



Great Lakes (HHS Region 5)

PTTC

Prevention Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Grant Writing 101: An 8-Step Roadmap to Funding Success

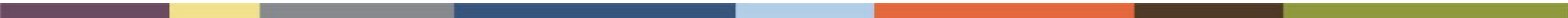
Kris Reed, MPH, CPS

August 6, 2025

Disclaimer

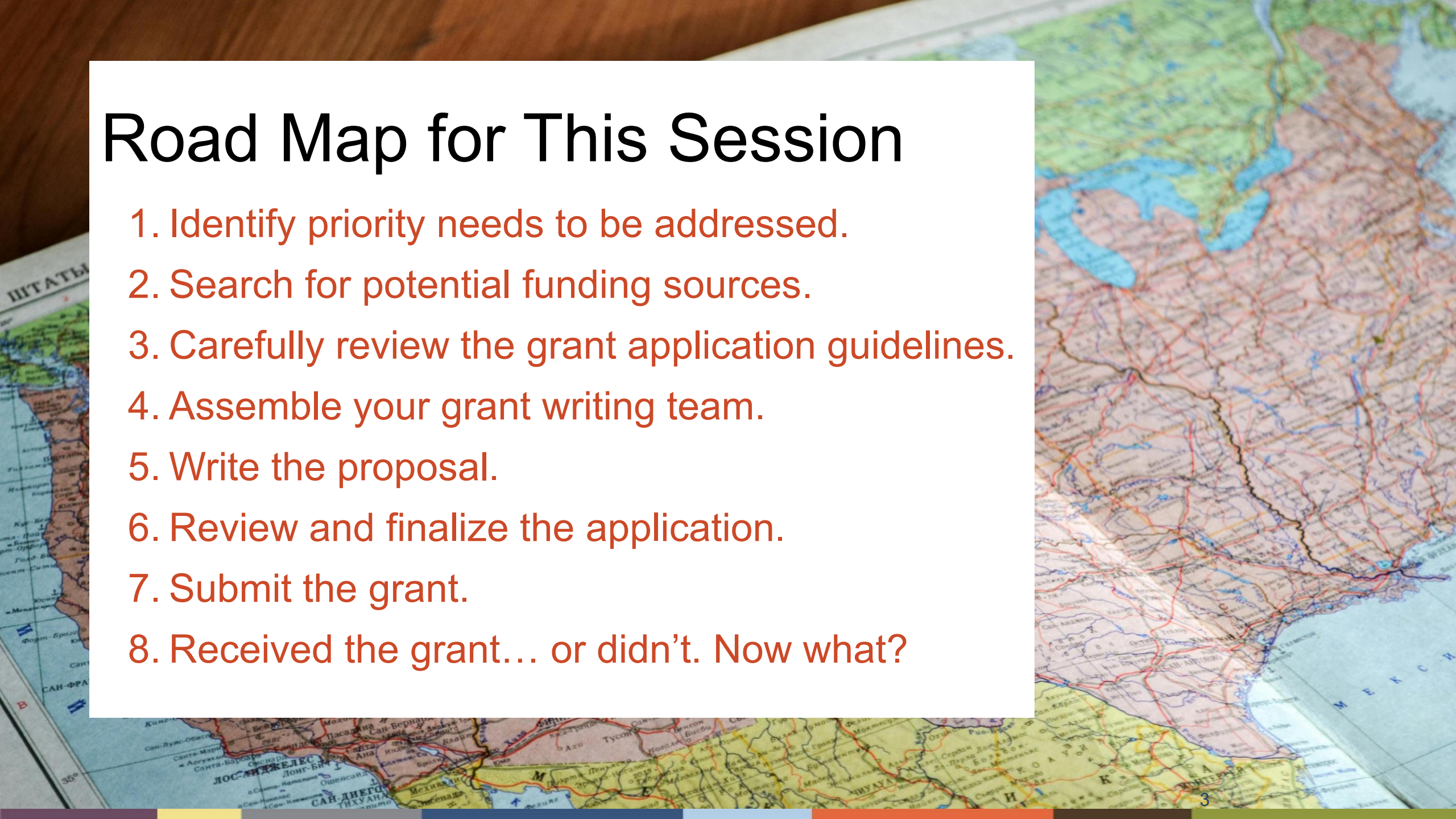
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Road Map for This Session

1. Identify priority needs to be addressed.
2. Search for potential funding sources.
3. Carefully review the grant application guidelines.
4. Assemble your grant writing team.
5. Write the proposal.
6. Review and finalize the application.
7. Submit the grant.
8. Received the grant... or didn't. Now what?

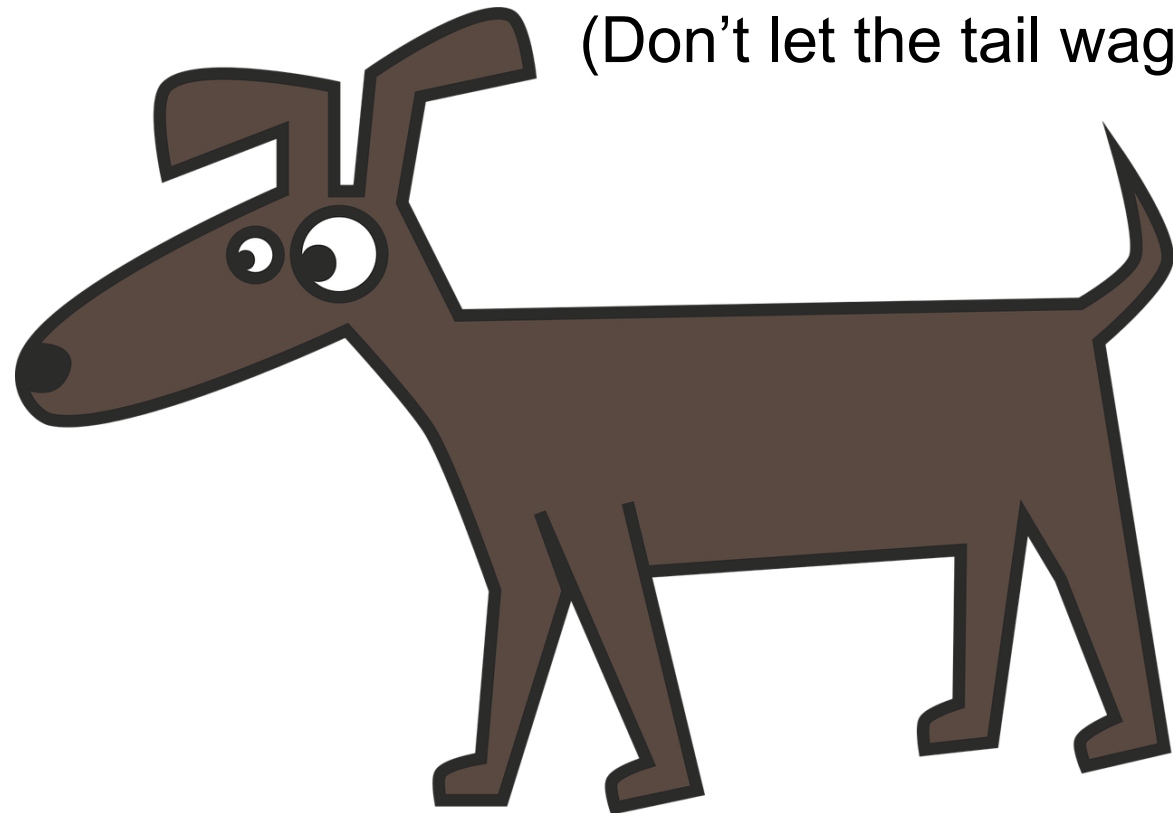




Be Forewarned

Pop quizzes are coming up!

1. Identify priority needs to be addressed.



Tap into your work on the
Assessment Step of the
Strategic Prevention
Framework (SPF)



What is one of your community's priority needs in preventing substance misuse?



2. Search for potential funding sources.



Examples of Types of Funding



Grants: No substantial involvement is anticipated between the sponsor and the recipient



Cooperative Agreements: Substantial involvement between sponsor and recipient



Contract: Acquire property or services for direct benefit or use of the funding source

Funding Websites: Examples

- <http://grants.gov>: Federal grant database
- <https://www.grantforward.com/index>: Database for researchers (not free)
- <http://candid.org>: (formerly Foundation Center and Guidestar) (not free)
- <https://www.rwjf.org/>: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/starting-points/funding>: Rural Health Information Hub
- *Others?*

3. Carefully review the application guidelines.



No Detail Is Too Small!

Pay attention to:

- Eligibility criteria
- Start and end dates
- Application evaluation criteria
- Expectations on collaboration
- Reporting expectations
- *Any other detail that might impact your project's successful fit with the funding*

Any Questions So Far?



Pop Quiz #1

True or False:

You can avoid “mission drift” by looking first at what funding opportunities are available before determining your community’s priority needs.



4. Assemble grant writing team.



Roles in Grant Writing Team

Lead proposal writer

- “Brain center”

Program expert

- Maps program plan
- Contributes key content

Administrative lead

- Often is an operations or finance manager
- Oversight, compliance, staffing, budgets

Evaluator

- If required in application

Strengths? Dread?

<https://padlet.com/klreed/strengths>

1. In the *Strengths* column, write the strengths you can contribute to a grant writing team.
2. In the *Dread* column, write the tasks you dread related to grant writing (those that drain your energy).

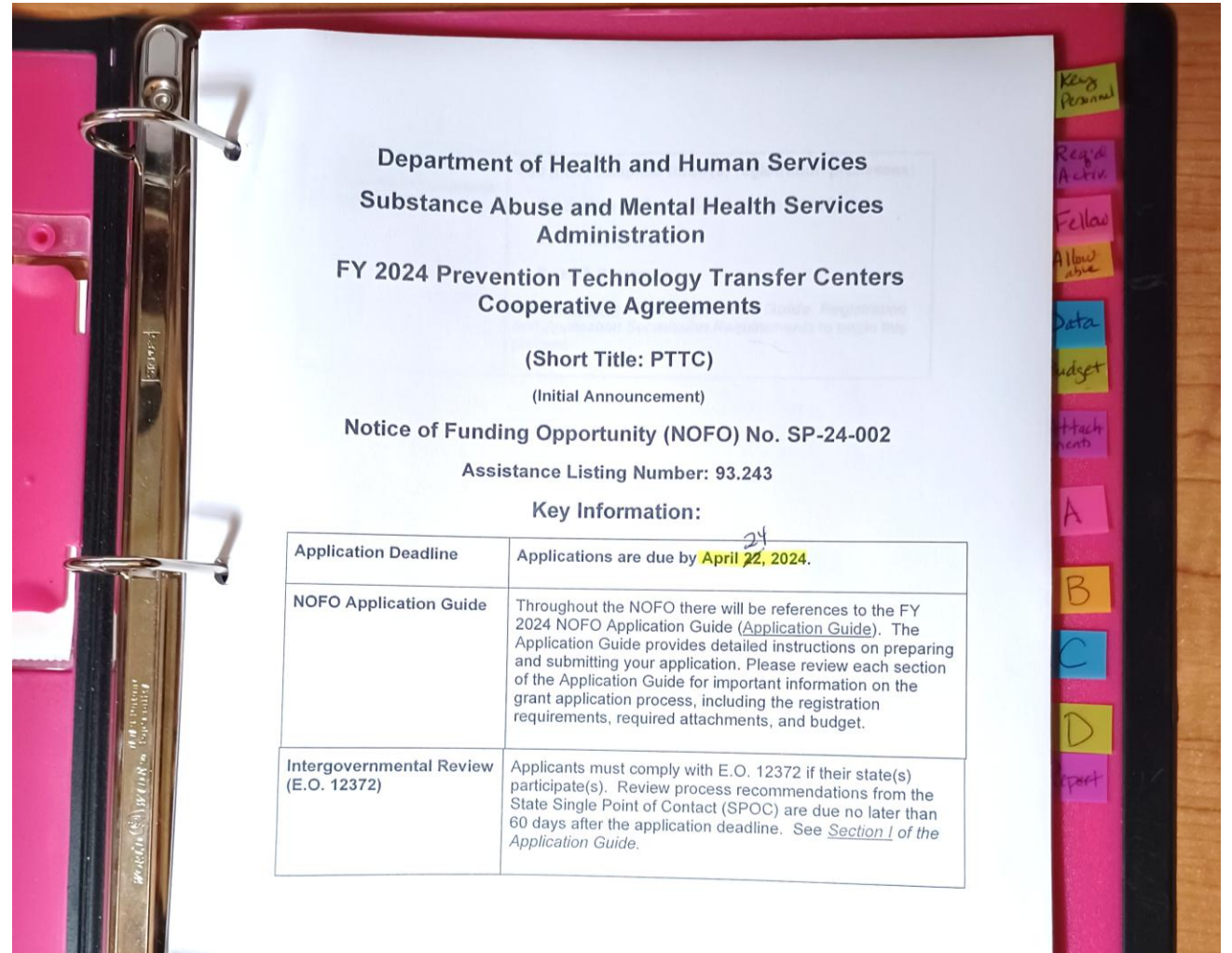


5. Write the proposal.



Before Beginning Writing

- Read ALL instructions at least three times!
- Recommend printing and using a highlighter, making notes, etc.



When Reading the Instructions Determine:

- Are there any conflicts of interest for you or your organization?
- Is an Internal Review Board (IRB) approval needed?
- Do you need letters of cooperation/support?
- What is the due date/time?
- How is it to be submitted? Mailed, electronic?
- What is the page limit for each section?
- Are there formatting requirements (margins, font size, etc.)?
- How are the sections numbered?

Create a Timeline with Lots of Buffer!

Work backwards from the due date:

Task	Deadline
Application due	April 24
Drop-dead date to person submitting application	April 19
Final review by team of the pdf document	April 17
Final draft completed	April 10
2nd draft	March 22
1st draft	March 8

Next, Create Task List

Example for
a SAMHSA
grant
application

Task	Lead	Deadline	Status	Notes
SF-424A Budget Form				
Budget Justification and Narrative				
Project Narrative - Section A - Statement of Need				
Project Narrative - Section B - Proposed Implementation Approach				
Project Narrative - Section C - Staff and Organizational Experience				
Project Narrative - Section D - Data Collection/Measurement				
Att 1 - Letters of Commitment				
Att 2 - Data Collection Instruments				
Att 3 - Sample Consent Forms				
Att 4 - Project Timeline				
Att 5 - Bio Sketches and Pos. Desc.				
Att 6 - Letter to State Point of Contact				
Att 7 - Confidentiality				
Att 8 - Doc. of non-profit status				
Final check of the whole document				

Meet with Grant Writing Team

- Create a shared vision of the project
- Agree on vocabulary
- Agree on timeline for each stage of writing
- Match staff strengths with grant writing tasks
- Identify who will have the power of the “final reviewer”
- Schedule weekly meetings to review task list and progress



Copy and Paste Proposal Questions That Will Be Scored into a Word Document

SECTION A: Population of Focus and Statement of Need (25 points – approximately 2 pages)

A.1. Identify and describe the geographic area where the project will be implemented and the population(s) of focus [training and/or technical assistance (TA) recipients] that will be impacted by this project, including underserved and historically under-resourced populations to the extent possible.

A.2. Provide a demographic profile of the population(s) of focus in terms of race, ethnicity, federally recognized tribe (if applicable), language, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, and socioeconomic status.

A.3. Describe the service gaps, barriers, and other problems related to the need for training and/or TA with the population(s) of focus in the proposed geographic area. Identify the source of the data (for example, the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), County Health Rankings, Social Vulnerability Index, etc.).

underserved and historically under-resourced populations to the extent possible.

A Story for You...



Writing Style

- Don't write in first person
- Write in the correct language of the field, but avoid jargon
- Write with the utmost clarity
- Write to persuade (e.g., use current data from a credible source, don't include unsubstantiated opinions)
- Avoid acronyms (if used, spell out in each section)



“Assume your audience is uninformed, but infinitely intelligent.”

– Kasturi Haldar, Reviewer for National Institutes of Health

Pop Quiz #2

The first task to complete when moving into the writing phase is:

- a. Create a timeline
- b. Convene a meeting of the grant writing team
- c. Read the full grant application instructions at least three times
- d. None of the above



5-minute Break



Typical Elements of Grant Applications

- Title
- Abstract
- Needs statement
- Goals and objectives
- Project narrative
- Evaluation
- Budget
- Budget narrative

Tips for Creating a Title

- Be original and relevant
- Capture accurately what the project is about
- Reflect themes that are priorities to the funding agency
- Use results-driven words
- Be clever but not cutesy
- Follow rules on length
- Use active, forward-thinking verbs (e.g., mobilize, empower)
- Create title once application is almost complete

Abstract

- A clear, concise summary that describes your request.
- The “hook” for the grant reviewer.
- Should be able to stand alone.
 - Do not refer to the proposal in the abstract.
- Write it well! It may be all the reviewers read.
- Write it when you have nearly completed the application.

Questions Your Abstract Should Answer

The abstract should succinctly answer the following:

- What do you intend to do?
- Why is the work important?
- What has already been done?
- How are you going to do the work?



Need/Problem Statement: The “Why”

- Show the funding source you understand the specific needs and explain how the project will address them
- Tell compelling stories to prove the need using facts and data
 - Cite evidence
 - Use graphs and charts



An Effective Need Statement...

- Defines the problem to be addressed
- Describes the focus populations to be served
- Includes quantitative and qualitative documentation and supporting information
- Does not make any unsupported assumptions
- Describes the situation in terms that are both factual and of human interest
- Does not assume the reviewer(s) are familiar with your project/field

Organizing and Writing the Need Statement

- Establish a foundational statement – what the need is and how you plan to address it
- Build your case with data
- Be succinct and persuasive
- Anticipate questions
- Use active voice; avoid first person references
- Write as though funding has already been approved. Avoid the use of “When funding is received,” and “Upon approval”
- Draw a logical conclusion that leads into the goals and objectives: What will be the result of your project?
- Follow the guidelines exactly

Note About Citations

Be sure to cite any resources from which you get data, statistics, or documentation of effectiveness!

Citation, noun. (Ci · ta · tion)

1. "The action or an act of quoting or referring to a passage, text, author, legal precedent, etc., esp. as an authority or in support of an argument; quotation."
2. "A cited passage, a quotation."
3. "A reference providing information about where a particular quotation, text, etc., is to be found; a bibliographical reference."

Oxford English Dictionary Online

Goals and Objectives: The “What”

- Limit the number of goals and objectives. More does not equal better!
- Write SMART objectives: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Results-oriented, and Time-bound
- Be certain goals and objectives are consistent with your need statement

WHAT

Project Narrative/ Methodology: The “How”

- Most lengthy and detailed section (usually most heavily weighted)
- Include all the essentials: who, how long, where, and how
- Structure the section in the same order and headers as the application instructions
- Keep the reviewers in mind!



Pop Quiz #3

True or False:

An effective need statement does not need qualitative and/or quantitative data to support it.



Evaluation: How Determine If the Project Is Successful?

Be sure that evaluation plan is consistent with the need statement, goals, objectives, and project design



A Good Evaluation Plan

- Includes both process and outcome evaluations
- Includes who will perform the evaluation
- Defines the criteria by which the program will be evaluated
- Describes data gathering methods
- Describes data analysis procedures
- Details how evaluation findings will be used for program improvement



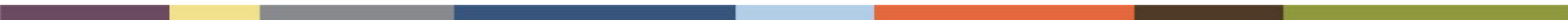
Budget

- Costs must be ***reasonable*** and ***necessary***
- Pay attention to limits and allowable expenses
- Don't guess at costs
- Check for matching funds requirements and if in-kind matches are allowed
- Check on allowable indirect rate
- Ensure it is complete and accurate
- Double and triple check calculations!



Budget Development Tips

- Never include a miscellaneous category
- Ensure that anything you ask for in the budget is mentioned in your proposal
- Dream big with the initial budget, then revise as needed
- If over budget, determine what expenses are not essential or could be acquired through other partners/funders
- Use budget format recommended/required by the funder
- Use Excel to help ensure calculations are correct



Budget Narrative

- Briefly but fully explain each item in your budget
- If it's included in the budget, it should be here!
- Include computations
 - 3 middle school prevention curricula x \$300/each = \$900
- Double and triple check your math!
- Follow format provided by funding agency, if available

Any Questions?



6. Review and Finalize Application



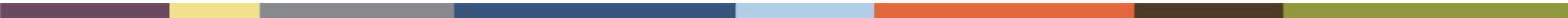
Review and Finalize Tips

- Read aloud to yourself the application and edit as needed
- Ensure ALL sections tie together and don't contradict
- Print out the entire document. How does it look? White space? Formatting? Easy to see where sections start/end? Margins? Fonts?
- Have a fresh pair of eyes read and “score” your proposal

“The more energy and time a reviewer has to devote to figuring out your application, the less energy a reviewer has to actually **review** your application!”

– Elliot Postow, Director of NIH’s Division of Clinical and Population-based Studies

Review Checklist

- ✓ Spell check and grammar review completed
 - ✓ Compared sections to funder's criteria
 - ✓ Checked to ensure each section flows and is logical
 - ✓ Rechecked all your math
 - ✓ Reviewed format (font size, margins, page count, etc.)
 - ✓ Ensured that word count or character count meets their requirements
 - ✓ Attached all requested documents
- 

7. Submit Application



Submission Tips

- Do **NOT** wait until the last minute to submit your application
- Plan to submit application at least 3 days before the specific deadline date and time
- Make certain that all required forms and signatures are included in your application

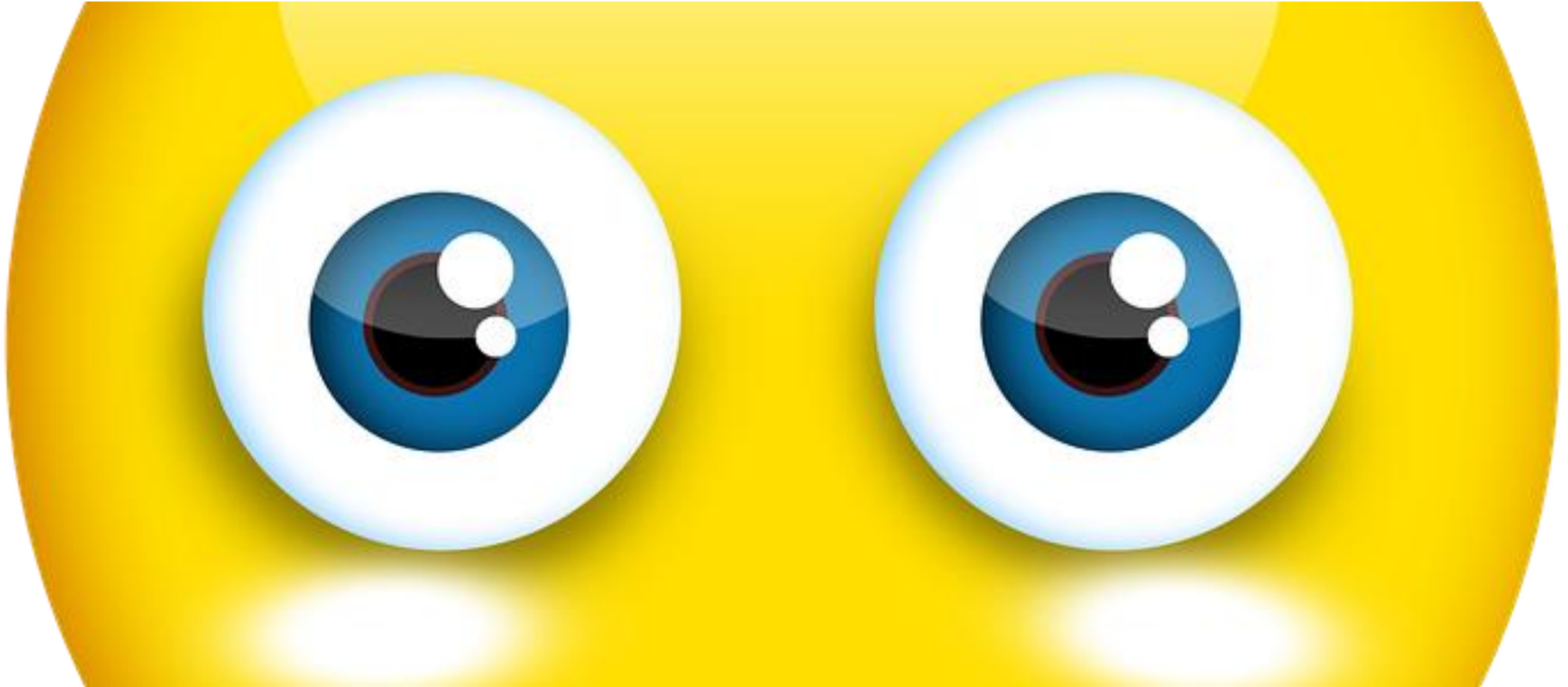


Waiting...

- Check application guidelines for timeline for review and notification
- Do NOT contact funding agency about the status of your application unless it is after the date given in the application guidelines



8. Received the Grant? Or not?



Received the Grant. Now What?

- Celebrate!
- Review Project Design/Methodology section, create action plans and timelines to ensure you do what you proposed (“punch-out” list)
- Check date on which you can start incurring costs that are allowable for the grant
- Begin hiring processes as soon as possible, as needed
- Create system(s) to gather data and document process for the evaluation and the reports for the funder

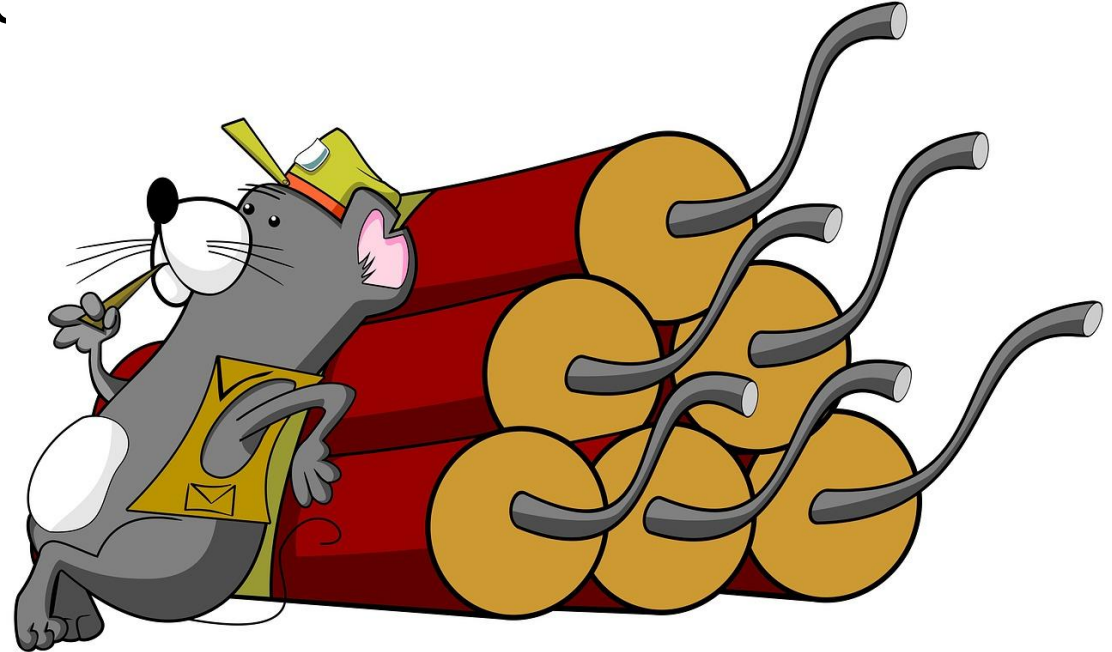
Example of a “Punch-out” List

D12 ▾ *fx*

	A	B ▾	C	D	E
1	What	When	Who	Steps to Take To Complete Task	Status
2	Convene advisory board	October		Set date and time of meeting	Done
3				Send email to advisory board with date and time of the meeting	Done
4				During advisory board meeting, ask the needs assessment questions.	
5	Conduct needs assessment	Sept. 30		Link to assessment: https://....	Done
6				Send email to listserve and providers list: We Want To Hear from You! Do you want to help shape our upcoming training and technical assistance offerings? If so, our training needs survey today! We will be collecting responses through Friday, October 11.	In progress
7					
8	Conduct virtual listening sessions to assess needs	October		Brainstorm those to invite to listening sessions	
9				Schedule listening sessions (two 1-hour)	

Received Grant. Cautions!

- Don't supplant funds!
- Do what you said you were going to do
- Monitor, report, and spend as planned
- Have systems in place to collect data



Application Rejected. Now What?

- Request feedback from the reviewers
- Take to heart any feedback you receive, even if you don't agree with it
- Look for new application opportunities to re-submit the project, incorporating the feedback of the reviewers



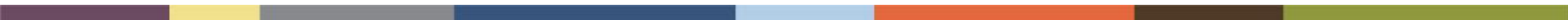
Pop Quiz #4

True or False:

It's okay to wait until the last day to submit a grant application if it will be submitted electronically.



A Few Last Thoughts



To Recap: Grant Writing Steps

1. Identify priority needs to be addressed.
2. Search for potential funding sources.
3. Carefully review the grant application guidelines.
4. Assemble your grant writing team.
5. Write the proposal.
6. Review and finalize the application.
7. Submit the grant.
8. Received the grant... or didn't. Now what?

Features of a Strong Proposal

- Well-organized proposal sections
- Well-researched and documented statement of the problem
- Evidence-based/-informed strategies for addressing the need
- Feasible goals
- Measurable objectives
- Reasonable budget
- Sound evaluation plan



Common Mistakes

- Failing to allow enough time to submit via mail or electronically
- Failing to obtain IRB approval, if needed
- Not reading the application package in its entirety
- Not following formatting guidelines
- Failing to proofread
- Failing to review .pdf of the application to ensure it converted correctly

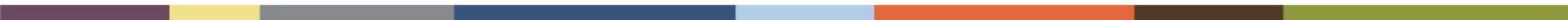


Remember...

- Follow the guidelines!
- Follow the guidelines!
- **FOLLOW THE GUIDELINES!**



Any Last Questions?



Upcoming Great Lakes PTTC Trainings

<https://tinyurl.com/GLPTTCevents>

- **Advanced Prevention Training: Promoting the Value of Prevention**
August 21 from 10:30-12:30 CT
- **Self Care Series** - August 22 from 10-10:30 CT
- **Social Media's Impact on Youth Substance Use and Mental Health**
August 27 from 11:30-1:00 CT
- **Preparing for the IC&RC Prevention Certification Exam**
September 4 from 10-11:30 CT
- **Change Leader Academy for Prevention Practitioners**
September 9, 16, 23, and 30 from 1-3 CT
- **Advanced Prevention: Integrating Youth Cannabis Use Prevention into Existing Prevention Efforts** - September 17 from 10:30-12:30 CT

Levels of Experience & Domain

HOME > TRAINING AND EVENTS CALENDAR

Implementation 101: Navigating Step 4 of the Strategic Prevention Framework

This 3-hour interactive training will delve into the implementation step of the Strategic Prevention Framework. We will focus on balancing fidelity with adaptation, establishing implementation supports, and monitoring prevention efforts to set your substance misuse prevention efforts up for success.

B AUDIENCE EXPERIENCE LEVEL [Click for info](#)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- List the three tasks necessary for successful substance misuse prevention implementation
- Describe how to mobilize support and build capacity for prevention implementation
- Name the three categories of Implementation Drivers
- Describe how Implementation Drivers impact capacity and support for prevention
- Explain the importance of balancing fidelity with adaptation

IC&RC PREVENTION DOMAIN(S): 1 and 2



Starts: May. 29, 2025 10:00

Ends: May. 29, 2025 1:00 pm

Timezone: US/Central

REGISTRATION DEADLINE

May 29, 2025

[Register](#)

EVENT TYPE

Webinar/Virtual Training



Event Level Descriptions

E

Everyone: Appropriate for all levels of experience in the prevention field.

B

Beginner: Designed for those who are new to the substance misuse prevention field (0 to 2 years of experience approximately). These trainings typically cover foundational concepts and basic knowledge for substance misuse prevention.

I

Intermediate: Designed for those who already have some foundational knowledge and understanding of the substance misuse prevention field (approx. 3-5 years of experience). These trainings build on foundational concepts and knowledge, moving into more specific and complex aspects of the topics.

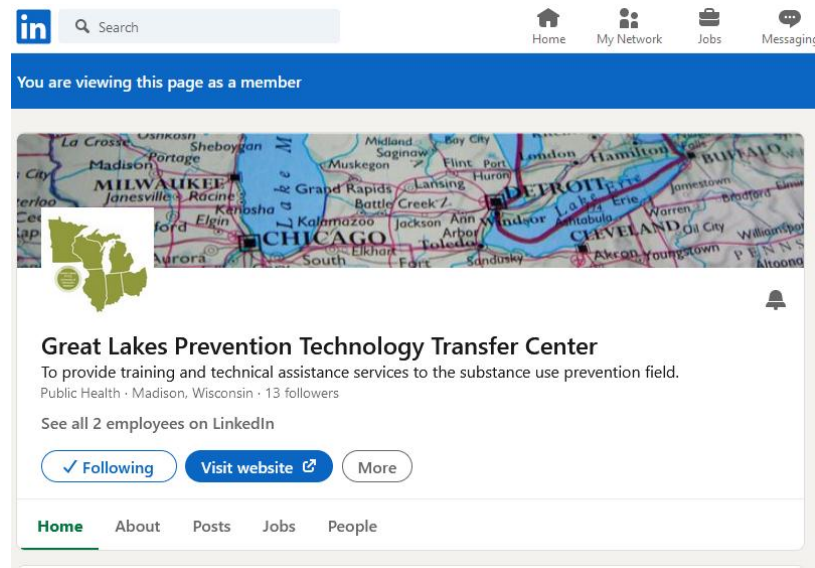
A

Advanced: Designed for those who have a substantial amount of knowledge and experience in substance misuse prevention (6+ years of experience). Facilitators of these trainings assume that participants have a strong grasp of the substance misuse prevention field's foundational concepts, such as the Strategic Prevention Framework, risk/protective factors, universal/selective/indicated prevention interventions, the 6 CSAP strategies, etc.

Like and Follow Us for the Latest Info!

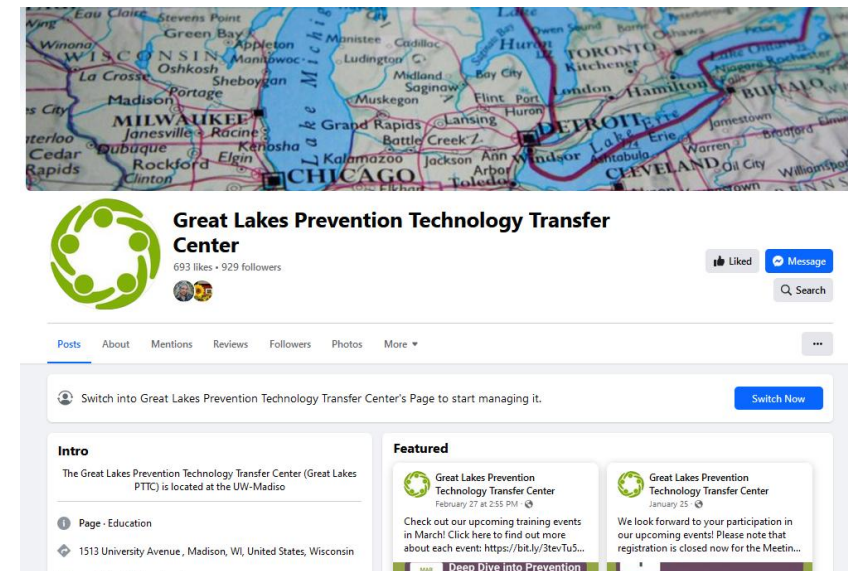
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Please Complete the Evaluation Form

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**WE WANT
YOUR FEEDBACK**