

Pre-Award: Planning & Application

Module 2

Instructor Notes:

Welcome to Module #2 which is the first of three modules on Pre-Award. This module pertains specifically to the pre-award activities of planning and application preparation. It correlates to Chapter 2 and 3 of the grantee manual. In the right corner of the slides you will find the more specific section references for the grantee manual.

Slide 2 Objectives

- By the end of this module, you should understand the:
- Key components of the pre-award process, to include:
- Typical pre-award planning activities
- Types of allowable applicant support FMCSA may provide
- Contents of a typical Grants.gov announcement and required forms
- What are the key elements of a Performance Based Application

Instructor notes:

- During this module we will explain some typical pre-award planning activities that grantees should undertake, based on best practices and help you understand what is meant by applicant support and the do's and don'ts regarding FMCSA interaction with applicants.
- During this module you will learn the basic elements of a Grants.gov announcement and how to use the announcement to prepare an acceptable and solid FMCSA application and provide you with the key elements of a Performance Based Application to help you develop one going forward

Slide 3 Pre-Application Planning Activities

Instructor Notes:

- In this section we will discuss some of the typical pre-application planning activities that grantees undertake, gathered from best practices.

Slide 4 Finding Funding Opportunities

- FMCSA publishes a Federal Register (FR) notice annually regarding all FMCSA grant opportunities
- Grants.gov announcement and synopsis
- Generally 30-45 days prior application due date
- Announcement/Instructions
- On-line Grants.gov application
- Supplementary forms – non-Standard Forms (SF)

Instructor notes:

- There are the two places that you will find the grant notices for FMCSA – the Federal Register and Grants.gov
 - FMCSA typically publishes an announcement of funding availability for all of FMCSA's grant programs, in the FR notice in June or thereabouts
 - Then it publishes individual grant program grant announcements or call for applications, in a Grants.gov announcement, which contains a full announcement and a synopsis by grant program.
- The Grants.gov synopsis gives you a quick look at the basics of the opportunity – key dates, funding amounts, Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number, etc.
 - Eligibility requirements
 - Agency
 - Paragraph or brief description
 - Link to the full announcement
 - Modification history if the announcement has been updated or modified
- The full announcement provides all of the details regarding eligibility criteria, etc, as well as the forms and other requirements. (We will go through a grants.gov announcement in detail in subsequent slides in this module).
- FMCSA has a goal of moving to 60 days advance announcement posting. But at a minimum Grants.gov announcements should be posted approximately 30-45 days prior to the due dates.

Slide 5 Grants.gov Access

- All applicants for FMCSA grants need to register for Grants.gov access prior to submission of their application.
- Go to www.grants.gov and see the For Applicants link under Quick Links on the left-hand side of the Grants.gov Home Page.
- Click the Get Registered button.
- Primary Applicant user guide: [http://grants.gov/assets/Applicant-User Guide_110711.pdf](http://grants.gov/assets/Applicant-User%20Guide_110711.pdf)
- Grants.gov Help Desk: 800-518-4708

Instructor notes:

- If you are following along, we are in Section 2.2.2, page 15 of the grantee manual.
- Grants.gov was established as a government-wide resource named the E-Grants Initiative as part of the President's 2002 Fiscal Year Management Agenda to improve government services to the public. It is a federal government website and not owned or operated by FMCSA.
- In FY2011, FMCSA began using Grants.gov for all its grant and cooperative agreement opportunities.
- Registration is a one-time process, but is required in order to submit a grant application. Since the registration process can take three to five business days or up to four weeks, depending on your organization to complete. You will need to make sure that your organization is registered with Grants.gov prior to the submission deadline so that your application isn't held up as a result.
- The manual provides specifics regarding the registration process if you need more detail than is provided here on this slide.
- If you are not familiar with Grants.gov, then you may want to download the Applicant-User Guide for all the questions you might have.
- It is also important to note that the account expires every 60 days so you need to keep it up or re-register.
- Once you register you can also set it up with email notification so that you don't ever miss an announcement again. Look on the website as to how to set that up.
- In order to register on grants.gov you must also be registered at the SAM website. SAM which stands for (System for Award Management) has replaced the CCR – Central Contracting Registration.
- In order to register at SAM you will need to obtain a DUNS number. So we will discuss these two steps on the next two slides.

Slide 6 Grants.gov Access, Continued

- Dun and Bradstreet (DUNS) - <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform/index.jsp>
 - All applicants for FMCSA grants need to have a DUNS number prior to submission of their application
- System for Award Management (SAM) –<https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/> (866-606-8220)
 - All applicants for FMCSA grants need to register at the SAM website prior to submission of their application

Instructor notes:

- We will discuss the SAM and DUNS further detail in the next two slides, however, in order to register for grants.gov to submit an application to FMCSA, you will need to register on the SAM website and in order to register at SAM you should have a DUNS number.
- Most of you already have a CCR number and SAM will allow users to gain access to data through searches, extracts, and web services of the legacy CCR system. In order to ease the transition to a new system, SAM will continue to publish legacy web service and extract formats for one year.
- Before registering for a new number in SAM be sure to check within your own organization to make sure that you have a CCR number and it has been properly migrated to SAM. Your CFO or grants office is the most likely place to check.
- Likewise, your organization is also likely to have a DUNS number and check with your organization before you register for a new one.
- You can also go on the DUNS website and find whether your organization has a DUNS number already.
- It is critical that the DUNS number be correct as inaccuracy could prevent the successful submission of applications through grants.gov
- Just as a point of reference, this is covered in more detail in Section 2.2.3 and 2.2.4 of the Grantee Manual, on Page 16

Slide 7 DUNS Registration

- A DUNS Number is a unique organizational identifier provided by Dun & Bradstreet (D&B)
- To determine if you already have a DUNS number or to obtain one, go to, <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform/displayHomePage.do>
- If more than one number is listed, determine which one should be used for grants

Accuracy and DUNS verification are critical to a successful application submission

Instructor notes:

- As noted in the prior slides, in order to register with the System for Award Management (SAM), a requirement for registering with Grants.gov, your organization will need a Data Universal Number System (DUNS) Number.
- A DUNS Number is a unique nine-character identification number provided by the commercial company Dun & Bradstreet (D&B). If your organization does not have a DUNS number visit <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform/displayHomePage.do>.
- Failure to enter a correct DUNS number will prevent the successful submission of applications through grants.gov and it will also prevent the application from migrating properly from Grants.gov to GrantSolutions (FMCSA's grant management system which is used to review applications and process grant awards) or from GrantSolutions to FMCSA financial management system and payment processing system
- So the bottom line is that use of the correct DUNS number is critical throughout the life cycle of the grant.
- If when you search on fedgov.dnb and your search turns up multiple numbers for your organization, you will need to decide which one will be used exclusively for grant application purposes. You may need to find out from within your own organization, which number you should use and it may be that you will use different numbers for different FMCSA grants, depending upon how your organization has established its DUNS numbers.
- It is important to try to verify the correct number for this grant from within your organization.
- Using any DUNS number other than the one registered with grants.gov will result in processing errors when submitting applications and subsequently processing invoices
- If you have sub-grantees they should have a DUNS number as well, but the final application should be entered under your (the prime grantee) DUNS number.

Slide 8 SAM Registration

- The System for Award Management (SAM) is a free web-site which consolidates Federal procurement systems and the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance.
- SAM has replaced the Central Contractor Registration (CCR) as the government-wide registry for vendors of the federal government.
- See <http://sam.gov> for more information about the system.

Instructor notes:

- The System for Award Management (SAM) is a free web-site which consolidates Federal procurement systems and the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance. Currently CCR, FedReg, ORCA and EPLS have been migrated into SAM.
- The Central Contractor Registration (CCR) is a government-wide registry for entities that do business with the federal government (this includes grantees as well as vendors).

Slide 9 SAM Registration, Continued

- Most organizations already have a CCR number, and if so, CCR has been migrated to SAM.
- Check at <https://www.ccr.gov>. to check your registration.
- If your organization is not registered with CCR, then you can apply on-line at <http://sam.gov>.
- Referred to the SAM User Guide to better understand the migration and process changes from CCR - https://www.sam.gov/sam/transcript/SAM_User_Guide_v1.8.pdf

Instructor notes:

- If you are already registered with CCR, please make sure that your organization's account information is up-to-date and that your account is not expired (CCR accounts require annual renewals.) To check your CCR account, please visit <http://www.ccr.gov>.
- Or check with your CFO regarding your CCR number.
- However, if your organization is not registered with CCR, you can apply on-line at <http://sam.gov>.
- CCR/SAM registrants are required to submit detailed information on their company in various categories. The SAM User's Guide defines and details specific the informational requirements.
- You only want one CCR or SAM number so be careful if there is more than one DUNS number to make sure there isn't more than one CCR or SAM registration.

Slide 10 Pre-Award Planning Process

- Determine if your organization is eligible to apply for this grant?
 - Look in grants.gov at "eligible applicants" and "additional information on eligibility"
- Does the FMCSA program description map to your organizational mission?
 - Reference the original authorization statute

Instructor notes:

- The pre-award planning process is an opportunity for the grantee to determine their eligibility for the grant and their internal capacity. It is important as you are looking at the Notice of Funding Availability of Grants.gov announcement to truly assess whether or not you and your organization should expend the time and in many cases your own match money to apply for this grant?
- To begin, look closely at eligibility. FMCSA's grant programs list specific eligible applicants for each and every grant program. If you are not one of these eligible applicants there is no point in applying as you will be immediately disqualified.
- **Eligibility** is unique for each specific FMCSA program, however, for example in the FY12 CDLPI announcement, it noted that **Eligible Applicants were unrestricted**, but instructed applicants to look at "**Additional Information on Eligibility**", which stated that FMCSA would award:
 - 80% to State applicants. These applicants include agencies in each State (including the District of Columbia) responsible for the development, implementation, and maintenance of all or part of the Commercial Driver License (CDL) program, or that have a direct impact on a State's compliance with the provisions of title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Parts 383 and 384 (agencies other than the lead CDL agency should coordinate, if practical, with the State's lead CDL agency prior to submitting an application).
 - And 20% to State agencies (including the District of Columbia), local governments, or other persons (entities) capable of conducting national programs that include research, development, demonstration projects, public education, and other special activities and projects relating to commercial driver licensing and motor vehicle safety that are of benefit to all jurisdictions of the United States or are designed to address national safety concerns and circumstances.
 - Finally, non-State applicants must be able to conduct programs on a national level, or that are national in scope and impact, and will provide widespread benefit to one or more groups of CDL stakeholders.

- So it is important to look at all of the details regarding applicant eligibility because there can be nuances that may render your organization ineligible and therefore you shouldn't bother to develop a detailed application.
- Another key part of the pre-planning analysis is to look at the program description and make sure that it aligns with your **organizational mission**. If you aren't already an organization that supports motor carrier safety or traffic safety, etc. it may be difficult to branch out into this programmatic arena. If it does map well to the mission of your organization, then reconsider whether this grant program is appropriate for your organization.
 - For example, the Border Enforcement Grant (BEG) program is designed to ensure motor carriers operating commercial motor vehicles (CMVs) entering the United States (U.S.) from a foreign country are in compliance with commercial vehicle safety standards and regulations, financial responsibility regulations and registration requirements of the U.S. and to ensure drivers of those vehicles are qualified and properly licensed to operate a CMV.
 - If your motor carrier safety program does not involve carriers that cross the US borders or does not involve licensure of CMVs, then it may not be the right grant for your organization.

Slide 11 Pre-Award Planning Process, Cont.

- Does the organization have the resources to provide the match and meet the MOE (where applicable)? And sustain for duration of the grant?
- Can our organization meet the performance criteria of the grant?
- Do we have the staff? The expertise? The systems? The leadership support?
- Within the specified timeframes?
- Does our organization have the personnel to develop the application?

Instructor notes:

- Another key element to look at is whether or not your organization can support the **match requirements** (if in fact there are match requirements)?
 - Work with your finance department to determine the level of MOE and then determine whether or not you can exceed that level by the 20 or 50% of match needed for some programs?
 - Is the source of match one that is unstable and may not be sustainable for the two years of the grant or the duration of the project?
 - Where match is involved the leadership commitment is critical to the assurance of that match. Ask yourselves, do you have that leadership commitment?
 - If you are obtaining match from other department or entity, be sure to do an MOU or a commitment letter before you get too far into the process. You don't want to dedicate a lot of effort to the application only to have it fall apart in the end.
- The **performance criteria** is another good place to stop and think for a moment. Can you meet the performance requirements or are they too aggressive for your organization size, staff, experience, etc.
 - If you are looking at a data or IT project under SaDIP or CVISN, can your systems support the effort? Your systems should be able to support the effort here and now and not rely on further upgrades or updates, that may or may not come through. And if they can't that could be critically problematic.
 - As noted before, if match or system upgrades or dependencies on resources or other departments is required to get the job done, leadership commitment and support is critical to success. You may even want to consider a leadership "endorsement" or support letter as part of the submission to get that internal assurance. Particularly if you are in an organization in which the political leadership may change before the grant is fully complete.
- And finally look at the effort that it will take to **prepare the application**.

- Quality applications take time and effort and take the talents of several different kinds of people. Finance to help prepare the budget and make sure that the costs are allowable, and allocable. Technical people to develop the project design, the performance measures, and verify the costs are reasonable and necessary, etc.. IT or data staff to help develop the problem statement and data to back it up, and perhaps policy or performance staff to help craft meaningful performance measures, and front line staff to help determine whether it is operationally feasible.
- All of this talent ideally should go into the application preparation and should be considered before you undertake a task for which you may not have the requisite staff to see it through to the end.

Slide 12 Applicant Support

Instructor notes:
(Transition Slide)

Slide 13 Applicant Support

- Support of our safety partners
- Increase technical quality of applications
- Encourage participation by all eligible grantees
- Encourage open, fair and equal access and even competition
- Maintain impartiality at all times

Instructor notes:

[Page 17]

- Now will move onto a brief discussion of the type of application and pre-award support you can expect from FMCSA.
- FMCSA is trying to support open, fair and even competition and encourage increased participation by local organizations and others, not just supporting our state partners. Although we of course are still quite supportive of our state partners as well.
- Overall we want to increase the technical quality of all our applications we want to do so with open and equal access.
- Applicant support is the ways in which FMCSA can "partner" with applicants, while maintaining the appropriate "arms length"
- At the end of the day the point of our efforts is to maintain a "level playing field", while still providing even handed and quality support to all of our applicants.
- Applicant support primarily applies to discretionary grant programs – although standardization of process and information provided is still important for the formula grant programs as well.

Slide 14 Applicant Support - Allowed Activities

FMCSA and Grantee Can:

- Review Applicants' Prior Year Application (if applicable)
- Funding Opportunity Conferences
- Publication of Question and Answers
- Regular Communications
 - Information in the FR Notice,
 - Contents of the grants.gov announcement
 - Application process/forms
 - Regulatory or statutory program questions

Instructor notes:

- This slide gives you a quick overview of the pre-award activities that FMCSA can and will participate in prior to your submission of an application. These are referenced in more detail in Section 2.3 in the grantee manual, page 17
- Just to highlight a few. FMCSA can thoroughly review your prior year applications with you, walking you through what worked and didn't work, whether it won or not. In this way we can help give you pointers for this years' application process
- We can also walk you through "themes" from other applicants winning applications from the prior year.
 - We can't just hand you last years' winning applications but we can discuss what made them winners.
- FMCSA has begun holding Funding Opportunity Conferences for more of our programs. These are conferences similar to prior MCSAP Basic Planning Meetings, but now for all FMCSA grant programs (each separately or grouped) depending upon the region.
 - These are meetings that are held often prior to the issuance of the official Grants.gov announcement and are open to existing grantees and other eligible parties.
 - In these meetings we will discuss this years priorities for the program, some of the changes to the application form or process, answer questions and provide some technical advice.

- This is a key opportunity for applicants to ask questions and for staff to provide feedback, but in a open, "everyone gets to hear" forum.
- As able, we will post on the FMCSA grant website, FAQs from other state conferences or just in general
- Just to recap, in general we can provide information on:
 - How to submit an application
 - Who submits an application
 - General program information
 - Specific funding year objectives
 - Evaluation criteria
 - Question and answers
 - Contact information
- The key for us is that need to make sure we are providing all grantees with the same information and the same access to questions and information. So that everyone has the same opportunities.

Slide 15 Applicant Support- Not Allowed

- FMCSA Can Not:
 - Review current year applications prior to submission
 - Discuss other applicants current year applications
 - Write any portion of, or edit current year applications
 - Identify the specific persons on the TRP
 - Discuss the specifics of the discretionary grant Technical Review Panel(s) (TRP)/grant review

Instructor notes:

- Essentially these "don'ts" pertain to discretionary grants however, even with formula grants FMCSA won't:
 - Discuss other applicants' current year applications
 - Write any portion of, or edit current year applications
 - Discuss detailed TRP discussions specifically
- To clarify, for discretionary grants –
 - We cannot review applications or portion of applications, or help with an application in anyway.
 - We can not tell you, specifically, what the TRP will be looking for, if it is not already shown on the announcement or in the FR or the specific conversations that occur within the TRP (we can refer to the general summary of comments, just not the specifics)
- For all grants, but most specifically around discretionary grants we have to keep an arms length to ensure a fair, open, and even competition

Slide 16 Scenario #1

The Federal Register notice was published, and grants.gov is open for States to submit FY12 MCSAP High Priority grant applications. A State sends FMCSA their draft grant application, and asks them to review it to make sure it is consistent with FMCSA policies and procedures, meets the priorities of the Agency, and does not conflict with any of other FMCSA funded grants.

How would FMCSA reply?

- A. Review the grant and give the requested feedback.
- B. Delete the grant and run you through the statutory elements of MCSAP High Priority , and the priorities listed in the FR notice.
- C. Review the grant and respond as to whether it is or is not technically sound only.

Instructor notes:

So lets walk through this scenario to help solidify what we just discussed.

In this Scenario, the Federal Register notice was published, and grants.gov is open for States to submit FY12 MCSAP High Priority grant applications. A State sends FMCSA their draft grant application, and asks them to review it to make sure it is consistent with FMCSA policies and procedures, meets the priorities of the Agency, and does not conflict with any of other FMCSA funded grants.

How do you think FMCSA should respond?

Review the grant and give the requested feedback.

Delete the grant and run you through the statutory elements of MCSAP High Priority , and the priorities listed in the FR notice.

Review the grant and respond as to whether it is or is not technically sound only.

Lets see.

Slide 17 Scenario #1 Discussion

- Answer is B
- FMCSA must not accept a draft grant application.
- FMCSA can run an applicant through the statutory elements of MCSAP High Priority, review the priorities listed in the Federal Register and the process for submission and the elements of the application.

Instructor notes:

- The answer is B – Delete the grant and run you through the statutory elements of MCSAP High Priority , and the priorities listed in the FR notice.
- FMCSA must not accept a draft grant application.
- We can run an applicant through the statutory elements of MCSAP High Priority, review the priorities listed in the Federal Register and the process for submission and the elements of the application.

Slide 18 How to Apply?

Instructor notes:
(Transition Slide)

Slide 19 Grants.gov Announcement & Synopsis

- Overview Information
 - Program or application changes since prior year
 - Funding Opportunity Description
 - Award Information
 - Eligibility Information – eligible applicants, match, etc.
- Application and Submission Information
 - Forms – SF-424, 424a, 424b, SF-LLL, special forms
 - Submission deadlines and estimated program funding

Instructor notes:

- Now we move over into Chapter 3 of your Grantee Manual.
- Once you get onto Grants.gov and locate the opportunity you will open up the Synopsis screen and see it consists of three components:
 - **Synopsis** – is a summary of the grant program and requirements to help an applicant determine whether or not they wish to apply.
 - **Announcement** – a full description of the program, evaluation criteria, details regarding how to apply, etc.
 - **Application** – the on-line forms for completing the submission on-line, such as the SF-424, SF-424a, etc.
- It is useful to note that the synopsis contains all of the updates to the announcement, so if updates have been made to the opportunity synopsis you will see them listed there. This is also where you can set up email notifications, if you would like to receive notifications of changes to the grant opportunity.
- The Overview Information – includes the agency name, opportunity title, announcement type (new or modification), funding opportunity number, CDFA number, key dates and other general additional information.
- The Funding Opportunity Description is the program goals, impact requirements, and project types – this is key information for how you form your application goals and objectives
- It is critical to look at the eligibility information because if you don't fully meet the eligibility, then don't apply or at a minimum call FMCSA to see if you are truly eligible before you put forth any effort.
- The Application and Submission Information – includes the electronic link to the full announcement, content and Form of Application –
- The Form of Application is what forms you need to submit, submission dates and times, estimated total program funding, and ceiling and floor or awards

- As you are beginning to plan for your submission be sure to note any changes to the program or the application process since last year. This is to make sure you don't just use last years application and cut and paste, because we may be calling for different things or have a different requirement or focus this year. Be sure to note what has changed and make those necessary changes to your submission.
- It is important to make sure that you submit all of the forms completed – we are cracking down on incomplete submissions and if the package is incomplete, ie: missing a form, we may not review the application until the entire package is received and may only consider it once all of the other applications have been reviewed and funded (as deemed appropriate)
- Deadlines are very important, late applications may not be considered until all others have been reviewed and funding decisions determined, so if you want your application to be sure to be considered, then get it in on time.
- Submission deadlines and estimated program funding amounts and award floor/ceilings. Look at the funding parameters – if the program funding is \$1Million don't submit a budget of \$1Million as they are not likely to award just one award. Likewise, for the individual awards, don't submit an application for more than the ceiling. These are just good quick tips as you begin to review the announcement and plan your application.

Slide 20 Grants.gov Announcement & Synopsis, Continued

- Application Review Information
 - Evaluation Criteria
 - Review and Selection Process
- Award Administration Information
 - General Terms and Conditions and Reporting Requirements
- Agency Contact(s)
- Other Information (Optional)

Instructor notes:

- The Application Review Information is critical information – this is the key to success – this is the evaluation criteria that will be used to score the application. Making sure the application closely addresses the evaluation criteria will substantially increase your chance for success.
 - Evaluation Criteria may include – things such as: Project need/adherence to the program priorities; Project sustainability; Soundness of your approach; Probability of achieving results; Financial management capacity; Viability of match funds (are the match funds based on another grant, that is unsure or is it solid state budget funds?); Experience with the grant program activities; and, applicant's past performance as a grantee, among other things
 - Your application should clearly address all of the factors listed within the evaluation criteria section
- The reporting requirements listed in the Award Administration Information is useful to note so that quarterly or more frequent or specific performance data reporting can be taken into consideration when developing your monitoring and evaluation plan (which is likely to be a part of many FMCSA applications).
 - This section may also be just a general reference to the terms and conditions and quarterly reporting requirements for the grant, but it may include special reporting requirements which would be useful to take into consideration when applying.

Slide 21 Announcement Review/Pre-Application Tips

- Review the components of the grant announcement and instructions
 - Determine project design, budget, staffing, project development
 - Internal development and review team
 - Create a work plan and timelines
 - Verify the necessary system access and signature authorities and transmission capabilities

Instructor notes:

- As with any project it is advantageous to do some planning ahead of time so that when the actual announcement comes out, the team can begin immediately to develop the actual application.
- Here are a few tips, based on best practices, for preparing the application.
 - Decisions regarding project design can be done in advance and is helpful in the creation of a high quality application. For instance, if you know that each year you apply for various FMCSA discretionary grants, at 6 months out you can look at your prior year application.
 - [Project design is the systematic identification and prioritization of problems and opportunities to be addressed through a project, to include the identification of a hierarchy of project goals and objectives, the planning of solutions in terms of inputs, activities, outputs, effects and impacts, and the assessment of project outcomes]
 - Look at the program and do some planning based on the general nature of the program and any weaknesses or strengths that were brought out in the prior years' applications.
 - Verifying that you have all of the access to the systems necessary for submission and the right authorities keeps things from falling apart at the last moment as well
 - Developing a high level budget so that you can determine match early on, helps prevent a mad race at the end to secure all of the necessary funding. Also, no sense in doing the work if you can't come up with the match.

Slide 22 General Application Elements

- Project Abstract/Summary – succinct description of the proposed project, statement of objectives and methods to be employed. Like an Executive Summary
- Project Narrative – description of the problem to be addressed, the methodology and measure of effectiveness
- Budget – SF-424a and supporting detailed budgets
- Budget Narrative – a narrative explanation of each of the budget categories within the budget

Instructor notes:

- Now we will move on to basic elements of any FMCSA application. These are the general elements of an application, the naming conventions may be different by programs and by announcement, but overall this represents the general elements.
- The Project Abstract/Summary is like an Executive Summary and helps give a quick picture of the grant proposal for initial review. A good abstract will help draw in the reviewer and present an initial positive impression.
- The Project Narrative should include the needs assessment or problem statement, project objectives, project activities, methodologies and design, list the personnel and staffing approach, the performance measures and how it will be evaluated. In the next section we will discuss performance based applications in much more detail.
- The application will also include a budget and budget narrative but we will address those in more detail in Module 3, the next module. You will find some high level description in Section 3.2.2 on page 21 of the grantee manual, but it goes into more depth on the budget in Section 3.5.

Slide 23 Project Narrative Elements

- Purpose - Measurable, time-limited, outcome oriented, realistic, related to the problem/need , the self-assessment
- Needs (or Self) Assessment, Statement of Need, or Problem Statement
 - Need can be determined by existing and valid data; or,
 - A self assessment of your entities programs (such as CDL)
- Methodology, Project Design, or Implementation Strategies - Discuss who/what/how/ where/when
- Work or Program Activity Plan, Timeline – Major activities, responsible parties, start date, end date and estimated personnel hours.

Instructor notes:

- I will run through these elements quickly as we go into more detail on them in the next section.
- The Purpose – this is the section in which you discuss how your project will measurably impact your agency's program.
 - It must be linked to an identified problem, need, or program improvement opportunity in your self-assessment.
 - It should be realistic (don't take on world peace!) but significant (so what!).
 - It will be evaluated to determine whether the program was a success, a failure or somewhere in between. So it needs to be relevant and reachable, but hopefully a beneficial stretch to achieve.
 - Project objectives usually decrease a negative or increase a positive phenomenon and should begin with *To increase... To decrease.... To reduce.*
 - Process objectives are another type of objective. Process objectives usually begin with *To provide.... To establish....To create.* The purpose should be based on a program improvement identified in the self assessment. (Attachment 3).
- The Problem Statement lays the foundation for the grant proposal. What will your plan or project design solve or cure or improve?
 - In the case of the CDL Program, it requires a self-assessment of the States CDL Program to include all aspects of the CDL program to include licensing, law enforcement, and the courts.
 - You should clearly indicate what is prompting the application for assistance. For example what is the obstacle to compliance? ie: ACD translation tables are outdated.

- Now Implementation Strategies, are also known as Program Strategies and are about the who, what, how, where and when. This is the meat of the narrative.
 - The strategies should be in clear, simple prose, but with details and should describe the methods or activities you are proposing to do that will achieve the desired results (objectives).
 - You need to describe your management plan.
 - Give details on key staff involved in the project and outline who is responsible for what and define responsibilities of all partners.
 - They should include the objective of the grant project, so for instance strategies to improve transaction processing and driver history record data quality, with the following tasks:
 - Task: Update ACD translation tables
 - Task: Modify DQ periods to ensure consecutive withdrawals for serious violations
- The narrative should also include a timeline that lists the major activities that make up the proposed project and provide the position title of the individual responsible for completing or supervising the activity, estimated start date, estimated end date, and estimated personnel hours. The Timeline should expand on the implementation strategies. It will be used to monitor against, using the quarterly progress reports and should take into consideration logical obstacles and lags – procurement cycles, etc.
 - Try to keep things to a two year maximum, although some FMCSA grants technically have unlimited periods for expenditure, it is prudent for grantees to anticipate expenditure within a maximum 2-3 year range.
- And finally, the narrative should also identify the challenges and possible resolutions. Although this isn't listed on the slide, because it often isn't included by applicants and isn't always required by FMCSA, it is useful to include, particularly for new grants or project designs that are wholly untested. This way it shows that you have already weighed and considered the challenges and provided for them, which may help to resolve any concerns on the part of FMCSA and the reviewers.

Slide 24 Project Narrative Elements, Continued

- Performance Measures or Objectives/Improvements – quantitative and qualitative performance measures to assess progress in achieving the purpose or objective of grant.
- Monitoring and Evaluation Plan - Who/what/how. Use of recommendations and how success will be measured.
- Organizational Information – information regarding the organizational goals and mission and prior work of a similar nature

Instructor notes:

- Performance measures should permit the state and FMCSA to gauge the progress in meeting the purpose or objective of the grant and to assess the strengths and needs in managing the grant and the program problem or need being corrected or improved by the grant.
 - What benefit will exist once the project is completed?
 - How will this benefit be measured?
 - Should reference goals and data support
- Remember – procurement of goods or services is merely a milestone, not an actual objective or outcome
- We will go into performance measures more in the next section.
- Once you have created performance measures you need to identify who will monitor grant performance and provide FMCSA with quarterly progress reports and through what means?
 - Identify what data will be collected and how (observation, testing, interview, surveys, etc.)
 - Who will collect data and how data will be analyzed.
 - How evaluation recommendations will be used for program improvement and how success will be measured.
- This is also a good sanity check for yourself to make sure that your performance measures are measurable and reasonable and that your strategy is truly likely to impact your measures.
- When developing an evaluation plan remember it should be two-fold: (1) a product evaluation and (2) a process evaluation.
 - Product evaluation addresses results that can be attributed to the project, as well as the extent to which the project has satisfied its desired objectives.
 - Process evaluation addresses how the project was conducted, in terms of consistency with the stated plan of action and the effectiveness of the various activities within the plan.
- The Monitoring and Evaluation Plan is both a product and process evaluation

- And finally, Organizational Information includes information related to the Applicant's organizational goals, mission statement, structure, or other information relevant to the proposed project.
 - This is your opportunity to show that you know how to do this work and have done it successfully in the past.
 - Providing a description of the scope of current activities as well as key elements of previous and/or other motor carrier or highway safety programs shows how these contribute to the ability of the organization to successfully implement the program requirements and meet program expectations.
 - This section should also reference any past performance descriptions and/or "credentials."

Slide 25 Performance Based Applications

Instructor Notes:

- This next section is not found in your grantee manual, but FMCSA felt that it was important related material to expound upon at this time.
- FMCSA is moving to a more performance based grant making approach across all of its programs and so we wanted to take a few moments to go over the basic concepts. For those of you who have already experienced this approach with MCSAP Basic, this may be more of a review, for others, it may be a first time look at performance based applications and their general make up.
- Although performance based applications it is not currently applied to all ten grant programs it is the ultimate goal of the agency
- In this section we will discuss performance based applications in general to help frame the over approach of using project goals and desired impacts as the driver for any grant application project design

Slide 26 Performance-Based Plans

- State the problem and establish a baseline
- Express desired performance improvements in terms of quantifiable objectives
- Formulate goals as interim steps
- Describe strategies for achieving each of those goals
- Include specific activities for each strategy
- Define a framework for periodic monitoring of activities and performance trends
 - Evaluate the impact of each strategy or activity on performance, adjusting as appropriate

Instructor notes:

- As discussed in the prior section, any performance based application begins with a problem and the establishment of a baseline. For example: crash rates to date; rate of CDL compliance; could even be a baseline around system functionality for SaDIP or one of the more technology based programs.
- As you move forward through the application and the plan, performance improvements should be based upon this quantitative baseline -- based on current safety or other relevant data.
- As you will note the bullets on this slide are essentially a re-characterization of the application elements referenced in the prior section and which we will break down in more detail in subsequent slides, so I will move on to the next slide and you can use this slide as a good cross-check of your application.

Slide 27 Problem Statement

- Identify commercial motor vehicle safety problems (existing, new/perceived)
 - Is the problem verifiable? (apply data analysis and real world experience)
- Describe the problem
 - Quantify the extent of the problem, citing data source and date to establish a baseline

Instructor notes:

- When developing your problem statement, tie it to the grant announcement and the reason for the grant.
- Provide a narrative description with some quantifiable representation of the problem. (i.e., number of crashes, percentage of crashes, or other data identifier)
- And make sure that it is feasible within the timelines provided, ie: can you accomplish the High Priority grant solutions within two years?

Slide 28 Sample Problem Statement

- For the most recent 5 year period 2004-2008, the average number of large truck crash involvements in State X was 3,558 per year. Further analysis reveals that -28% (1,196 average per year) of these involvements occurred in four of the state's 60+ counties
- During the same period, "speeding", was the traffic violation cited in -40% (10,523) of all Traffic Enforcement violations involving commercial motor vehicles.

Instructor notes:

- Here is an example of some problem statements.
- Be sure to be specific in the time element and to include the "why" in your statement. For instance in these examples, we could go even further and note the contributing factors involved.

Slide 29 Performance Objective/Improvement

The expected outcome/result based on the strategies and activities deployed to address the problem (i.e., reduction in the number of percentage of crashes), including the date or time when the outcome is expected (multi-year if necessary)

Sample Performance Objective

To reduce the number of large truck-involved crashes in the four counties by 6% (72 crashes) over the next 3 years (by 2013), reducing the average from 1196 to 1124.

Instructor notes:

- From the problem statement, then comes the performance objective, so based upon the strategies that you plan to put in place, how will you address the problem?
- Performance Objectives are also known as performance measures
- These can be multi-year although they don't have to be depending upon what is stated specifically in the announcement.
- The example here is for a MCSAP Basic Lead Agency grant, but could apply to other grant programs

Slide 30 Sample Performance Goals

- To reduce the number of large truck-involved crashes in County X by 8% (78 crashes) by 2013, reducing the number of crashes from 1196 to 1118.
- To reduce the number of large truck-involved crashes in County Y by 5.7% (83 crashes) by 2013, reducing the number of crashes from 1100 to 1037.

Instructor notes:

- Here are some additional sample performance goals.

Slide 31 Program Strategies

- Identify the method to be utilized to address the problem and achieve the desired goal
- Each strategy should be feasible and justifiable
 - Within the power of those responsible
 - In proportion to the size of the problem
 - How was the strategy chosen and was it a reasonable methodology?

Instructor notes:

- To some extent you will have to think through your program strategies prior to finalizing your performance objectives/goals, but we have put them after the objective as we build our plan from the top down to the details.
- The Program Strategies are also known as the Methodology or Project Design or Implementation Strategies (to tie them into the slides we previously walked through)
- As noted before the strategies are the actions you plan on taking to address the problem and that will help you reach your objective.
- So for instance if we know we have a speeding problem, and we've tied that as a cause of crashes, we need to look at strategies to decrease speeding.
- This could be activities such as outreach or motor coach training, as well as increased speed surveillance, penalties, etc.
- It is important that as you brainstorm about strategies that you consider some of the things on the slide, such as feasibility and tie to the actual problem and size of the problem.

Slide 32 Sample Program Strategy

- FMCSA's Large Truck Crash Causation Study reported that speeding was the critical reason in 21% of the estimated truck crash involvement nationwide
 - Increase enforcement (focus on speeding) in the four counties to reduce the number of large truck crash involvements
 - Monitor and adjust location and timing of enforcement activity on a quarterly basis in conjunction with a review of crash data

Instructor notes:

- Here are some sample strategies, as examples

Slide 33 Program Activity Plan

- Specific actions and activities necessary to implement the related strategy
- Include level of effort, specific location, responsible staff and milestones
- Who, what, when, where, how.....

Instructor notes:

- The Program activity plan is also known as the Work Plan and timeline and is the meat of your strategy – how to you make your strategy happen?
 - What is your level of effort? How many staff will you need? What exactly will they be doing?

Slide 34 Sample Program Activity Plan

- Analyze crash data in the target counties to further identify crash characteristics (location, time of day, etc.) to focus enforcement efforts
- Increase traffic enforcement activity (focus on speeding drivers) by 10% from the 2011 level of X in the target county areas each year
- Conduct patrols in highly visible locations and at times and places identified by data analysis

Instructor notes:

- Here we have some good examples of an activity plan
- What is the step by step process to increasing enforcement activity?

Slide 35 Monitor Results and Evaluate

- Describe how you will measure the effectiveness of each activity and strategy, using incremental benchmarks for a multi-year strategy
- Were targets/milestones met?
- Evaluate performance
 - Review baseline data and compare to new results
 - Assess effectiveness of strategy and activities
 - Make adjustments as appropriate
 - Document for quarterly report or annual update

Instructor notes:

- As we mentioned in the previous section, you want to develop a Monitoring and evaluation plan to help determine how you will measure if your strategies work and how effectively they work.
- Again remember, when thinking about measurements make sure that your systems can support the reporting and data, ie: if you are proposing to export crash data monthly to monitor and measure your program, can your system do that?
 - Will the data exist to measure your program? It is important to use sources and data that actually exist or are collectable without huge changes, etc.
- Ultimately, once you have the grant and you are managing it, it is ok to make adjustments to the strategies and the measurement as needed, and you may want to build some flexibility into your project design

Slide 36 Sample Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

- Review inspection/traffic enforcement results
- Review crash data results (A&I online MCMIS)
- Compare the quarterly CMV crash numbers to the baseline data to determine if the activities are effective(allow for crash reporting lag)
- Adjust activities and/or targeting as needed for subsequent periods to meet performance objective
- Prepare/update quarterly progress tracking

Instructor notes:

- Here is an example of part of a monitoring and evaluation plan.
- Ultimately we would like to see more detail than this, but for illustrative training purposes, this gives you a sense of the general framework.

Slide 37 Other Plan Evaluation Factors

- National goals/priorities
- State-specific goals, priorities, information or studies
- Available resources, such as CMV safety data
- Other objective criteria FMCSA deems appropriate within the evaluation plan
- Program integration

Instructor notes:

- Here are just a few additional considerations for evaluation factors.
- Other objective criteria could include: program balance, geographic diversity and innovation, but these would all be in the published evaluation criteria.
- Remember, where appropriate, it is useful to tie your evaluation factors to the priorities noted in the Grants.gov announcement – such as, natural gas extraction for the High Priority program.

Slide 38 Key Concepts

- Define the problem
- Develop a quantifiable performance objective and goals to support it
- Describe specific and detailed strategies and activities
- Monitor activities quarterly
- Evaluate effectiveness of activities annually

Instructor notes:

- This slide provides items to cross check to just see if your application meets these criteria or most of them.

Slide 39 General Application Tips

- Demonstrate the problem using local or national data
- Map the application to the program specific goals and objectives
- Make the connection between the project design and the proposed outcomes
 - Explain why the project design is the best design suited to achieve the best outcomes

Instructor notes:

- Likewise, this slide and the next are just useful summaries of much of what we have discussed in the last two sections of this module.
- These are useful to review as you look over your final application and ask these questions. For instance:
 - Does my application map the strategies to the goals and objectives? And are those goals and objectives based appropriately off a quantifiable program?
 - Does my project design really address the problem? Or more appropriately is it the best design to address this problem?

Slide 40 General Application Tips, Continued

- Describe how you met the past performance goals, if applicable
- Cross-check against all application requirements
- Adjust application based on feedback from prior year
- Keep simple, concise and well written

Instructor notes:

- Did I really address all of the elements and criteria stated in the application?
- Was I able to resolve some of the issues that were raised by FMCSA in the review process last year?

Slide 41 Review of Required Forms

Instructor notes:

- Now that we have gone over the narrative and really the most important and creative part of your application, lets move onto the forms and make sure that everyone is comfortable with the primary forms that are required with each FMCSA application.

Slide 42 SF-424 Tips

- Line 8a: Legal Name = DUNS Number Name
- DUNS and EIN/TIN Numbers correct
- Line 8f: Contact Info accurate
- Line 11: CDFA matches Grants.gov
- Line 20: Federal debt statement accurate
- Line 21: Certified by authorized individual

Instructor notes:

- In Sections 3.3 (page 21-22) and 3.4 of your grantee manual, we reference the forms used, however in the next few slides we will just highlight some of the key lines and important areas of these forms. Both the Forms themselves and the instructions can be found in Appendix K of the grantee manual as well as on-line on Grants.gov with each grant announcement.
- The SF-424 is the required application form that must be submitted with all FMCSA grant applications. It is a standard federal form and should be rather familiar to most of you by now.
- I will just point out a few key lines.
- Line 20 asks the applicant whether they are delinquent on any federal debt and if so to provide an explanation. That line will be compared to the debt statement on the Administrative Capability Statement (which I will reference in a subsequent slide) and is an intake element for FMCSA application review. So be sure you respond to Line 20, do so accurately and consistently with the Administrative Capability Statement.
- Line 21 is where the individual authorized by your agency to submit grant applications signs the form. In so doing that individual is certifying that the statements contained within the form are true and that they will comply with any resulting terms of an award. Also, notes that any false or fictitious or fraudulent claims may be subject to criminal, civil or administrative penalties.

Slide 43 SF-424b Overview

- Standard set of federal assurances to which the applicant certifies compliance
- Includes:
 - Legal authority to apply for grants
 - Compliance with federal regulations and statutes – Hatch Act, Civil Rights Act, Equal Opportunity, etc.
 - Compliance with the requirements governing the program

Instructor notes:

- Although the SF-424b is also a required form for all FMCSA grant applications, it is not contained within Appendix K, because it is essentially just a certification. However it is important to understand this form and you can find a copy on Grants.gov with all of the FMCSA applications.
- The SF-424b is a set of 18 federal assurances to which the signature signs as the "duly authorized representative of the applicant to certify that the applicant..."
- It should be signed by an entity of the applicant with the authority to certify for the organization
- The assurances cover everything from Hatch Act compliance to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, as well as certification to compliance with A-133 audits and all applicable requirements of all other Federal laws, executive orders, regulations, and policies governing this program.
- Be sure to read all of the assurances and become familiar with them so that you understand to what you are certifying.

Slide 44 SF-LLL Overview

- Standard form for disclosure of the Lobbying Activities
- Most responses will be "no" on this form
- Replaces the GG-lobbying form

Instructor notes:

- The SF-LLL is a brief lobbying disclosure form (found on page 143 in Appendix K of the Grantee Manual)
- Most answers will be no, however don't just check the boxes without fully reviewing them to make sure that you accurately depict your organizations' lobbying activities.
- Rather than submitting the GG-lobbying form (Grants.gov) and then having to potentially submit the SF-LLL, which might delineate some possible conflicts, FMCSA has chosen to just use the one form, which covers all possibilities and is more standardized across the federal government.

Slide 45 Administrative Capability Form Overview

- Grantees are subject to administrative and financial standards in the CFR and OMB Circulars
- Administrative Capability Form is for applicants to certify they have the appropriate capabilities to meet these standards
- Certification is a binding statement that the questions have been answered accurately
- Application may not be processed in a timely fashion without the submission of this form

Instructor notes:

- I referenced this form previously. and it can be found in Appendix K, but also referred to in more detail in the grant manual on pages 22-23, Section 3.4.2.
- Timely submission of the form may delay the review and processing of your application and subsequently a potential award.
- Each FMCSA application package will contain an Administrative Capability Form. You need to submit one form per grant application, however you may copy it if you are submitting several different program applications within the same year, for instance you are submitting both a MCSAP Basic and BEG applications, you can complete and sign the form for MCSAP basic and then make a copy of that form to submit with BEG.
- This is an annual requirement, so a new form will need to be submitted each application year. So even if you submitted a form on your FY11 grant application in June 2011, you will need to submit another for your FY12 application.
- State and local governments and non-profit organizations that receive Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) financial assistance funds are subject to the administrative and financial standards set forth in the relevant Codes of Federal Regulations (CFR) and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circulars. The CFRs and OMB Circulars that apply specifically to State and local government and non-profit organization recipients of Federal grant funds are:
 - OMB Circular A-102, “Grants and Cooperative Agreements with State and Local Governments”
 - 2 CFR 215, “Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreement with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations (OMB A-110)”
 - 2 CFR 225, “Cost Principles for State, Local, and Indian Tribal Governments (OMB A-87)”
 - 2 CFR 230, “Cost Principles for Non-Profit Organizations (OMB A-122)”
 - 49 CFR Part 18, “Transportation – Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments”

- OMB Circular A-133, “Audits of States, Local Government, and Non-Profit Organizations”
- The purpose of this questionnaire is for applicants to certify that they have the appropriate administrative and financial standards to successfully manage Federal grant funds. As with the SF-424b the signator is certifying the assurances and responses to be true and that person will be subject to audit and undoubtedly tested at some point.
- If an organization’s policies and procedures do not fully comply with the requirements in the questionnaire, then the organization may need revised or new policies in order to comply with Federal financial management standards.
- Some of the questions on the form include: audit history, financial management and systems questions; procurement standards; personnel systems and policies and procedures; travel systems and policies and procedures; and sub-grantee systems and practices

Slide 46 Key Contacts Form Overview

- Required with all FMCSA grant applications
- Used to populate contact lines in the Notice of Grant Award and assign grantee roles in GrantSolutions
- Form includes:
 - Applicant Organization name
 - Authorizing Official name
 - Grant Manager name
- Timely submission is important for application processing

Instructor notes:

- The Key Contacts Form is referenced on Page 23 in the Grantee Manual, and the form itself is in Appendix K, page 140-142
- Timely submission of the Key Contact Form with the application is critical to the timely review of the application. It is a required form and part of the application.
- A Key Contacts form must be submitted with each application, even if there are several applications from the same entity in the same year. Each application and/or program could require different Key Contacts, so it is important to submit a separate one for each application.
- It is also a critical form to making sure the Notice of Grant Award (NGA) goes to the correct person in your organization.
- If changes occur in the Authorizing Official and Grant Manager, noted by the grantee on the form, while the application is under review the applicant should notify FMCSA immediately
- FMCSA uses this form to assign Grantee roles and responsibilities in GrantSolutions, thereby helping to assure that the correct Grantee Authorizing Official receives the grant award notification and signs the correct grant award.
- The information required in the Key Contacts Form includes:
 - Applicant Organization Name used on the SF-424;
 - Authorized Person to review, sign, and accept grant awards on behalf of the organization;
 - The person in the organization who will have daily oversight over implementing the grant; and
 - The person responsible for monitoring grant program finances. (This individual should be able to provide clarification on financial information such as budget details, Single Audits, invoice support documentation,

and so forth. This role is typically performed by a grant, finance, or administrative/program specialist.)

Slide 47 Proposal Submission Best Practices

- Use an internal review team for your final application review prior to submission
 - Is the solution related to the program goals?
 - Is the solution feasible?
 - Have all the criteria been met?
 - Is the budget accurate and the costs allowable, allocable, necessary and reasonable?

Instructor notes:

- In this slide and the next, we just run through some proposal submission best practices (contrary to the proposal content tips we provided earlier).
- This list can actually be found in Section 3.6 of the grantee manual.
- Use this as sort of a check list when preparing to submit your application to help improve the quality and relevance of the application, as well as develop stakeholders and invest people in the project once it is obtained.
- It is a best practice to pull together your own internal proposal review team to review your application prior to submission to FMCSA simulating to some extent the review that FMCSA will conduct.

Slide 48 Proposal Submission Best Practices, Continued

- Use an internal review team for your final application review prior to submission
 - Do you have the funds to match the grant? (if applicable)
 - If systems are required, has IT looked at it to make sure their systems can handle the project?
 - All application components are complete and included?
 - Leadership is committed to the project?

Instructor notes:

- This is some additional useful questions, to address prior to submission of the application.

Slide 49 Wrap Up and Knowledge Check

Instructor Notes:

(Transition Slide)

Slide 50 Summary

- Now that you have completed this module, you should understand the:
 - Key components of the pre-award process, to include:
 - Typical pre-award planning activities
 - Types of allowable applicant support FMCSA may provide
 - Contents of a typical grants.gov announcement and required forms
 - What are the key elements of a Performance Based Application?

Instructor notes:

- Now that you have completed this section, you should understand:
 - The pre-award process, to include:
 - General pre-award planning activities
 - The types of applicant support you can expect and not expect from FMCSA
 - The basic grants.gov announcements, their content and placement
 - The key elements of a Performance Based Application; and,
 - Which forms are standard and what are some important things to know about them
- Attached at this link is a Knowledge Check, feel free to take this “quiz” and then check your answers to determine how well you understood and synthesized this information. The answers can then be found at the link listed at the bottom of the slide.

Slide 51 Check Your Knowledge

- Module 2 Knowledge Check
- Module 2 Knowledge Check Answers