Common Problems Found in Applications

Application does not meet requirements of the solicitation

♦ Substantial parts or components of the application required in the solicitation are missing from the submission.
♦ Applicant submits an application with a narrative that is not responsive to the information requested (e.g., the project must be a national application, but addresses only state-wide requirements.)
♦ Applicant does not adhere to the application requirements.
♦ Applicant does not file the application by the stated deadline. There are rarely any exceptions to the deadline; applicants should not assume that they are likely to get one. Importantly, applicants should not wait until the last moment to try to submit their application over www.Grants.gov as the registration process may not be completed in time to allow the application to be considered for funding.
♦ Applicant is not eligible to apply. Read the eligibility section of the solicitation before anything else.

Application has problems with goals and objectives

♦ Application does not clearly address the goals and objectives of the solicitation.
♦ Applicant's goals and objectives are not clearly supported by the data.
♦ The goals and objectives are not concrete and measurable and do not relate back to the original need of the solicitation.

Application has problems with project scope or design

♦ Applicant does not demonstrate an understanding of the purpose of the project as outlined in the solicitation.
♦ Program design/strategy does not address the needs assessment and data provided in the application.
♦ Applicant over-promises. The application narrative does not cover what applicant realistically will be able to achieve within the grant period.
♦ Applicant applies for funding in a project area they do not fully understand or do not have appropriate experience.
♦ Applicant's program design is not new or innovative.
♦ Applicant applies for expanding or enhancing an existing program when such is prohibited in the solicitation.

1

- Applicant applies for the exact same thing they did the year before when they were funded.
- Applicant describes an unpersuasive project strategy that does not lay out a clear, logical plan for undertaking the project.
- Applicant does not invest the time to build collaborations with other community agencies up front in the proposal writing stage. Whatever project you are proposing most likely will be strengthened if it includes collaboration with other community groups serving the same target population or working on a related problem in the same community.

Application has problems with funding issues

- Applicant does not follow the provided funding policies. For example, the solicitation clearly outlines the needed information and its submission format; however, the applicant still lists unallowable costs and general objectives that do not tie to the stated gaps and needs.
- Applicant's budget allocates funds for expenses that are not allowable in the solicitation.
- The budget information provided has no connection with the needs assessment and/or with the program design.
- Budget contains mathematical errors and does not contain the same line items and amounts in both the budget detail and budget narrative.
- Applicant asks for funding to replace programs that have been eliminated.
- Applicant applies for more money than is available in a given solicitation.
- Applicant does not include details in their proposal about what will happen when the current federal grant money is used up. Grant reviewers are impressed when applicants have planned for sustaining the program long-term; they are conversely not impressed when the applicant leaves them to assume that once the federal dollars are gone, the lights will be turned off and the project will end. If an applicant proposes a project that is worth the initial federal investment, then it is worth the applicant's time to find other community partners who can help sustain the work at the end of the federal grant.

Other problems

♦ Applicant does not understand the competitive grant process. Proposals are judged on their merits by experts in the field; however, applicants should not assume that the reviewers will know anything about their organization or project that is not specifically stated in the application.
♦ Sloppy writing.