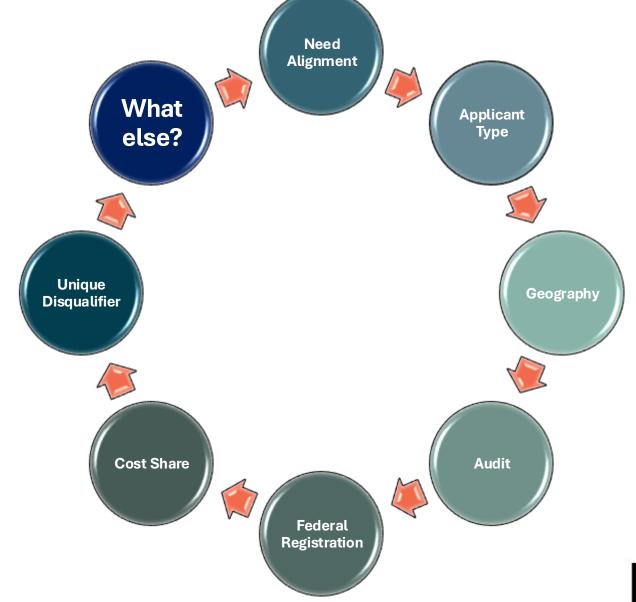
Starting Out



- Your experience!
- Searching for opportunities
- Types of federal funding
- What's your need?
- Finding a potential funding match
- Eligibility
- What's a NOFO/A?



Eligibility



BYNES

CONSULTING GROUP

Examples of Funding Opportunities

Notice of Intent DE-FOA-0003423: Energy Improvements in Rural or Remote Areas FY24 Funding Opportunity Announcement DE-FOA-0003428 Department of Energy

https://grants.gov/search-results-detail/356272

USDA-FS-2025-LSR-WEST: Landscape Scale Restoration Grant Program 2025 West Department of Agriculture, Forest Service

https://grants.gov/search-results-detail/355887

N0001424SB003 National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP) 2024 Department of Defense, Office of Naval Research

https://grants.gov/search-results-detail/356162

7200AA23APS00006 Biodiversity Annual Program Statement (Biodiversity APS), Agency for International Development

https://grants.gov/search-results-detail/348891



NOFO Treasure Hunt #1

- What agency or entity is managing this Opportunity?
- What is the deadline for submission?
- What kind of federal funding instrument is it?
- What is the funding ceiling per applicant?
- Is your current organization eligible? Why/Why not?
- Is there a pre-application information session for this NOFO?
- Who is the contact for the NOFO?
- Is additional information available to learn more details about this Opportunity?
- What federal forms have to be submitted as part of the submission package?



Internal Capacity Questions to Consider:

Proposal

Organizational Capacity
Program Feasibility
Funding Opportunity
Return on Investment
Risk Assessment

FXAMPLES

- How many people and how much of their time is available to invest effort in proposal writing?
- Given the due date, is there adequate time to submit?
- What is a realistic ask based on your organization, your need, your project and the priorities stated in the NOFO?
- When would the money be received? Does that timeline fit your need? If there is staggering of grant payments, would that coincide with and support your needs?
- Do you have a demonstrable track record of success/ efficacy with the project type/scope?

Refer to TOOLS A & B



Internal Capacity Questions to Consider: Implementation

Organizational Capacity
Financial Resources
Project Scope and Complexity
Sustainability
Compliance and Reporting
Collaboration and Partnerships
Risk Tolerance

Refer to TOOLS A & B



Tools for Streamlining Your Proposal Development

THE BASICS

- TOOL A Preparation checklist: Organizational capacity to develop proposal
- TOOL B Preparation checklist: Organizational capacity for implementing the proposed project
- TOOL C Common pitfalls to look out for
- TOOL D Punchlist of documents and information to collect and format
- TOOL D Checklist of required and optional materials in the submission package
- TOOL E Sample timeline (Gantt) for proposal development
- TOOL F Narrative content guide (merit rating)



NOFO Treasure Hunt #2

- What typeface and font size should you use for the narrative?
- List the attachments that should be included in your final submission package
- What pages of the NOFO describe the merit rating criteria?
- Is there a page limit for the budget narrative?
- Does the NOFO give preference to or require involvement of specific populations?
- When will the decision be announced of which proposals have been awarded funding?
- Does the NOFO ask for a literature review, inclusion of subject matter experts
 (SME), an external evaluator, evidence-based methods, and/or evidence-informed approaches?
- What is the maximum length of the attachments?

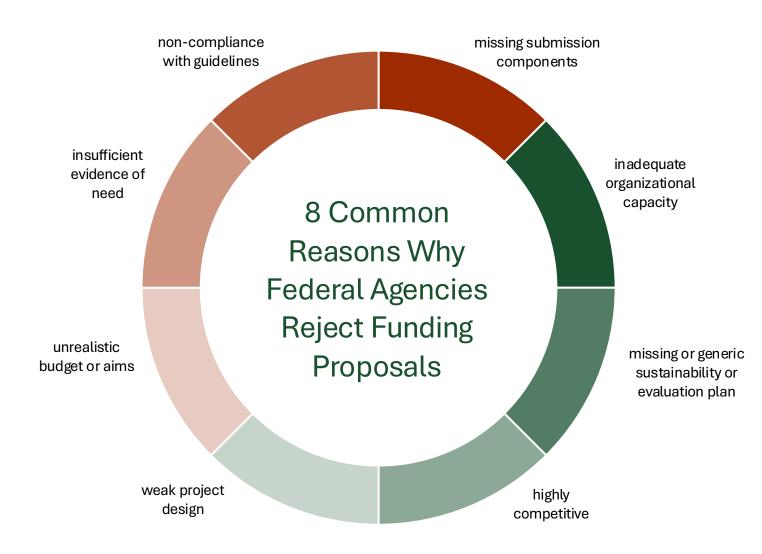


Avoiding Common Pitfalls

What pitfalls, challenges, obstacles or just plain mistakes have you made or have you been made aware of when working on a federal funding proposal?

Avoiding Common Pitfalls

What pitfalls, challenges, obstacles or just plain mistakes have you made or have you been made aware of when working on a federal funding proposal?



Common Pitfalls

- Failure to register or complete system requirements
- Failure to review eligibility requirements
- Inadequate attention to deadlines
- Failure to follow application and submission guidelines
- Misalignment with stated grant priorities
- Inadequate planning and preparation
- Passive grant-writing style

- Weak or unclear project narrative
- Incomplete or incorrect budget
- Failure to address compliance and regulatory requirements
- Unrealistic timelines or objectives
- Inadequate stakeholder/community involvement
- Overlooking evaluation and sustainability plans
- Lack of internal review and refinement

TOOL C



Tools for Streamlining Your Proposal Development

THE BASICS

- TOOL A Preparation checklist: Organizational capacity to develop proposal
- **TOOL B** Preparation checklist: Organizational capacity for implementing the proposed project
- **TOOL C** Common pitfalls to look out for
- TOOL D Punchlist of documents and information to collect and format
- TOOL D Checklist of required and optional materials in the submission package
- TOOL E Sample timeline (Gantt) for proposal development
- TOOL F Narrative content guide (merit rating)





Funding Proposal Development Roadmap



Dive into the NOFO

- Invest time to familiarize yourself. Download, print, read, take notes, mark up, and then read it again!
- Test access to platform



Prepare a narrative skeleton

- Create a simple, bulletpoint outline
- Include eligibility and capacity questions

Gather the internal team

- Present the concept to the team, get the green light, determine roles, scope, eval, approximate budget...the big stuff.
- Set regular meetings with this team to review progress and answer key questions

Create a narrative flow

- Systematically populate the merit rating chart with your key points for every element
- Use the narrative content guide to ensure thoroughness



Create the game plan

- Use the timeline (Tool E) to map out your steps from inception to submission.
- Build in time for the unexpected
- Make sure 100% of submission checklist items are assigned to team members
- Follow-up daily with team members
- Sketch out preliminary budget

Write and review all narrative documents

- Use the populated merit rating chart as a guide to expand on complex ideas
- Ensure concept and commitment alignment
- Review work, eval, sustainability plans and budget narrative against for consistency
- Close gaps



Align item by item with narrative, metrics and workplan



03

REVIEW & REFINE

- Use outside reviewer if possible
- Write abstract
- Fill in budget forms



SUBMIT EARLY

 Plan to submit at least one week day prior to the deadline



Conceptualization *sidetrack*

WHO can write your proposal?

This is a different question than WHO is the architect of your proposal

We assume the writing will be done by employees:

- Project Manager
- Executive Director
- Chief Development Officer/Associate

Numerous organizations leverage other resources, individuals and expertise to undertake the writing:

- Volunteers
- Board Members and Trustees
- Long-time members of the organization
- Freelance grant writers providing a contract-based service
- Grant writing consultants who provide organizations with ongoing help through retainer contracts

Something to keep in mind!

Now...back to your regularly scheduled programming!



Competitive Conceptualization

- ☐ Compelling Need Statement: Write a persuasive narrative that clearly conveys the urgency and importance of addressing the problem. Use data, statistics, and anecdotes to emphasize the significance of the issue.
- ☐ Clear Objectives and Goals: Define measurable, time-bound objectives that align with the goals of the grant. These should be specific, realistic, and achievable within the timeframe of the funding.
- ☐ Clarity and Conciseness: The proposal should be well-organized, clearly written, and free from jargon. Reviewers often have limited time, so proposals that are concise, focused, and easy to read stand out.
- ☐ Innovation and Creativity: Funders are often drawn to projects that present innovative solutions to persistent problems. Showcase how your project introduces new methods, models, or technologies that can create transformative change.

- □ Scalability & Sustainability: Demonstrate how the project can be scaled or replicated in other areas or by other organizations if successful, as well as how the benefits of the project will be sustained beyond the grant period. Funders prefer to invest in initiatives that will have a broader, lasting impact
- □ Evidence-Based Approach: Use evidence-based practices and demonstrate how the proposed project builds on proven methodologies. Include research or case studies that show similar initiatives have succeeded.
- ☐ Specific, Measurable Outcomes: Clearly outline what success will look like. Use quantitative and qualitative metrics to show how the project will be evaluated. Metrics should align with the funder's priorities and be clearly measurable.
- ☐ Attention to Detail: Ensure the proposal is free of errors and adheres to all formatting and submission guidelines. Attention to detail reflects the professionalism and care of your organization. Lack of it, the opposite.

- □ Organizational Capacity: Demonstrate that your organization has the experience, qualified personnel, technical and grants management expertise, and infrastructure to successfully execute the project. Highlight previous successful projects, especially those funded by federal sources, to demonstrate credibility.
- Evaluation Plan: Include a robust evaluation plan that shows how you will assess the project's success and impact. This should include predefined performance measures, data collection methods, and tools for continuous monitoring and evaluation.
- ☐ Community Involvement: Demonstrate how the project is rooted in community needs and has involved key stakeholders in its design and how it will do so in its implementation. Show that there is strong support from those who will benefit from or be impacted by the project.



An Age-Old Dilemma

Siloing v. Synergy

TOOL E

NOFO#

Organization Name

Proposal Development & Submission TIMELINE

			Wed	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Мо	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Мо
	Responsible														
Task	Party	Parties	6/26	6/27	6/28	6/29	6/30	7/1	7/2	7/3	7/4	7/5	7/6	7/7	7/8
Preparation & Launch															
Pre-Application call															
Review NOFO															
Draft proposal Gantt (timeline)															
Write narrative content/rating table															
Write punchlist (org docs) and submission checklist															
Provide access to grants.gov, login.gov, SAM															
FU with CMS re: narrative, abstract, budget, etc. Forms															
Meet as team to agree upon aims/scope/timeline/POCs															\top
Sketch out basic project timeline, metric targets, and parallel broad-strokes budget															
Set meeting schedule with POCs, key personnel and leads															
Communicate 'assignments' to all identified leads															
Secure org documents															
Complete all Federal Forms															
Pull and upload to Share drive background documents for Contractor															
Writing & Reviewing															
Write narrative using narrative content/rating table															
Write Workplan															
Write Navigator Training and Certification Plan															
Write COI attestation & plan															
Write recruitment and hiring schedule															
Write project abstract															
Collect key personnel resumes															
Write job descriptions for described/budgeted positions															
Draft 5 years budgets/totals using Federal Budget Form															
Draft narrative budget justification															
Conduct & write business assessment															
Review and correct narrative, budget, justification, attachments and forms															
Finalize narrative, budget, justification, attachments and forms													_		
CEO review (or designee)															
Submission Uploads													_		
Narrative, abstract, budget justification				<u> </u>	-		-	-	-	-	-				
Budget sheets				<u> </u>	1		1	1	1	1	1				
All attachments (7)				<u> </u>		_	1	1	1	1					
All Federal Forms (4)				<u> </u>	1		-	1	1	1	1				
Final review of aggregrate online application				<u> </u>	1	_	1	1	1	1	1				
FINAL submission															

Tools for Streamlining Your Proposal Development

THE BASICS

- TOOL A Preparation checklist: Organizational capacity to develop proposal
- **TOOL B** Preparation checklist: Organizational capacity for implementing the proposed project
- **TOOL C** Common pitfalls to look out for
- **TOOL D** Punchlist of documents and information to collect and format
- **TOOL D** Checklist of required and optional materials in the submission package
- **TOOL E** Sample timeline (Gantt) for proposal development
- **TOOL F** Narrative content guide (merit rating)



NOFO Treasure Hunt #3

- What is the maximum number of years you can propose for funding?
- List the sections that must be included in your project narrative.
- Does the NOFO provide a sample workplan? Project timeline?
- Is a business assessment (financial stability eval) required for submission?
- What is the maximum length allowable for the abstract?
- What, if anything, does the NOFO advise about PII?
- What is the maximum number of points possible in the merit rating?
- Is matching funding required, and if so, what are the requirements for the match?
- What is the day of the week that the deadline for submission falls on?
- What number do you call or email do you write to if you experience technical issues during the submission process?



Budget Preparation

Project B	Budget Br	eakdown													1.		
item	Unit qu	uantity Unit C	ost Frequer	ency 1	ime unit (Months, Days or Lump	% Charged	Total (RSD)									
. Staff and Other Personnel Costs (please itemize costs of staff, consultants and other personnel to it	be recrui	ted directly by	the implem	nenting p	partner for project implementation	on)	2,2	71,000.00									
rector and leading expert	1	126	000 6	mor		100	K 7:	6,000.00									
echnical assistant	1	50,			th .	100		00,000.00									
ommunication officer unior of ficer	1 1	50,			eh eh	100		00,000.00								=	=
nacialoffeer	1	75		mor	th the same of the	100		10,000.00 75,000.00							2.		
Supplies, Commodities, Materials (please itemize costs of consumables to be purchased under the risting of promotional materials (2 sets x 80.000 RSD based on previous experience)	project,			portatio	n, freight, storage and distributio	n costs)	1	94,000.00									
rinting or promotional materials (2 sets x 80, 000 inst based on previous experience) rameworks for posters (18 x 2500 RSD based on internet research)	-	70	000 1	set c	f promotional materials	100	1	10,000.00									
amendments possers (see a 2,000 hours on the men reasons ny	-											١.					
	-				am expenses will cover h									TOTAL			
					ind Kremenchuk-deployed	I teams; 1	100% IS			Day Rate/Unit			ACTUAL DIRECT				
Equipment, vehicles and furniture (please itemize costs of non-consumables to be purchased under	r the pr	reflected b	elow but	t would	l be allocated by project			Count		Cost	Days	E	EXPENSE	KIND			
Ssability toolkit for health mediators (signs on cards, arm, jacket etc. based on previous experience)	_	Personne	ı														=
	-								1	\$400		44	\$ E 000		3.		
Contractual Services (please list works and services to be contracted under the project)		OCONUS	IC (Rze	eszow)				-				14	\$5,600				
onsultants (supert to MoH in development of the Protocol - 2 consultants x 12 working days)		OCONUS	Logistics	s/Ops/	Safety Officers (Rzeszow	/)			2	2 \$350		14	\$9,800				
ionsultants (devolpment of culturally sensitive guide - 2 consultants x 14 working days) Consultants (development of operational procedures for prevention and intervention in cases of COVID-19 in CAs and PCs - 2 consultants x 10	-	OCONUS	Liaison/0	/Comn	ns Officer (Rzezsow)				1	\$300		30	\$9,000				
onsultants (development of operational procedures for prevention and intervention in cases of COM D-19 in CAs and PCs - 2 consultants x 10 orking days)	1 -																
onsultants (development of Tookit for health mediators - 2 consultants x 20 working days)					nt-hour shifts)			-	3			30	\$18,000				
inacnial services		Project M	anager/Co	Coordin	ator (Khmelnytski) (inclu	des hazar	d pay)		1	\$1,500		32	\$48,000				
ranslation (fars) and arabic) ranslation of guidelines for provosion of cultural-servicies (english, c.c., 120 pages x 1500 per page)	-				ytski) (includes hazard pa				1	\$1,800		30	\$54,000				
esign and editing of publications (2 publications x 90000 RSD)	_									2 \$750		30			4.		
resign of promotional materials (promotion of health mediators, inforamtion about health services)	_	Security r	elay Offic	cer (Po	oland/Lviv) (may include h	azard pa	y)						\$45,000				
ngagement of health mediators (5 health mediators x 3 months)		Trainers (Khme	elnytsk	d)				3	\$2,000		30		\$180,000			
edesign of website	\Box	Driver (K	nmelnytsk	ki)					1	\$200		30	\$6,000				
E. Training (please itemize training costs of staff, consultants and other personnel for project implementations that care workers (2 trainers x 7 working days)	entatio											30					
rainers for health care workers (2 trainers x 7 working days) rainers for health care workers (2 trainers x 5 working days)	—				Interpreter (1); fixer (1) (F	nmeinyt	ski)			\$200		30	\$30,000				
rainers (regarding COVID-19,30 educations)	_	SUBTOT	AL PERS	SONN	EL								\$225,400	\$180,000			
pervision		Travel													321		_
. Transfers and Grants to Counterparts (please list transfers and sub-grants to project implementing	g partn		al Climba	- //	ing/Bags (AIRLINK)				14	\$2,250		1	\$3.500	\$28,000	5.	Tota	als
	\vdash												4-1	\$20,000			_
	-	Individual	Travel/Er	merge	ncy insurance coverage				1	\$23		310	\$7,130				
. Travel (please itemize travel costs of staff, consultants and other personnel for project implementa	tation)	Lodging (F	Rzezsow)	()					3	\$100		30	\$9,000				
		Lodging (F							8	\$70		30	\$16.800				
	_							_					,				
		Per Diem	(Rzezso	ow)					3	\$50		32	\$4,800			φ4,000	,
		Pre-purch	ased food	d (in P	oland) +Incidentals (Khm	elnytski)			11	\$50		30	\$16,500			\$16,500	j
		SUBTOT	AI TRAV	VFI									\$57,730	\$28,000		\$85,730	
		Equipme											\$51,150	Ψ20,000		+00,100	

		Education	al/Tech E	Equipm	ent/Supplies				1			1	\$85,000	\$15,000		\$100,000	es
		PPE (balli	stic) (for	our ov	vn team)				11	\$500		1	\$5,500			\$5,500	,
		Fuel								\$100		12	\$1,200			\$1,200	,
								-				_					
		Medical C	onsumab	ibles/E	quipment				1	I .		1	\$5,000			\$5,000	_
		Trauma S	upplies						1	1		1				\$0	1
		Communi	cation Eq	auip &	Data (Sapphires & burner p	ohones)			1	\$2,700		1	\$2,700			\$2,700)
						,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,				Ψ2,700			. ,	£4F 000		. ,	
				ıpmen	t & Supplies								\$99,400	\$15,000		\$114,400	
		Insurance															
		GRM Sup	plementa	al Insu	rance				6	\$2,350		1	\$14,100			\$14,100)
		Offshore \	Vorker In	nsuran	ce (Death, Dismembermen	t, Repatria	ation of Re	m	1	\$10,000			\$10,000			\$10,000	,
		SUBTOT	AL INSU	JRAN	CE								\$24,100			\$24,100	,
		SUBTOT	AL Team	n 1									\$406,630	\$223,000		\$629,630	,
					ency (15%)							\neg	\$60,995	7,		,	+
								4				خے		6000.000	0.00	0.00=	•
		TOTAL	ream	าร 7 ส	\$ Z							_	\$467,625	\$223,000	\$69	0,625	4
		l .															

BUDGET INFORMATION - Non-Construction Programs

OMB Number: 4040-0006 Expiration Date: 02/28/2025

			SECT	ION A - BUDGET SUMM	ARY								
	Grant Program Function or Activity	Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number	Estimated Unob	, a	New or Revised Budget								
	(a)	(b)	Federal (c)	Non-Federal (d)	Federal (e)	Non-Federal (f)	Total (g)						
1.			\$	s	\$	\$	\$						
2.													
3.													
4.													
5.	Totals		\$	s	\$	s	\$						

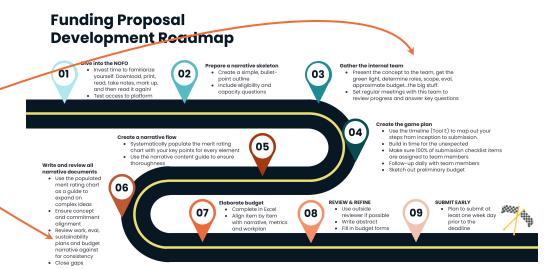
Standard Form 424A (Rev. 7- 97) Prescribed by OMB (Circular A -102) Page 1



GROUP CONSULTING

Budget Preparation

- Begin the process of budget development EARLY.
 Familiarize yourself with allowable costs.
- Ensure that the person assigned to develop the budget has the right skills and the time necessary to attend regular team meetings – they need to understand the proposed project and help detect hidden costs
- Build and refine iteratively against the narrative components to ensure alignment and accuracy – do not wait until the narrative is complete
- Use Excel or Sheets to retain budget details not required in the federal form populate forms a day or two before submission
- Make sure the top financial officer in your organization reviews and approves the budget before submission
- Make sure you are aware of any organizational negotiated IDC with the US government
- Write the justification systematically parallel to the final budget to be submitted





Review & Submission

- Practice accessing the portal at your first meeting and again 4-5 days and then at least 1 day out from your intended submission.
- Internal team and external, 3rd party reviewer, systematically and comprehensively review the entire package
- Internal review should be completed by someone familiar with the terms of the NOFO
- Use ALL tools available to you to review each element of the proposal for thoroughness and clarity.
- Ensure that the top financial officer reviews both the budget and the accompanying budget narrative
- Ensure that the chief executive is aware of the submission date and continues to concur with the organization's capacity to carry out the project once awarded

Competitive Conceptualization

- narrative that clearly conveys the urgency and importance of addressing the problem. Use data, statistics, and anecdotes to emphasize the significance of the issue.
- ☐ Clear Objectives and Goals: Define measurable.
- ☐ Scalability & Sustainability: Demonstrate how the project can be scaled or replicated in other areas or by other organizations if successful, as well as how the benefits of the project will be sustained beyond the grant period. Funders prefer to invest in initiatives that will have a broader.
 - -Based Approach: Use evidence-based and demonstrate how the proposed ilds on proven methodologies. Include or case studies that show similar have succeeded.

Measurable Outcomes: Clearly outline cess will look like. Use quantitative and

e metrics and be cl

to Detai dadheres on guideli ssionalisr

TOOL D

Submission Punchlist:

Organizational Documents & Submission Elements

□ Organizational Capacity: Demonstrate that your

personnel, technical and grants management

expertise, and infrastructure to successfully

execute the project. Highlight previous successful projects, especially those funded by federal

☐ Evaluation Plan: Include a robust evaluation plan

defined performance measures, data collection

☐ Community Involvement: Demonstrate how the

methods, and tools for continuous monitoring and

that shows how you will assess the project's success and impact. This should include pre-

organization has the experience, qualified

sources, to demonstrate credibility.

Metrics

SAMPLE Checklist for Complete Submission Federal Funding Proposal

C	omponent	How to upload	Page limit
Pr	oject abstract	Use the Project Abstract Summary Form	1 page
Pr	oject narrative	Use the Project Narrative Attachment form	25 pages
Βι	udget narrative	Use the Budget Narrative Attachment form	None
At	tachments (7 total)	Insert each in a single Attachments form	
	Work plan		None
	Indirect cost agreement		None None
_			None
	Proof of nonprofit status		None
3	Recruitment and hiring schedule		12 pages
1	Resumes and job descriptions for key personnel		
	Business assessment of applicant organization		
Ot	ther required forms (4 total)	Upload using each required form	None
	SF-424 (Application for Federal Assistance)		None
	SF-424A: Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs		None None
	Project/Performance Site Locations		
	Disclosure of Lobbying Activities		
	(SF-LLL)		

CONSULTING GROUP

TOOL C

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

1. Failure to Review Eligibility Requirements

organization, or project scope

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

2. Misalignment with Grant Priorities

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

NGO Punchlist (example)

NOFO: agency acronym-opportunity #

Login gov registration information

Required Items

eview draft narrative, budget, justification, appendices and form

- SAM.gov registration information & secondary authenticato
- Grants.gov registration, workspace access & secondary authenticator
- TOOL E: EXAMPLE Funding Proposal Preparation Gantt/Timeline BYNES Meet as team to discuss and agree upon scool Set meeting schedule & ID POCs & SME contacts identify shared document platform/give access to

FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION

Melanie Emerson, PhD, MA
Senior Consultant
melanie@bynesconsulting.com
520.282.0776
Tucson, AZ

Maddy Bynes-Devaney, MPP
Founder & Principal
maddy@bynesconsulting.com
520.3075751
Washington, DC

