Overview

This module provides basic information about SAMHSA grant announcements and grant application documents. You will see how SAMHSA uses standard "templates" to develop most agency grant announcements. You will see that there are templates for Services, Infrastructure, Best Practices Planning and Implementation, and Service to Science program types. Prospective applicants are encouraged to become familiar with the basic format and requirements of the templates prior to the announcement of the funding opportunity. You will explore how to use SAMHSA's Web site to find the templates, search for funding opportunities, determine basic grant eligibility requirements, locate and review specific Request for Applications (RFAs) and Program Announcements (PAs), retrieve grant application kits, and identify people who can provide advice before you submit an application. You will learn about **www.grants.gov**, a critical resource for prospective applicants.

Purpose of Module 3

Module 3 is designed to help you understand the SAMHSA grant announcement process to better enable you to organize and prepare for submitting a grant application. First, you will explore the language of the SAMHSA grant announcement process. Then, you will consider how your project funding needs relate to current SAMHSA funding opportunities and how to determine your eligibility for specific grant opportunities. Next, you will be introduced to information resources to help you locate, review, understand, and download information about SAMHSA's grant announcements. Finally, you will discuss how contacting Government Project Officers and connecting with your State and local systems and community partnerships will help you organize and eventually write your grant application.

Module 3 Learning Objectives

After completing this module, you will know:

- How SAMHSA organizes and publishes information about grant programs using RFAs and PAs;
- How to access complete grant application kits including the grant announcement and other essential information and application documents;
- How to determine whether or not your organization meets grant eligibility requirements;
- How to understand and satisfy grant application format requirements;
- How to search the Web for essential information and grant application resources; and

Link Your Project to SAMHSA Grant Announcements

- How to gather support and how to receive technical assistance from key Federal, State, and local partners and resource people.

Module 3 Underlying Assumptions

- SAMHSA provides all the necessary information on funding opportunities on the agency's Web site **www.samhsa.gov**. Another critical source of information is **www.grants.gov**. Grants.gov is an electronic storefront for interactions between grant applicants and the Federal agencies that manage grant funds.

- SAMHSA has developed standard "templates" to describe the basic program purpose and application requirements for grant opportunities within four program types: Services, Infrastructure, Best Practices Planning and Implementation, and Service to Science. Staff use these templates to develop the RFAs and PAs that announce funding opportunities.

- SAMHSA funds grant programs using RFAs and PAs. The RFA/PA will be posted on the SAMHSA Web site and at **www.Grants.gov**.

- To write a grant application that successfully clears the preliminary screening, pay special attention to the eligibility criteria for applicant organizations and to the application formatting requirements and screenout requirements (e.g., special program requirements, page limits, outline and section titles, attachments, and appendices).

- To write a competitive grant application that will score well during the review process, write well-thought-out, comprehensive responses to the evaluation criteria.

- Formal and informal technical assistance is available to potential applicants. Communication with SAMHSA program and grant specialists and other professionals and organizations with successful application experience will help you identify resources and information as well as develop a test for your proposed project idea.

Module 3 Agenda

Topics to be discussed:
- Methods for announcing available grant funds;
- Request for Applications and Programs Announcements;
- Assessing what you need to apply;

- Requesting and reviewing the grant documents;
- Reviewing project eligibility requirements, screenout criteria, and evaluation criteria; and
- Communicating with resource people and potential partners.

Methods for Announcing Available Grant Funds

Government agencies use a variety of terms to announce that grant funding is available and to solicit grant applications. As you consider what government grant-funding opportunities are right for your organization, it is important that you become familiar with the grant announcement language and methods used by the government agency from which you are considering seeking funds. SAMHSA uses two methods to announce the availability of grant-funding opportunities—RFAs and PAs. In addition, most SAMHSA announcements are developed from a standard template for one of the following program types: Services, Infrastructure, Best Practices Planning and Implementation, or Service to Science. You can review the templates on the SAMHSA Web site **www.samhsa.gov/grants/apply.aspx**.

Requirements specific to each grant program will be added to the standard template. In preparation for developing a grant application, prospective applicants are encouraged to become familiar with the basic format and requirements of the templates prior to the announcement of the funding opportunity.

Request for Applications and Program Announcements

To announce the availability of grant funds, SAMHSA releases Request for Applications (RFAs) and Program Announcements (PAs), described as follows:

- RFAs and PAs contain all the necessary program and application information for responding to the funding opportunity.
- PAs are unique in that they are "standing" announcements with application due dates several times during a year. This process allows the agency to fund new grantee organizations on an ongoing basis.

SAMHSA releases an RFA or PA when grant opportunities become available. These announcements are located at **www.samhsa.gov** and **www.grants.gov**. The information in an RFA or PA provides the program description, application directions, and requirements.

The **www.grants.gov** Web site serves many purposes:
- A single source for finding Federal grant opportunities;

- A way to register for e-mail notification of Federal grant opportunities;
- A standardized manner of locating and learning more about funding opportunities;
- A single, secure, and reliable source for applying for Federal grants online;
- A simplified grant application process with reduction of paperwork; and
- A unified interface for all agencies to announce their grant opportunities, and for all grant applicants to find and apply for those opportunities.

Accessing What You Need to Apply

- Visit **www.samhsa.gov** and **www.grants.gov**. Review the overview of the RFA or PA to determine if the funding opportunity is appropriate for your project.
- Check due dates for applications.
- Request the grant application kit for the RFA or PA of interest from the clearinghouses or download it from **www.samhsa.gov/grants/apply.aspx**.

Check the RFA or PA to decide whether or not your organization is eligible to apply and prepared to meet the application requirements by the application deadline.

Requesting and Reviewing the Grant Documents

SAMHSA grant application kits consist of the following documents:

- RFA or PA;
- Grant Application Forms (the Public Health Service (PHS) Form 5161-1 including Standard Form (SF) 424 v2 and SF 424A); and
- Grant Application Forms, Certifications, and Assurances all available from SAMHSA at **www.samhsa.gov/grants/apply.aspx**.

When you are interested in a specific RFA or PA, you can either download the necessary forms from the Web site, or request the appropriate grant application kit that includes all the forms and instructions you need. You can receive the kit by calling one of the SAMHSA clearinghouses at 1-877-SAMHSA7. For CMHS, visit the National Mental Health Information Center (NMHIC) at **www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov**; for CSAP and CSAT, visit the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI) at **www.ncadi.samhsa.gov**. You can also download the kit from the SAMHSA Web site at **www.samhsa.gov/grants/apply.aspx**.

The kit includes the RFA or PA and all the forms for your narrative and budget information. The PHS 5161-1 includes SF 424 v2 (face page) and the SF 424A (budget pages), plus certifications and assurances that are required with grant applications. The kit may contain other handouts, tips, resources, or required information. **Carefully** read

all instructions and information. If you need assistance, contact the relevant SAMHSA staff people listed in the announcement. Note, two different names often are listed, one for program information and the other for grants management.

Review Project Eligibility, Screening Requirements and Evaluation Criteria

- Every grant RFA and PA has eligibility requirements that must be met.
- Every grant RFA and PA has formatting, screening, and application requirements that can bring your application into the review—or screen it out.
- Make a list of all eligibility, screening, and application requirements, and make staff assignments to meet the need.
- Every grant RFA and PA has evaluation criteria that are used by reviewers to assess and score your application.
- Give yourself enough time to address the evaluation criteria.

One of the first things you should do is to verify that your project meets the eligibility requirements stated in the RFA or PA you are considering. Then, study the requirements for your application in terms of page length, font size, and organization. To ensure fairness, all applications will be assessed against the same application requirements and criteria. Applications not meeting the eligibility, screening, or other application requirements may be returned to the applicant without review. After all the hard work, exceeding allowable space requirements or missing other details can exclude you from competition, so pay close attention! Handout 3-1 provides a checklist that outlines formatting and screening requirements for grant applications.

In addition to the eligibility and screening requirements, the evaluation criteria drive your written response. The evaluation criteria are somewhat different for each grant announcement. The evaluation criteria section of the grant announcement provides instructions for completing the Project Narrative of your application, as well as criteria against which the application is reviewed and scored. The review committee will weigh the quality of your application against the evaluation criteria and points published in the grant announcement. While you stay within the page limits, font size, and other specified requirements, it is critical that you provide complete, well-thought-out responses to the evaluation criteria.

Link Your Project to SAMHSA Grant Announcements

Communicate With Resource People and Potential Partners

You increase your understanding of how the project can meet specific needs and how best to organize and deliver proposed services and not duplicate them by communicating with resource people at the local and State levels:

- **State Point of Contact (SPOC)**—You are required to notify your State that you are requesting Federal dollars. Many States have a designated SPOC who receives this information. Be sure to let your SPOC know that you are applying for a Federal grant. Remember to ask about free training and technical assistance that may be available to you from other sources.

- **Single State Agency (SSA)**—The SSA for drug and alcohol abuse and for mental health often provides technical assistance and is a contact for you to develop a strong relationship for identifying funding opportunities, training, and networking.

- **Government Project Officer (GPO) and Grants Management Officer (GMO)**—Every RFA or PA includes program contacts that you can call about specific SAMHSA programs.

- **Project Partnerships and Community Groups**—Relationships developed with coalition groups and advocates will be helpful with your project design and evaluation ideas. Organize a meeting to present ideas or set up a focus group to test your project plans and gather feedback.

- **Consumers and Families**—Those who access your services are excellent sources of information on how improvements can be made. Set up meetings and focus groups with these people to obtain needs assessment information. An anonymous suggestion box also can be a great tool for input; just remember to review it frequently.

Summary Points to Remember...

- Specific project and community needs identified in the planning stage will focus and drive your search for funding opportunities.
- SAMHSA provides access to extensive information and resources to help you identify funding opportunities.
- Reading the standard templates for grant announcements in advance will help you become familiar with the types of programs SAMHSA funds and the requirements for each announcement.
- To apply for a SAMHSA grant, you will need to have all the pieces of the application kit (e.g., the RFA or PA and the application forms).

- The **Web site www.grants.gov** is an important source of information for potential grant applicants.

- Paying careful attention to the eligibility requirements will help you identify an appropriate funding opportunity for your organization.

- Paying attention to the formatting requirements will help you assemble an application that gets accepted for review.

- Providing thorough, well-thought-out responses to the evaluation criteria results in a more competitive application submission.

- Contacting SAMHSA program staff can help you understand SAMHSA's initiatives and help you prepare your application to address SAMHSA's priorities and requirements.

- Working closely with State and local agencies and with current relevant Federal grantees may increase the credibility of your application.

Link Your Project to SAMHSA Grant Announcements

Page Intentionally Left Blank
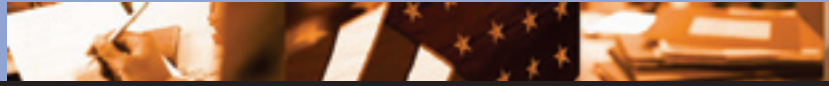
Module 3: Handout 3-1

Checklist for Formatting and Screening Requirements for SAMHSA Grant Applications

SAMHSA's goal is to review all applications submitted for grant funding. However, this goal must be balanced against SAMHSA's obligation to ensure equitable treatment of applications. For this reason, SAMHSA has established certain formatting requirements for its applications. ***Failure to adhere to these requirements may affect the ability of your application to be funded.***

❑ Use the PHS 5161-1 application.

❑ Applications must be received by the application deadline or have a proof of timely submission, as detailed in Section IV-3 of this announcement.

❑ Information provided must be sufficient for review.

❑ Text must be legible. (For Project Narratives submitted electronically in Microsoft Word, see separate requirements in Section IV-2.3 of this announcement under "Guidance for Electronic Submission of Applications.")

   ■ Type size in the Project Narrative cannot exceed an average of 15 characters per inch, as measured on the physical page. (Type size in charts, tables, graphs, and footnotes will not be considered in determining compliance.)

   ■ Text in the Project Narrative cannot exceed 6 lines per vertical inch.

❑ Paper must be white paper and 8.5 inches by 11.0 inches in size.

❑ To ensure equity among applications, the amount of space allowed for the Project Narrative cannot be exceeded. (For Project Narratives submitted electronically in Microsoft Word, see separate requirements in Section IV-2.3 of this announcement under "Guidance for Electronic Submission of Applications.")

   ■ Applications would meet this requirement by using all margins (left, right, top, bottom) of at least one inch each, and adhering to the page limit for the Project Narrative stated in the specific funding announcement.

   ■ Should an application not conform to these margin or page limits, SAMHSA will use the following method to determine compliance: The total area of the Project Narrative (excluding margins, but including charts, tables, graphs and footnotes) cannot exceed 58.5 square inches multiplied by the total number of allowed pages. This number represents the full page less margins, multiplied by the total number of allowed pages.

   ■ Space will be measured on the physical page. Space left blank within the Project Narrative (excluding margins) is considered part of the Project Narrative, in determining compliance.

To facilitate review of your application, follow these additional guidelines. Failure to adhere to the following guidelines will not, in itself, result in your application being screened out and returned without review. However, the information provided in your application must be sufficient for review. Following these guidelines will help ensure your application is complete and will help reviewers to consider your application.

❑ The 10 application components required for SAMHSA applications should be included. These are:

- Face Page (Standard Form 424 v2, which is in PHS 5161-1)
- Abstract
- Table of Contents
- Budget Form (Standard Form 424A, which is in PHS 5161-1)
- Project Narrative and Supporting Documentation

- Appendices
- Assurances (Standard Form 424B, which is in PHS 5161-1)
- Certifications (a form in PHS 5161-1)
- Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (Standard Form LLL, which is in PHS 5161-1)
- Checklist (a form in PHS 5161-1)

❑ Applications should comply with the following requirements:

- Provisions relating to confidentiality and participant protection specified in Section IV-2.4 of the specific funding announcement.

- Budgetary limitations as specified in Sections I, II, and IV-5 of the specific funding announcement.

- Documentation of nonprofit status as required in the PHS 5161-1.

❑ Pages should be typed single-spaced in black ink, with one column per page. Pages should not have printing on both sides.

❑ Please number pages consecutively from beginning to end so that information can be located easily during review of the application. The cover page should be page 1, the abstract page should be page 2, and the Table of Contents page should be page 3. Appendices should be labeled and separated from the Project Narrative and budget section, and the pages should be numbered to continue the sequence.

❑ The page limits for Appendices stated in this announcement should not be exceeded.

❑ Send the original application and two copies to the mailing address in the funding announcement. Please do not use staples, paper clips, and fasteners. Nothing should be attached, stapled, folded, or pasted. Do not use heavy or lightweight paper or any material that cannot be copied using automatic copying machines. Odd-sized and oversized attachments such as posters will not be copied or sent to reviewers. Do not include videotapes, audiotapes, or CD-ROMs.