Office of Grants Management Application Training Series
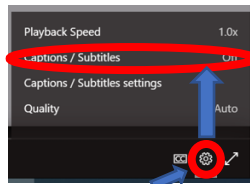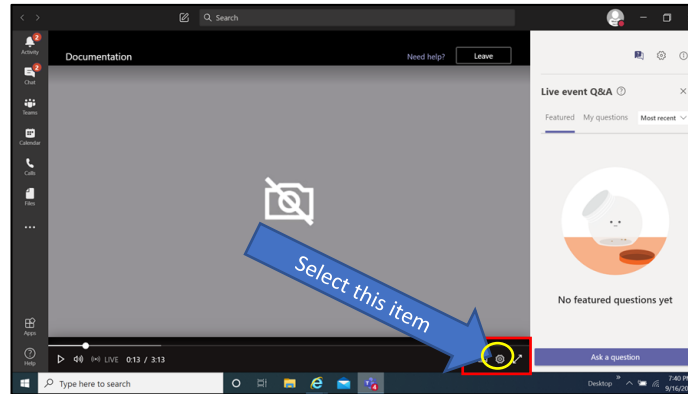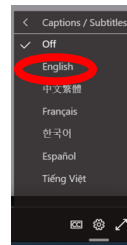
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You then select the language of choice

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It will then display the language chosen

Disclaimer

The translations provided in this application use what is referred to as mechanical translation technology. Although this method of translation is very effective and provides a high rate of accuracy it is NOT 100% word for word accurate. Things that may affect it are the quality of the microphone used and potentially a person speaking that may have an accent.

Application Training Series:
Project Strategy &
Project Work Plan/Timeline Tasks

July 12, 2023

Prepared by Montgomery County Office of Grants Management

Welcome!

- This meeting will be recorded and posted for future viewing on the Office of Grants Management online application portal
- The slide deck will also be posted in the same location for your reference
- Online Application Platform Home Page: https://mcmdgrants.smapply.org

Information Session Agenda

- Provide an overview of the grant application tasks: Project Strategy and Project Work Plan/Timeline
- Provide insight into Review Committee process and feedback/tips for applications
- Walk through the application platform
- Open up for participant questions (put your questions in the Q&A box)
- Any questions we cannot answer during the Information Session will be addressed and posted on the platform

Application Tasks

- **Applicant Information (Reusable) Task:** Organization contact info and supporting documents (data fields and uploads)
- **Applicant Background (Reusable) Task:** Organization size and leadership demographics (*data collected will never be seen by Review Committees or used for awarding*)
- **Project Strategy Task:** Project data & narrative
- **Project Budget Task:** Project cost details
- **Budget Narrative/Justification Task:** Brief explanation of Project Budget
- **Project Staffing Plan Task:** Outline of staff roles
- **Project Work Plan/Timeline:** Implementation schedule
- **Performance Plan and Performance History:** Outline of metrics and outcomes both to be achieved and already achieved
- **Optional Supporting Documents to be Uploaded Task:**

Project Strategy Task: Data Fields

The Project Strategy includes several data fields related to the proposal:

- Project Title – **If awarded, this will become the grant agreement name**
- Project Overview – Brief description of the project (100 words maximum)
- In applications with multiple target populations, applicants select one or more target populations that they wish to be considered for funding
- Montgomery County Funding Request – Amount requested for the grant period
- For Grant Programs allowing multi-year proposals, include the Montgomery County Funding Request for the additional years of project (assuming continued appropriations and satisfactory project performance)
- Total Project Cost – Total cost of project in Grant Program's fiscal year (from **ALL funding sources**)

Project Strategy Task: Narrative

The proposal's Strategy Narrative should answer questions outlined in the NOFO and within the grant portal task description. If a question does not apply to your proposal, please indicate that it is not applicable within the Strategy Narrative.

A Strategy Narrative will include:

- Information about the target population/community and needs
- Information about your organizations capability to implement the proposed project in a culturally, linguistically, and/or technically proficient way for the target population/community
- Information about collaborations with other organizations

Some grant programs will allow an organization to submit their strategy narrative in an alternative format such as a video or audio recording.

Common/FY24 Community Grants Strategy Narrative questions include:

- Please describe the specific population/community that your organization targets and explain your relationship to this population/community. Why is your organization uniquely suited to have a positive impact on this population/community?

- What is the issue or need within your target population/community that this proposal will address?

- How will the proposed project address this issue or need? Please explain in as much detail as necessary.

- What are your organization's current capabilities to implement the proposed project? Please note your capacity, including human and financial resources, to implement projects as well as past experience. Feel free to reference other Tasks in this application (i.e. Staffing Plan) for more detail instead of repeating it in this narrative.

- What is your organization's capability to implement this project in a culturally, linguistically, and/or technically proficient way for the target population/community?

- Overall, how will the requested funding have a positive outcome on your organization and target population/community?

- If a collaboration is being proposed, what work have your organization previously done together? What skills, experience, capabilities, and/or connections does each organization brings to the partnership? How will the roles and responsibilities under the project be separated by organization?

Review Committee Project Strategy Feedback: the Six Cs

1. **Concise -** Be concise, when possible. Review Committee Members (RCM) have difficulty absorbing information from long narratives.

2. **Concrete** – Be specific and direct in **_how_** your proposed project will achieve its stated goals. RCMs often see gaps in how a project will work.

3. **Clarity** – RCMs prefer that you include the question you are answering or add sub-headings for clarity. Application task uploads should also include the title of the application task, organization name and project title as headers.

4. **Connection -** All elements of your application should show a clear connection with the grant priorities and scoring criteria, as outlined in the NOFO.

5. **Consistent -** All elements of your application should be consistent with each other. RCMs often note a lack of consistency between budget and strategy.

6. **Cite -** Feel free to refence other application sections/Tasks (i.e. budget or staff plan) in your strategy narrative. Specifically cite the application Task name so the RCM can go directly there. Hyperlinks to external sources (i.e. news article, research paper, your website, etc…) can be helpful too. Overall, no need to repeat information that is in other places in your application or external source.

Project Work Plan/Timeline

- This section should outline the implementation schedule of the proposed program over the 12-month grant performance period.
- For Grant Programs allowing multi-year proposals, include Project Work Plan/Timeline information for the additional years of project (assuming continued appropriations and satisfactory project performance)
- The Project Work Plan/Timeline must match performance period of the Grant Program listed in the NOFO.

Project Work Plan/Timeline: Review Committee Feedback

- The Work Plan/Timeline should clearly define:
  - Each project goal/activity,
  - list responsible staff and;
  - include implementation and completion target dates for each project goal/activity.
- Timeline structure will significantly vary by project (i.e. a repeating after school activity vs. preparing for a one-time major community event)
- Applicants may use monthly, quarterly, or a set of specific dates for project milestones, but it should be clear which program goals/activities will be completed within each time period.
- All elements of your application should be consistent. If you reference other sections (i.e. budget or staff plan) in your Work Plan/Timeline, cite the applicant task name.
- Formatting tips: use tables, charts or bulleted lists with sub-headings for clarity.

Application Length Expectations
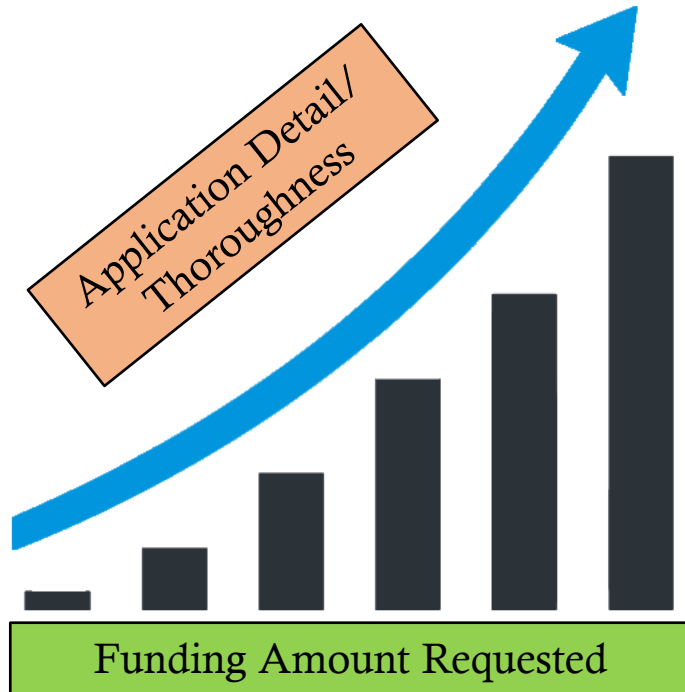
- Smaller requests may have more brief Task responses.
- Larger requests should have more details and support included.
- Even for large requests, Review Committees prefer applications be as concise as possible.

General Recommendations

- Be direct and clear in your proposal on *how* your program will achieve the grant program's goals and priorities.
- Ensure that all the pieces of your application present a consistent strategy/approach in your proposal.
- Consider this program's Priorities and Scoring Criteria/Weight when developing your proposal.
- Feel free to use graphics, charts, tables, maps, project workflows, and other non-narrative tools to clarify or enhance your proposal.
- Develop, coordinate, and finalize your application offline and then upload all materials into the application.
- Uploads in pdf format are preferred (except the Project Budget, MS Excel please) but other formats are also welcome. **The application platform has difficulty reading Mac formatted documents** (i.e. Pages, Numbers, and Key Note) so these should be submitted as PDFs or converted to MS Office formats.
- Start now on getting your legal house in order, if needed.

Additional Task Trainings

OGM will provide additional trainings specific to each Task focused on more detailed explanations of the Task, optional templates, and past Review Committee feedback on what they felt was useful.

Training Topic	Time, Date, and Link to Event/Recording
Applicant Information and Applicant Background Reusable Tasks	Wednesday, July 12, 2023 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM
Project Strategy and Project Work Plan/Timeline Tasks	Wednesday, July 12, 2023 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM
Project Budget, Project Budget Narrative/Justification, and Project Staffing Plan Tasks	Friday, July 14, 2023 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM
Performance Plan and Performance History Task	Friday, July 14, 2023 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM

Review Process

- OGM convenes a review panel made up of qualified neutral, qualified individuals in Montgomery County Government, and possibly the broader community, selected for their experiences in the grant program's subject area, grants administration, and/or project management.

- In applications with multiple target populations, each target population pool of resources may have a separate Review Committee evaluating all proposals falling under that category. The same project proposal may be reviewed by multiple Review Committees.

- The panel members will review and score applicant proposals based on the criteria and priorities established in the NOFO.

- Final decisions will be made based on the scores, reconciliation of funding across categories, and other factors such as applicants past performance on previous County awards.

Review Instructions

- The Review Committee receives a training about the grant program goals, priorities, target populations, and application components.
- Each member of the review committee will assess each application for:
    - Eligibility (required metrics, if applicable),
    - provide a score against set criteria outlined in the NOFO, and
    - make an ultimate recommendation if the application should be funded.
- The Review Committee receives guidance from OGM of the Review Policies (see next slide).

General Review Policies

- **Judge the impact of the proposed project, not the quality of the proposal.** Montgomery County is one of the most diverse communities in America. However, not all applicants may have the experience or training to develop highly refined proposals. However, their proposed projects may reflect the best solutions for problems within their specific communities.

- **Score proposals with a consistent method, including adjusting scores on previously reviewed applications if necessary to maintain this consistency.** As reviewers go through the applications and gain a sense of the broader quality of the overall pool, they may feel that their scoring of early applications is no longer accurate. If this is the case, reviewers are encouraged to go back to already completed applications to adjust scores (up or down) as necessary to maintain a consistent scoring method.

- **Review proposals independently, your scoring approach does not need to be consistent with peers.** Reviewers are bringing different expertise and experience to the table, as well as diverse life perspectives. This will likely result in different scores between reviewers. These differences are important and will be addressed during the final awarding discussions.

- **Provide concise, constructive comments.** Brief comments that justify your score are not only helpful for the final awarding discussions, but may also be used to help applicants understand why their proposal was, or was not, funded.

Further Questions?

Montgomery County Office of Grants Management

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OGM online grants application platform for information, updates, and to apply for County Grants (OGM website coming soon)
https://mcmdgrants.smapply.org