

Memorandum

TO: [Names omitted]
FROM: [Names omitted]: Students
DATE: March 1, 2015
SUBJECT: Grant Analysis

This memorandum analyzes the selected RFP as a whole, examines the specific guidelines set forth within it, evaluates the organizational logic and rhetorical devices used in the corresponding grant, and explores the degree to which the articulated objectives and outcomes of the grant concur with the mission and aims of the granting organization.

RFP Analysis and Grant Comparison

Core Information

The only core information that the RFP provides is the name of the sponsoring agency and the dollar amount available. Other typical core information, such as the RFP title and number, and the submission deadline, are not included in the document. However, the information that is provided is as follows:

The sponsoring agency is the Urban Betterment Foundation, and the dollar amount available is a maximum of \$5,000.

Target Population

The target populations that the Community Development Program, the grantor that issued the RFP, is looking to serve are communities in low-income neighborhoods within the City, and community-based organizations with the ability to connect residents to a variety of housing-related services and employment opportunities.

The Neighborhood Improvement Association, the organization that drafted the grant, is seeking to serve low-income working individuals and families within the city limits—a remarkably similar population to that of the grantor. More specifically, the grant hopes to affect the “impoverished community of more than 150,000 residents with a median household income of \$14,000 (CD 100), nearly all of whom are minority (Black (52%) and Hispanic (39%) [*sic*], many are immigrants who arrive poor, with a lack of basic language skills, and minimal social, educational and vocational skill necessary to gain employment and participate in society.”

Problem

The problem that the RFP addresses is the lack of economic opportunities, investment protection and expansion, and housing-related services in low-income neighborhoods within the City.

The grant addresses the same problem: the degradation of the economic and housing situation of low-income neighborhoods in the city. This is evidenced in their “Brief statement of the problem to be addressed” that describes their want to “attract working

individuals and families back to an economically revitalizing area, and to continue to stabilize and rebuild the economic base of this [city] community.”

Purpose

The purpose of the RFP is to build and sustain strong communities and create economic opportunities and housing related services for low-income neighborhoods within the City as well as to support local efforts that work to do just that.

Though the grant speaks to the stabilization and the reconstruction of the City economic base its primary purpose is only to provide housing, particularly, to create a subsidiary housing management company, not job opportunities that the RFP discusses.

Eligibility

The agencies applying for funding must meet a specific set of criteria outlined in the document. Those criteria are as follows:

- Not-for-profit establishment with evidence of 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status
- A minimum of six years of experience in City housing and community development
- Confirmation of successful completion of a minimum of five community housing projects in the City
- Strong board participation and competent leadership
- Established track record of relationships cultivated with other organizations and populations in the community, and City government.

There are no special considerations given to minorities, women, or specific ethnic groups. However, they do give priority to projects that:

- Foster collaboration among diverse community organizations, and City government.
- Mirror a comprehensive approach to community development.
- Advocate community resident involvement and commitment.
- Serve as models for a city-wide audience of community development specialists and/or the City.

Funding is not granted to individuals or government agencies, or for capital building projects, lobbying or religious purposes.

Funding Amounts

The RFP allows for funding requests up to \$5000 but does not specify the average size and number of awards given and does not require matching funds.

The grant, though obviously requesting funding through the grant application, does not request a specific funding amount.

Granting Period

The information that the RFP provides in this area is slim. For instance, there is not a specific start time listed for the project and it RFP did not mention anything regarding Phase I, II, or III funding, seed funding, or demonstration project funding.

It did, however, note that the RFP is for one-time, short-term (one year, maximum) projects. Application for repeat or extended funding is not prohibited.

Restrictions

The only restrictions that the RFP provides are that the project hoping to receive funding not exceed one year or request repeated funding.

These restrictions inhibit the likelihood of the grant being selected for funding because its project length is estimated at two years.

Proposal Sections and Guidelines

The RFP is very clear in stating the contents of the applications. It notes that the Common Application Form (CAF) may be used but only with the inclusion of the following:

- Cover letter, on company-specific stationery, signed by your director
- Executive Summary
- Narrative (no more than five pages) that includes a:
 - Project Description
 - Brief statement of problem to be addressed
 - Goals and objectives
 - Target population
 - Project activities
 - Key Staff (with attached resumes)
 - Plan for measuring project results
- Project Budget (expenses and income)
- Organization Background (mission, major activities, and credentials for carrying out project)
- Conclusion (brief statement of long-term project plan)
- Appendices (Attachments):
 - Certificate of Incorporation and By-Laws
 - Verification of tax-exempt status (IRS determination letter)
 - List of officers and Board of Directors
 - Staff Biographies and Key Staff Resumes
 - Organization Operating Budget
 - Latest Financial statement (audited, preferred)
 - List of other current funding sources and uses.
 - Current Annual Report (if available)
 - Consultant/subcontractor commitment letters (if applicable)
 - Support letters or endorsements (limited to maximum of two)

Though the RFP did not specifically request the submission of additional forms, it did include a list of documents, listed in the appendices section above, that are to be attached to the application. No specifications were made about font, type size, or layout.

The grant includes all of this information, including the appendices, meeting the requirements provided by the RFP.

Review Process

Our group assumes, through the RFP's use of the pronoun, "we," as in "We will contact you..." that it is the Urban Betterment Foundation themselves who will be reviewing the grant proposals. They note, in the RFP, that applications will be acknowledged within two weeks of their receipt and that any interest will result in discussion of the application within three months, but do not list any specifics regarding who will actually be reading the proposal, how it will be scored, or what their evaluation sheets look like.

Additional Information

No additional information was provided.

Keywords

The keywords from the RFP include:

- community
- development
- low-income
- economic opportunities
- neighborhood
- expand
- sustain
- protect
- housing services
- preserve
- develop
- enhance
- improvements

The grant used several of these words and their synonyms, including:

- neighborhood
- development
- expand
- low-income
- housing
- opportunity
- services
- stabilize
- economically revitalizing

Grant Format Analysis

Overall Organizational Logic

On the RPF, under “The Grant Review Process,” application procedures are outlined. The order in which they are listed is the same order by which the corresponding grant is organized. By adopting the very organizational logic laid out in the RFP, the writer of the grant demonstrates a shared thinking between the company funding the project and the company hoping to receive those funds. This suggested, “shared thinking,” allows for the assumption that, since these two companies already have one commonality, they might also have others, such as goals, ideas, and values. Thus, formatting the grant in this way is effective given its implication that the company of those who wrote the grant, is a company that reflects that of the grantor.

Narrative Organizational Logic

The organization of the narrative is very deliberate. There are two main sections of the narrative: “Project Description,” and “Plan for Measuring Project Results.” The first, “Project Description” is broken down into several subsections listed in the following order:

- Brief statement of problem to be addressed
- Goals and objectives
- Target population
- Project activities; and
- Key staff

These subsections are followed by the second main section entitled, “Plan for Measuring Project Results.”

Ordering the information this way, shows a progression, similar to that of an essay. First the problem is introduced in the brief statement of the problem. Then a thesis, or an overview of the proposed answer or solution to the problem is given under “Goals and objectives.” Next, a description of whom the goals and objectives will affect follows in “Target population,” and the details of how exactly the afore mentioned goals and objectives will be executed as a means of benefiting the target population, follow that. This entire section is concluded with the final subsection, “Key staff,” which explains who exactly will be carrying out the procedures listed in “Project activities,” and why they are good for the job.

The entire first section is dedicated to the potential of the project, the second section details the calculation of how the completed project measured up.

Ordering the narrative in this way is, like the overall organizational logic, effective because it is easy to follow, which aids in comprehension and understanding.

Appearance

The RFP had a very professional and comprehensible appearance. Part of this is because of the section headings. These headings are in bold typeface, so they stand out amongst the body text.

Also contributing to readability is the paragraph length. Paragraphs, when utilized, are short and to the point. Not only is this appealing to the eye, but it also aids in comprehension by introducing only small amounts of information to the brain at once.

RFP Guidelines

Through their grant program, the Urban Betterment Foundation is seeking to fund organizations that revitalize low-income neighborhoods through improving housing by providing services to these neighborhoods and creating employment opportunities. They are looking for projects that will invest in local neighborhoods and they will fund nonprofit organizations only—not individuals, government agencies, or capital building projects. The project must have a direct benefit on the local neighborhoods and accomplish significant improvements, potentially serving as a model for the community and for future projects.

As previously mentioned, the grantor requires the organization to meet specific requirements such as: possessing a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, at least six years of experience in the field of community development and housing, at least five previously completed successful community housing projects in the city, strong board involvement and leadership, and relationships in the community with other organizations and the city government. The project itself needs to promote affordable housing, strategize about job creation for the low-income residents, enhance community development in the city by producing innovative development tools, and contribute a significant improvement economically to low-income neighborhoods. They favor projects that go beyond these basic requirements to promote larger community advancement through collaboration with other organizations and the local government as well as engagement with community residents. Demonstrating a comprehensive approach to the issue and serving as a model for the city and other development practitioners will give the project priority.

Grant and Funding Agency Goal Correspondence

Criterion for funding projects (basics)		
<i>RFP</i>	<i>Grant</i>	
	Yes/No	Explanation
Preserve affordable housing in the City’s low-income neighborhoods.	Yes	They will do so through the creation of a housing management company that will revitalize low-income neighborhoods.
Identify and create strategies for low-income job creation.	No	The grant doesn’t explicitly state this in the goals description. Though it briefly touches on the employment situations of residents, it doesn’t address how to help them in this way.
Develop new sources of capital and innovative community development tools.	Yes	Innovative community development tools will be created through a management company which will “respond to changing internal and external market conditions.”

Enhance the capacity of the City’s community development organizations to function more effectively.	Yes	The management company will allow them to expand and improve the housing agenda efficiently and effectively, reaching more than 5,000 NIA residents and 150 scattered-site buildings.
Effect significant improvements to the housing and economic environments of the City’s low-income communities.	Yes	The grant describes ambitious goals for the “large resource of publicly-owned housing.” It will have significant influence because half of the housing in the area that NIA serves is publicly owned (18,500 units) and in need of management.

Criterion for funding projects (priority)		
<i>RFP</i>	<i>Grant</i>	
	Yes/No	Explanation
Foster collaboration among different community agencies, and City government.	Yes	They will be managing city property.
Reflect a comprehensive approach to community development.	Yes	A portion of the 2,500 inadequately maintained housing units in the community will be newly managed by the Neighborhood Improvement Association.
Promote community resident participation and engagement.	Yes	Relationships will be forged between residents and city managers.
Serve as models for a city-wide audience of community development practitioners and/or the city.	Yes	They can potentially serve as a model for community development as it is a large scale project that aims to attract individuals and families back to an economically revitalizing area and to stabilize economic base.

Persuasive Strategies

Ethos

In the goals and objectives section, the grant-writer admits that property management is difficult under any circumstances, especially in low-income neighborhoods but volunteers their organization as the one that will be able to tackle the issue because they care about the residents, stating, “our residents deserve excellence and access.”

They are honest about the situation, noting that their funds and community support are extremely limited, even taking a risk in admitting, “many would view this picture as futile.” This could be a reason for the grantor to turn down their application if other applicants represent more optimistic appeals, but the writers turn it around by

establishing credibility in their claim as they see it as an opportunity to help an area that really needs it, and they are the only ones capable of accomplishing the daunting task.

They establish their organization as a proactive and efficient group by using language like “fast-paced,” “quickly respond,” “forge partnerships” and other action verbs as well as the number of residents they will benefit in the project activities section. Illustrating their staff members as dedicated volunteers and active members in the community who are involved in other local service organizations accounts for credibility at an individual level. Their inclusion of tenants in their Board of Directors and the apparent impact they have already made in the community cite their dedication to serving residents first.

Pathos

The seeming “futility” of the situation also exemplifies pathos because they are stressing the poor conditions of these neighborhoods and demonstrating a severe need for intervention from a caring management company. It serves as an emotional appeal, demonstrating that if the grantor doesn’t help, no one will, due to the lack of present funding and community support.

The narrative of their organization’s background, beginning with a few community leaders and growing through successes is inspiring and evidence of their dedication. This and language like “Building by building. Lot by lot. Block by block” demonstrates their hard work and commitment, emphasizing the slow but continuous struggle to do good for the community.

Specific stories like the street where residents had to pay gang members in order to pass through and the peaceful apartment housing for the elderly that NIA created, reach the core of their passion and the need for their continued aid by showing the before and after of their intervention. They strive to be the best nonprofit housing developer in the country.

Logos

In the goals section, the writers use reasoning to explain the benefits of choosing to help their specific community rather than other local communities, setting it up as a place that has potential despite its current disparate state. It is a good location because it is attractive and a transportation hub, making it accessible and potentially appealing to new residents. This is advantageous to their economic needs and shows real future potential. The authors also use several statistics in the target population to express the need for funding. They argue that the community’s need for safe and affordable housing is “critical.”

The organization also explains how they are resourceful in the end of the background section, using the potential from the neighborhoods and residents they serve as assets to their goals of creating a more stable community. Finally, in the conclusion they point to just how dire the need for affordable housing is, referring to the fact that it is even beyond what census data reveals. They reiterate their impressive history and credentials to reemphasize why their organization will serve the grantor’s interests more than other organizations.