

**GRANT WRITING 101**  
 Tips and Tools for Writing Successful Grants

# Your Master Plan

Problem Statements and Project Descriptions

Federal Grants Division District Attorneys Council 421 NW 13th, Ste. 290 Oklahoma City, OK 73103 405-246-1008

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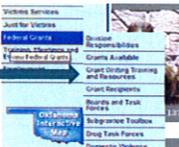
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## Welcome!

- ▶ This is the fourth in a series of Grant Writing Webinars offered by the District Attorneys Council Federal Grants Division in 2011
- ▶ Today's Webinar provides some tips and tools for writing problem statements and project descriptions
- ▶ Presentation will be posted at [www.ok.gov/dac](http://www.ok.gov/dac) within two days of the Webinar




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## Introduction

- ▶ "Your Master Plan" is the "why" and "what" of your project
- ▶ Why do you need THIS grant?
  - Problem Statements
- ▶ What are you going to do with THIS money?
  - Project Narratives




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### Introduction

- ▶ These two narrative sections are your chance to introduce funders to your agency and your community
  - Strive to make a great impression
- ▶ They are also your only chance to educate funders about your agency and community
  - NEVER assume that the people reading your applications already know your agency or your community



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### Introduction

- ▶ Food for Thought
  - Strongly encourage you to review your grant application and consider a major rewrite rather than a cut and paste
  - Staff/Board reviews are more competitive than ever and the "same old grant" is not enough
- ▶ Avoid Complacency
  - Grant writers tend to become complacent and less time, effort, and emphasis is put into grant preparation
  - Even to the point of entitlement



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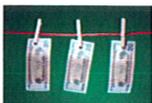
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### Introduction

- ▶ Put your best foot forward
  - The grant writer may begin to assume that the reviewer knows about the agency, the community, what the grant is for, and what has been accomplished
  - Encourage you NOT to assume that the grant will be funded just because it has been in the past
  - The focus for the upcoming award cycles will include the quality of the application



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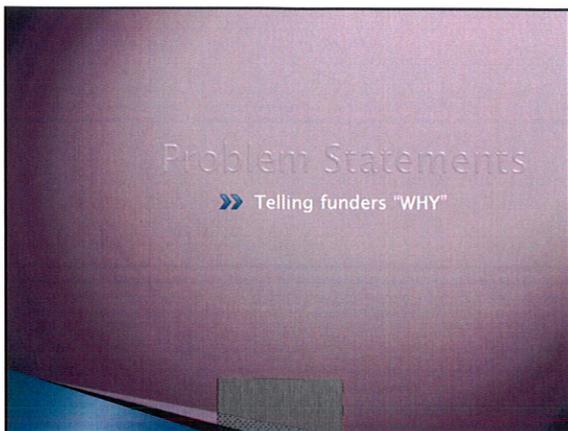
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### Problem Statements

- ▶ The Problem Statement...
  - is the foundation of your proposal
  - tells the grant reader what your agency wants to address
- ▶ Many people panic at the sight of a blank page awaiting information
  - Before you write, put together a loose outline
  - Take it one topic at a time



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### Sample Outline

1. Introduce your agency
  - A. What are your agency's general purposes and goals?
  - B. How long have you been around?
  - C. What's changed since the beginning?
    - a. Have you grown?
    - b. Expanded services?
  - D. What is your service area?
    - a. Population
    - b. Location



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### Sample Outline



- 2. What's the problem?
  - A. Keep your problem narrowly defined
    - a. This makes it clear that an agency your size can make an impact on the problem
    - b. Make sure you establish a logical connection between the problem and the work you do
  - B. Define the problem as the community's problem
    - a. Don't focus so much on your need for funds
    - b. Focus on the need to solve this problem for the community

REMEMBER: You are asking for these funds to help others!

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### Sample Outline



- 3. Prove there is a problem
  - A. Support your statements with relevant LOCAL data
    - a. A brief mention of a national statistic is fine, however, this is about YOUR community
    - b. Don't overdo it - look for statistics with the most impact
  - B. Tell funders why this is a problem in your area
    - a. Economic hardships, high unemployment?
    - b. Cultural factors?
  - C. Explain what has been done in the past to address the problem
    - a. Explain how your project is going to build on previous successes or how it is better than previous attempts

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### Sample Outline

- 4. Why is your agency the best choice to address this problem?
  - A. History
  - B. Expertise
    - a. Are you the only agency in a 5-county area?
  - C. Prior successes

5. Why is THIS grant the best fit for your project?




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## Research



- ▶ Research validates your problem
- ▶ Research does not just provide statistics
  - Helps identify areas of need that you may not be aware of in your community
  - Determines what resources are already out there
- ▶ Research can provide impact
  - If you find a particularly appalling statistic – use it

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## Research

- ▶ Research takes time
  - This is not something you can start the weekend before the grant application is due
- ▶ Research requires common sense
  - Beware of collecting too much
  - Remember to keep it local



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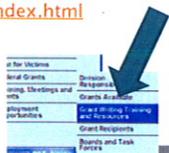
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## Tips and Tools

- ▶ Webinar
  - Last month's Webinar "Prep for Success" covered research and sources in-depth
- ▶ PowerPoint
  - It is available at:  
[http://www.ok.gov/dac/Federal\\_Grants/Grant\\_Writing\\_Training\\_and\\_Resources/index.html](http://www.ok.gov/dac/Federal_Grants/Grant_Writing_Training_and_Resources/index.html)



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### Tips and Tools



- ▶ Grab the reader's attention
  - A really great statistic works well
  - A great anecdotal example that illustrates the extent of the problem
- ▶ Don't be too wordy – but don't be too brief
- ▶ If it isn't in your grant application – it doesn't exist

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### Tips and Tools

- ▶ Use local data to back-up your claims
  - Anyone can use Google to pull up national statistics; use it to find local statistics
  - Check you local police department website
  - Make friends with the person who keeps statistics for your agency
  - Learn how to use online public records sites:
    - [www.oscn.net](http://www.oscn.net)
    - [www.odcr.com](http://www.odcr.com)
  - Look at the UCR Reports for your area:
    - [www.ok.gov/osbi](http://www.ok.gov/osbi)
    - [www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/ucr](http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/ucr)



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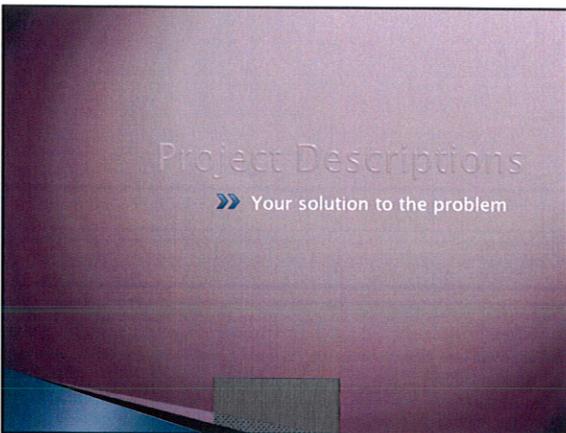
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Project Descriptions

»» Your solution to the problem

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## Project Descriptions

- ▶ Defining and describing the problem that the agency wants to solve with a grant project is only half of a successful grant application
- ▶ The Project Description is the proposed **solution** to the Problem Statement
- ▶ Make a fluid transition from problem to solution – don't mix them up in the narrative
  - This makes assumptions that the readers know what you are talking about

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## Your Solution



- ▶ You MUST ask yourself:
  - Does my solution pass a "reality check"?
    - Has this been done successfully elsewhere?
    - Can our agency pull it off with THIS funding source?
    - Do we have reasonable objectives for this project?
- ▶ If you can answer "yes" to these items, then build a case for your solution

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## Project Description

- ▶ Great Project Descriptions answer the following questions for funders in a logical order:
  - What are you going to do to address the problem?
    - General description of the solution and how it applies to the problem
  - How are you going to do it?
    - Specific activities
    - Don't leave out vital steps
    - Timelines for those activities, if needed



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## Project Description

- Who is going to do it? What are their responsibilities?
  - Staff
  - Community partners
- What are the expected outcomes?
  - Who benefits from the project?
  - How many will benefit?
  - Positive outcomes?
  - Are there any obstacles?
  - How will they be addressed?
  - How will this address the problem?



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## Project Descriptions

- ▶ Good project planning is especially obvious in this section
- ▶ Good project planning involves research
- ▶ Researching the proposed solution is just as important as researching the problem
- ▶ Just as research validates a problem – it also will validate your proposed solution

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## Caution!

- ▶ The research results are not your proposal
  - They are to highlight your proposal
- ▶ It is easy to get off topic and drift into a description of the research instead of the proposal
  - State your intentions, refer to the research – and get back to your plan!
- ▶ If your solution is a new idea – say so!
  - Don't attempt to make data fit your scenario

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### Tips and Tools

- ▶ Project Narrative = Project Description
- ▶ Be specific about implementation
  - Who is responsible?
  - What are the expected outcomes?
  - Do you have community partners? What is their role?
- ▶ Address possible obstacles to your project
  - Provide information on how your agency will address them
- ▶ Don't skip on the details - grant readers want to know as much as possible about your plan
- ▶ Make clear statements about projected accomplishments



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### Tips and Tools

- ▶ Check it!
  - Ask someone NOT familiar with your idea to read your Project Description
  - Have them describe it to you or a third person
    - Can they explain the program?
    - Can they describe how the program fits into the workings of your agency?
    - Can they tell you who it serves?
    - Can they tell you the expected outcomes?
  - If there is a "no" to any of these - it is a hole in the information. Plug it.



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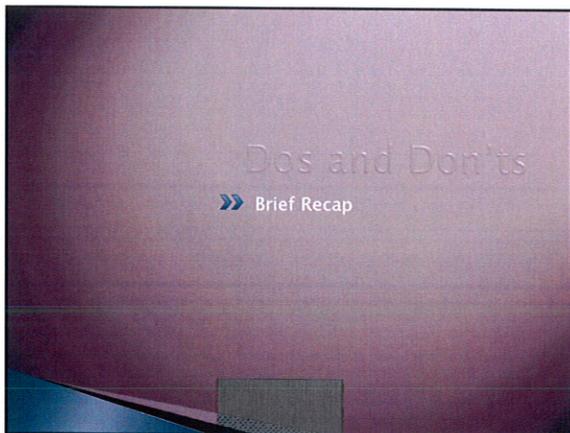
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ DO break up the narrative into organized, complete paragraphs</li> <li>▶ DO make the problem statement long enough to convey the information</li> <li>▶ DO have someone proofread for clarity</li> <li>▶ DO provide an anecdotal story</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ DON'T complain about previous applications that weren't funded</li> <li>▶ DON'T use acronyms without defining them</li> <li>▶ DON'T assume funders can figure out what you are trying to say</li> <li>▶ DON'T overstate the problem</li> <li>▶ DON'T assume that grant readers know your agency</li> </ul> |
| <b>Dos</b>   | <b>Don'ts</b>   |

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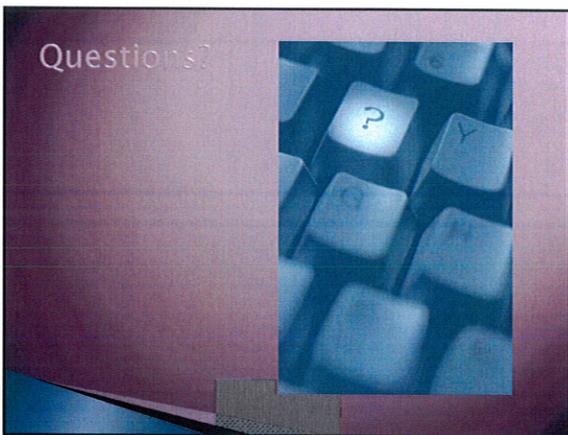
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Save the Date...

**Wednesday  
July 13, 2011**

**1:30 p.m.**

GRANT WRITING TRAINING

Date: 7/13/2011  
Time: 1:30 p.m.

Topic 5:  
**The Devil's  
in the  
Details**

Presented by  
The Alaska Department of Social Services

For a complete schedule of training events, go to [www.ak.gov/Sec\\_Federal\\_Grants](http://www.ak.gov/Sec_Federal_Grants)

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