



Module 4

Overview

Module 4 describes how to review and analyze the standard templates and the RFA or PA to clearly understand the types of projects that SAMHSA supports. We will also review the PHS 5161-1, the “official” application form that includes the SF 424 v2 and SF 424A, which are the face page and budget pages. A thorough understanding of all grant announcement documents will help you make a final decision about applying for a particular grant-funding opportunity. You will be able to determine whether or not your project needs and the funding opportunities truly match.

Purpose of Module 4

Module 4 analyzes the standard templates, the RFA or PA, and the PHS 5161-1 application form with the budget pages to clarify specific SAMHSA requirements. This module will help you understand each document of a grant announcement and teach you to prepare both the application Project Narrative and all essential forms, including the budget.

Module 4 Learning Objectives

When you complete the module, you will be able to:

- Study the specific eligibility and screening requirements of all grant announcements;
- Review the RFA or PA evaluation criteria to determine your project strengths and weaknesses for application scoring;
- Respond to grant announcements, and outline a comprehensive technical response;
- Anticipate and address standard SAMHSA policies, procedures, and priorities; and
- Complete all necessary forms, including the budget.

Module 4 Underlying Assumptions

- The standard templates help you understand SAMHSA’s program mission, goals, objectives, eligibility, and other requirements to assess whether or not your project is compatible with the funding program.
- Analyzing the general requirements, policies, and procedures in the RFA or PA helps you determine whether or not your project has the resources to comply with the requirements.
- Assessing each section of the grant announcement guides your application outline and helps organize the writing team assignments.

Module 4 Agenda

Topics to be discussed:

- Components of a grant application kit;
- Standard grant templates;
- Standard services grant templates;
- Project Narrative;
- What works in preparing grant applications; and
- What does not work in preparing grant applications.

Components of a Grant Application Kit

To apply for a SAMHSA grant, you will need the RFA or PA and the application form (PHS 5161-1). All materials can be downloaded in electronic form from the SAMHSA Web site www.samhsa.gov/grants/apply.aspx:

- The **RFA and PA** contain instructions and information to help you complete a grant application. The components required in the application are the face page, Abstract, Table of Contents, Budget Form, Project Narrative, Supporting Documentation, Appendices, Assurances, Certifications, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities, and the SAMHSA Grant Application Checklist.
- The **PHS 5161-1** is the official application form that includes both the SF 424v2 (face page) and SF 424A (budget pages). Applications *must* be submitted on the PHS 5161-1 form. This form is available for downloading in several formats from the SAMHSA Web site and the HHS/Program Support Center site at www.hhs.gov/forms/PHS-5161-1.pdf.
- Another important form submitted with applications is the **Assurance of Compliance Form**, which can be found on SAMHSA's Web site. The form is intended to ensure compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975. It must be included in the grant application.
- Also, applicants applying for grants that fund substance abuse treatment or prevention services must complete the SMA-170, **Assurance of Compliance** with SAMHSA Charitable Choice Statutes and Regulations. The form can be downloaded from the SAMHSA Web site www.samhsa.gov/grants/apply.aspx.



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A grant represents legally binding obligations between grantees and SAMHSA. All applicants must agree to comply with the rules of operation to receive grant funds.

Although the grant application forms include standard policies and procedures, some language may be changed for specific grant programs. If changes are made, these modifications will appear in the RFA or PA.

Standard Grant Templates

These documents help you understand the areas that SAMHSA supports to see where there is a match with your project. They include general SAMHSA grant policies and procedures so you can determine whether or not your project can comply with all requirements. You should become familiar with these standards for the Services grants or any other area in which you have interest and experience. When the right funding opportunity is announced in an RFA or PA, outline your response and complete all the tasks required to submit a comprehensive application package that will meet the requirements for evaluation points and funding.

We encourage you to look at the standard grant templates to understand the four different types of grants that SAMHSA supports. You can find the standard templates on SAMHSA's Web site. For purposes of this TA Manual, we will use the "Services" template as an illustration.

Standard Services Grant Template

Although each grant program has unique goals, every grant announcement uses the same broad outline to provide information to applicants. The specific content may not be identical across grant programs, but these sections usually provide similar information. The RFA or PA provides a detailed roadmap for application development, specifying everything from page limits for each section to how the evaluation criteria will be applied.

This module uses the Services template as an example. The Services template includes the following information:

- **Funding Opportunity Description**—This section helps you understand whether or not your project activities fit compatibly with the intent of the grant program. This section will also assist you in determining whether or not your organization can design new activities to meet community needs that match SAMHSA grant program interests. Typically, the Funding Opportunity Description includes a discussion of expectations or allowable activities. The expectations and allowable activities subsections specify how grant funds are to be used. The Funding Opportunity Description also includes information about performance data that must be collected and reported to SAMHSA.

- **Award Information**—This section tells you the pool of funds that is available and how much is planned for each award.
- **Eligibility Information**—This section identifies **who** can apply for the grant. Congress often establishes eligibility requirements.
- **Application and Submission Information**—This section provides explicit instructions about application format, submission deadlines, number of copies, and delivery addresses. All applications must be submitted by the deadline to be considered and *will be returned without review* if received after the deadline. This section also describes any funding limitations or restrictions and any additional submission requirements. For each grant program, SAMHSA determines the amount of time that applicants have to submit an application. The RFA or PA specifies the deadline date.
- **Application Review Information**—This section includes the evaluation criteria (also referred to as the Project Narrative) that reviewers will use to assess and score your application and to comment on the technical merit of your proposed project. Points are assigned to each section of the Project Narrative based on the quality of your response to the specific requirements. Use the evaluation criteria to design your Table of Contents to help grant application reviewers find and score each section.
- **Award Administration Information**—This section provides information about the award notices, administrative and national policy requirements, and reporting requirements for grantees.
- **Agency Contacts**—This section includes names and other information for SAMHSA program and grants management contacts.

Project Narrative

The Project Narrative is found in Section V-1 of the RFA. The Project Narrative describes what you intend to do with your project and includes the Evaluation Criteria for the required sections. The following elements are generally required in SAMHSA's Services grant announcements:

- The **Statement of Need** is expected to describe the unmet need or emerging problem to be addressed by the project. It seeks identification and description of the target population to be served, including geographic area, demographics, and cultural and racial/ethnic considerations. The Statement of Need also describes how the project currently provides services and why they are insufficient or inappropriate for the need. Handout 4-1 presents "Questions to Consider When Preparing to Write Your Statement of Need."



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- **Proposed Evidence-Based Service/Practice.** This section generally requires substantial data documentation and/or a literature review. Handout 4-2 presents “Questions to Consider When Preparing to Write Your Proposed Evidence-Based Service/Practice.”
- The **Proposed Implementation Approach** is expected to describe the goals and objectives of the proposed project, including appropriate client service projections. This section demonstrates how the proposed project will have a significant impact on the described need during the grant-funding period. The Proposed Implementation Approach specifically demonstrates how the project will be carried out. It also demonstrates that the anticipated outcomes of the proposed services represent an effective use of funds. Handout 4-3 presents “Questions to Consider When Preparing to Write Your Implementation Approach.”
- **Staff and Organizational Experience** is expected to describe the capability of the applicant organization, its history of serving the target population, and its experience with similar projects. This section describes the resources available to implement the project. It also presents a management plan for the project, including plans for fiscal and administrative monitoring, a staffing plan highlighting key personnel, letters of support and commitment from other agencies, and a timeline for implementing the project. Handout 4-4 presents “Questions to Consider When Preparing to Write Your Organizational and Staff Experience.”
- The **Performance Assessment and Data** section is expected to document the ability to collect and report on the required performance measures as required in the RFA or PA. A plan for data collection, management, analysis and reporting should be described. Handout 4-5 presents “Questions to Consider When Preparing to Write Your Performance Assessment and Data Section.”

SAMHSA also expects to see the following elements in the Project Narrative:

- Comprehensive evidence of cultural competence within the applicant organization in each section. SAMHSA’s guidelines for assessing cultural competence are available at www.samhsa.gov/grants/apply.aspx.
- Appropriate citations for literature referenced in the development of any and all sections.

Tips on developing each of these areas are covered in Module 5.

Twelve Basic Principles for What Works in Preparing Grant Applications

Before discussing the specific writing information, let's look at SAMHSA's "Twelve Basic Principles for What Works in Preparing Grant Applications." The planning items for Principles 1–3 were addressed in previous modules. Principles 4–12 specifically support grant writing that we will discuss in the next module.

Principle 1—Match your ideas to the funding source and thoroughly understand the goals of the SAMHSA grant program.

Ensure that the proposed project in your application meets the grant program's needs. Refer to the SAMHSA priorities and Web pages discussed in Module 1. Even if you have a worthy project, it will not be considered for funding unless it fits the RFA or PA. Read the grant program goals, program descriptions, and evaluation criteria to ensure that your proposed project approach can fulfill the actual program requirements.

Principle 2—Use the designated SAMHSA resources for technical assistance and advice.

Program Contacts: For some reason, few applicants seek SAMHSA assistance in developing their applications. The program's contacts are identified in each RFA or PA. These people are available to consult with all applicants requesting assistance, and not using them is a waste of a great resource. Committed to ensuring the receipt of many good applications, SAMHSA wants to assist potential applicants as much as possible. Applicants can seek advice about grants management from SAMHSA's Division of Grants Management, receive information about grant review from SAMHSA's Office of Program Services (Grant Review Office), and contact GPOs for specifics about grant programs. Review the RFA or PA for the names of designated program contacts.

Use e-mail to reach any SAMHSA contact. All SAMHSA e-mail addresses use the first name followed by a period, then the last name, followed by @samhsa.hhs.gov. (Note: Get in touch with the program contact *before* you officially submit your application. SAMHSA staff, including the program contact, cannot comment on your application once it has been submitted.)

Technical Assistance Workshops: Information about SAMHSA workshops is posted on SAMHSA's Web site (www.samhsa.gov) as soon as it becomes available. This information is especially helpful if you are a first-time SAMHSA applicant.



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Principle 3—Begin the necessary groundwork *before* the grant announcement documents are published.

As a potential applicant, give yourself as much lead time as possible to write your application. Keep your project notebook up to date, and be aware of current and emerging SAMHSA programs that match your interests and needs. Pay attention to funding information at www.grants.gov and the SAMHSA Web site.

In addition, many professional organizations and national associations highlight Federal grant programs in their newsletters to constituents well in advance of the official notice. Take advantage of lead time to develop ideas and to begin the necessary groundwork before the grant program is officially announced.

Develop a network of contacts that can help, such as State and local government entities, university staff, and individuals and other organizations that may provide support to the project. Develop a committee, and get key participants in place to assist with application development.

Principle 4—Establish a timetable to develop your grant application; organize the necessary personnel as soon as funding availability is announced.

Do not waste energy fretting about the short timeframe or seemingly complicated grant opportunity instructions. These parameters cannot be changed; an applicant must be willing to accept these requirements. With planning activities in place, move forward quickly.

The production of a successful grant application cannot always be worked around everyone's routine schedule. Establish a plan for what needs to be accomplished, by whom and by when. Developing a grant application requires the same diligent planning and scheduling as does any other labor-intensive, priority project. For example, identify individuals (called your grant-writing team) who can complete certain necessary tasks:

- **A person responsible for writing the application**—Although several individuals may write particular pieces, one person should pull the entire application together to make sure it flows and that nothing is omitted or repeated.
- **A person or small committee removed from the process to critique the first draft and identify questions or gaps**—This critique will be most effective if it is based on evaluation criteria that the grant peer reviewers will use in evaluating applications. (The evaluation criteria are specified in the RFA or PA.)
- **A person to request and coordinate receipt of letters of support**—This person also might help the organization providing the letter of support to draft an individualized letter describing how the organization can contribute to the efforts of the applicant organization. Many persons are willing to be supportive but may

lack time to draft a letter. Do not use boilerplate letters of support. The letters must be recent and specific about the kind of support being committed. These letters of support are different from a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). An MOA is a formal and contracted partnership that allows sharing of services between organizations according to agreed-upon terms.

Principle 5—Follow instructions about formatting your submission.

The application format is not the place to be creative! Take advantage of the fact that someone else has designed the form. Use creativity for the technical idea. Even if you believe your own format is better, do NOT stray from the prescribed format of the application. An application that fails to follow the required format and table of contents may be found to be non-responsive to the grant announcement and may not be forwarded for evaluation. Moreover, deviation from the required format increases the likelihood that you will leave out necessary information. It also makes it difficult for peer reviewers to find information in the application, which can affect your evaluation negatively.

Pay attention to every detail of the format and instructions, including directions about page limits, font size, and number of copies required for submission. If you have ideas to improve the format for next year, program officials would welcome suggestions *after* the grant cycle is completed.

Principle 6—Lay out a master plan.

A good application should provide a master plan, a vision of where the project is going and the expected results. Although this may be difficult because some ideas have not been fully developed, every effort should be made to think through reasonable approaches.

The master plan should cover key questions of who, what, where, when, and why. The application should include specific goals, objectives, tasks required to accomplish the objectives, target population, resources, timeframes, and a methodology to evaluate accomplishments. It also should list other funding sources, if any, and what those funds would cover.

Principle 7—Be reasonable and realistic.

Successful applicants find the safe middle ground between too much and too little. Within the required page limits, describe the project and how it is to be carried out. Do not provide unnecessary detail. It may result in reviewers missing important information.



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Be sure to provide evidence-based justification for your goals and a convincing description of how and why you think you will be able to accomplish them. An unexplained ambitious goal may lead reviewers to question your credibility and may adversely affect your score for the specific evaluation criterion.

Principle 8—Provide information on *all* the evaluation criteria.

This point cannot be emphasized enough! An applicant must provide information in support of each evaluation criterion. The reviewers will assess the merits of the application specific to *all* the evaluation criteria. Be thorough and concise. Be sure to put information under the appropriate criteria. Know exactly what SAMHSA wants for each of the criteria, and explain how each criterion will be met. If you aren't sure or don't understand a criterion, call the program contact listed in the RFA or PA.

Carefully address the cultural competence components of the evaluation criteria. Cultural competence is a priority at SAMHSA and should not be addressed as an afterthought.

Principle 9—Explain omissions, rather than hope that no one will notice.

What is *not* said in an application can hurt as much as or more than what *is* said. Very often, an application loses points because an omission from the application was not explained. For example, if a segment of the population is not included in the project, this absence should be explained. If something is not included in the application, it simply does not exist for the purposes of the review. Reviewers are instructed neither to “read between the lines” nor to consider their own personal knowledge of a particular program.

Principle 10—Make a reasonable funding request, and match the budget to the scope of work. Do not go over budget!

It is important that the budget request clearly reflect the project scope. The justification for funds must match the amount requested. Be specific: justify each item for all years of support requested. Appropriately defend staff hours. Specify the need for consultants and travel. Explain the use of consultants instead of internal staff. Be mindful of the funds available, and do not exceed the dollar limit found in the RFA! Handout 4-6 offers a “Budget Preparation Worksheet.”

Principle 11—Address items regarding participant protection.

Address each item individually. If any do not apply, state “not applicable” and indicate why. Provide for parental consent as applicable. Provide details for debriefing children as well as parents or guardians. Address confidentiality of client/subject information within the project team (e.g., clinicians, evaluators, and support staff).

Principle 12—Keep the application simple, reasonable, businesslike, and professional.

The application should be error-free, and all the forms should be completed correctly. Pay attention to detail. The application should look as if it is ready for publication. Have someone check every page of every copy of the application to be sure that all pieces are included. **Read and follow all directions outlined in the grant announcement documents.** Make sure a staff team member reads and “scores” your application according to the evaluation criteria to ensure no parts are vague or incomplete.

What Does Not Work in Preparing Grant Applications

1. Missing pieces or inadequate responses to the components of the application;
2. Inadequate understanding of the intent of the RFA or PA;
3. Outdated or poorly cited literature;
4. Insufficient staff experience to carry out the proposed project;
5. No discussion of how cultural issues will be addressed;
6. No discussion of the evaluation tools; and
7. Failure to address the elements related to participant protection and human subjects.

Summary Points to Remember...

- Your project’s mission should match SAMHSA’s priorities, needs, and funding opportunities.
- You should understand how to use the complete grant application kit.
- Following the required steps, processes, timelines, and requirements will help your grant achieve the highest possible score.
- You should use SAMHSA resources and contacts to get help.

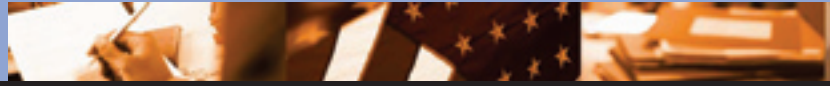


Module 4: Handout 4-1

Questions to Consider When Preparing to Write Your Statement of Need

1. What is the problem to be addressed?
2. What is the extent of the need?
3. Have we discussed the community demographics and problems?
4. Have we documented our rationale for using this population?
5. Is our target population defined?
6. Have we documented the need in this population for the service we provide?
7. What geographic area do we hope to cover?
8. What resources are available for our project?
9. Does our project address any of these gaps?
10. Have we expressed our solution to the problem in terms of goals, objectives, and methods?
11. Have we included sources of local data, such as:
 - State and county public agencies?
 - School systems?
 - Court systems?
 - HIV/AIDS planning councils?
 - Community health assessments?
 - United Way organizations?
 - U.S. Census Bureau, SAMHSA, and other Federal Agencies?
 - Hospitals?

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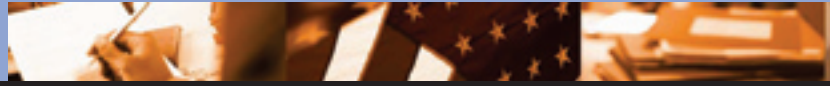


Module 4: Handout 4-2

Questions to Consider When Preparing to Write Your Proposed Evidence-Based Service/Practice

1. Do we have evidence-based sources for our proposed service(s)/practice(s), if required?
2. Have we referenced literature published within the last five years?
3. Have we used authors whose work is cited the most often (leaders in the field)?
4. Do we include literature on the cultural dimensions of the problem?
5. Have we provided evidence that the proposed approach is appropriate for our target population?
6. Have we justified any adaptations that we are proposing to the evidence-based service or practice?
7. Have we paid attention to any specific requirements for epidemiological data?

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Module 4: Handout 4-3

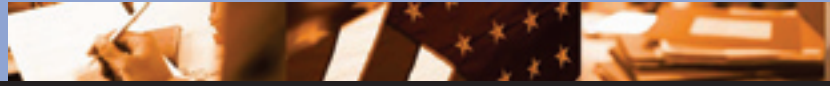
Questions to Consider When Preparing to Write Your Implementation Approach

1. Are the objectives Specific?
2. Are the objectives Measurable?
3. Are the objectives Achievable?
4. Are the objectives Realistic?
5. Are the objectives Time-limited?

THINK SMART!

6. Have we listed each objective in one or two sentences?
7. Have we listed the objectives in order of importance?
8. Have we adequately addressed how the objectives will be carried out?
9. Have we clearly stated the reasons for selecting our methods and demonstrated that they can be accomplished?
10. Have we involved the target population to give feedback on the methods?
11. Have we taken steps to ensure cultural competence?
12. Have we addressed how participants will be recruited and retained?

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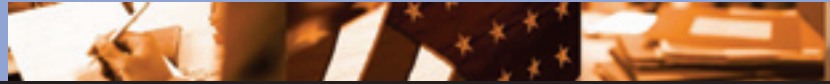


Module 4: Handout 4-4

Questions to Consider When Preparing to Write Your Organizational and Staff Experience

1. Can we sell the organization's capacity, uniqueness, and niche?
2. Can we detail roles and responsibilities of key staff?
3. Can we show the expertise of the staff?
4. Do we know the amount of time each person will work on the project?
5. Have we developed a timetable?
6. Do we know how the staff are reflective of the target population or culturally competent to work with the target population(s)?
7. Have we indicated why consultants are necessary?

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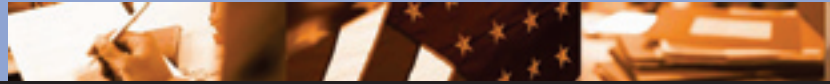


Module 4: Handout 4-5

Questions to Consider When Preparing to Write Your Performance Assessment and Data Section

1. Do we understand what “performance assessment” means for this RFA or PA?
2. Do we know the specific performance measures that are required in this RFA or PA?
3. Do we know what data collection instruments will be needed?
4. Do we know how the data will be collected?
5. Do we have experienced individuals to help us plan our performance assessment? Have we brought them into the design phase? Have they reviewed the program plan to help us determine how to measure/monitor progress towards our program objectives?
6. Have we involved the target population in the design and implementation of our performance assessment?
7. Have we taken steps to ensure cultural competence in the performance assessment?
8. Do we have plans for using the results of the performance assessment to improve project management?
9. Have we included GPRA data in our plan?

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Module 4: Handout 4-6

Budget Preparation Worksheet

Directions: Read the question and ask yourself if you can answer “yes” to that section. If you cannot answer “yes,” develop a plan to complete this worksheet before the application is written.

Budget Section	Yes	No Plan To Do
Did we check to see that the budget is directly linked to the project?		
Did we adhere to SAMHSA budget guidelines in allocating resources for different functions and activities?		
Have we reviewed all the budget forms and gathered the appropriate budget information needed to complete the forms?		
Do we use basic accounting concepts and terminology?		
Did we recruit someone to our team with solid accounting experience related to grants and projects?		
Did we involve the accountant in the planning to ensure proper integration of resources with project objectives?		
Did we estimate our expenses as accurately as possible?		
Did we provide a well-written budget justification that supports our proposed project?		

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