EPA Grant Writing Tips: Tools to Defeat Your ARC Nemesis

October 15, 2019
Agenda

- Welcome, CCLR's role, tips - Ignacio Dayrit | CCLR
- About FY2020 EPA ARC - Schenine Mitchell | EPA
- Local perspective - Katelyn Wright | SLB
- Consultant perspective & more tips – Chris Gdak & Mike Storonsky | Stantec
- Q&A - All
About CCLR

National platform for excellence in brownfields redevelopment

- Technical Assistance to Brownfields (TAB)
- Workshops & Webinars
- Grant Review
- Consulting
- Online at www.cclr.org

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Ignacio Dayrit
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About you

- Polling slides
Schenine Mitchell functions as an Environmental Scientist, working in the Land, Chemicals, and Revitalization Division as a Brownfields Project Officer for several Brownfields Assessment, Area Wide Planning, and Environmental Workforce and Job Development Training Grants. Schenine serves as the Coordinator of the EPA Region 2 Brownfields Program.
The EPA Region 2 Brownfields Team conducted debriefs for all 27 regional proposals submitted for the FY19 EPA Brownfields Multipurpose, Assessment, and Cleanup Grant Competition.

The reviewer comments were analyzed revealing common weaknesses among Region 2 proposals.

We are highlighting reviewer comments from 3 Categories:

- Project Area Description and Plans for Revitalization
- Community Need and Community Engagement
- Task Descriptions, Cost Estimates and Measuring Progress
PROPOSAL WEAKNESSES

• Impacts to the community
• Important data
• Site identification
• Compelling statistics
• Citations and references
WEAKNESSES, CONT’D

- Housing, poverty, and unemployment challenges
- Strategies and benefits
- Cleanup plans
- Existing infrastructure
- Key demographics
WEAKNESSES CONT’D

• Health and welfare issues related to sensitive populations
• Studies and references
WEAKNESSES, CONT.

- Community organization roles
- Community engagement – involvement
  - feedback
WEAKNESSES, CONT.

- Assessment project detail
- Tasks for the contractor
- Realistic timing of activities
- Budget costs
- Budget details and distinctions
WEAKNESSES CONT’D

- Schedules, timelines, and task descriptions
- Outputs and project success
- Project progress, tracking and measuring
- Corrective actions
What's Next????

Attend one of EPA's Grant Writing Workshops

New Jersey Locations:

County of Passaic
930 Riverview Drive, Suite 250
Totowa, NJ 07512
October 22, 2019
1:00pm-4:00pm

Gloucester Township
Township Municipal Building
Council Room
1261 Chews Landing Rd
Clementon, NJ 08021
October 23, 2019
10:00am-1:00pm

New York Locations:

City of Rochester
Central Library
Kate Gleason Auditorium
115 South Ave.
Rochester, NY 14604
October 23, 2019
10:00am-1:00pm

City of Albany
DEC Office
625 Broadway Room 129
Albany, NY 12233
October 30, 2019
9:00am-12:00pm

New York City
EPA Regional Office
290 Broadway, 27th Floor
New York, NY 10007
Conference Room 27D
November 12, 2019
9:00am-12:30pm
EPA is now issuing Request for Applications (RFAs). The following forms and documents are required under the announcements.

1. Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)
2. Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424 A)
3. Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424 B)
4. Preaward Compliance Review Report (EPA Form 4700-4)
5. Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (SF-LLL)
6. EPA Key Contacts (Form 5700-54)
7. Narrative Information Sheet, the Narrative, and required attachments.
Ignacio Dayrit

Ignacio has been the Director of Programs at CCLR where he has helped dozens of communities obtain more than $50M in grants.
### Trends

- **Budget**
- **Brownfields grants**

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~ Estimate - excludes job training and Assessment Coalition Partners
* RLF not offered
^ Multipurpose introduced. Not offered FY2020
"Award" and Apply" refer to number of communities, not grants
+ Area wide Planning grants were awarded on a different cycle before FY2019. The average annual allocation was approximately $4M
Why is CCLR giving this presentation?

- TAB provider
- Free review
- FY2019 results
- CCLR results
  - FY2019
  - Past years
- R2 results
- Lessons
Lessons

- Project scope and description
- Team, partnerships & coalitions
- Leveraging
- Writing & editing
Start NOW!!!!!

- **Webinars:**
  - EPA – Thursday, Oct 24, 2019 at 2pm EST
  - TAB – Wednesday, Oct 30, 2019 at 2pm EST

- **Threshold**
  - Eligibility – applicant/coalition partner and site
  - SAM and DUNS
  - Forms, forms, forms
  - Letters and Council / Board approval

- **Narrative**
  - Project Area Description & Plans for Revitalization
  - Community Need and Engagement
  - Task Descriptions, Cost Estimates & Measuring Progress
  - Programmatic Capability and Past Performance
Project Scope & Description

- Think forward
- Cost
- Resources
- Team
- Logic
New this year – thinking between the lines…

- Local determination of impacted communities – poverty, flood plains
- Consistency of planning efforts and location of sites in flood plains
- Alignment of reuse and economic development – e.g. Opportunity Zone
- Communicating with partners and stakeholders
- More detail on implementation, costs, schedule, task lead and outputs
- More thought and preparation needed on budgets, and allocation of cost share
- Tables, formatting, responding to criteria
Team, partnerships & coalitions

- Who’s doing & what?
- Coalition
- Budgets
- Grant writer
- Consultant??
Leveraging

- Consistent with project description
- Grants, loans, incentives, financial mechanisms - Opportunity zones
- Other Federal programs
- Other state programs
- Local
- Partners
- In-kind
Writing, editing, format

- CCLR review & consults
- Editor or consultant
- Others in your team
- Cut and paste hack job
- Formatting
- White space
- Tables
- Editing
- Tense
About you

- More polling slides
Katelyn Wright

Katelyn Wright is the founding Executive Director of the Syracuse Land Bank, a county-wide land bank created to assemble blighted, vacant, and abandoned property under single-ownership, engage in preventive maintenance, and market properties for return to productive uses consistent with the community’s Comprehensive Plan. Prior to joining the Land Bank, Katelyn was a land use planner with the City of Syracuse’s Bureau of Planning and Sustainability.
Chris Gdak & Mike Storonsky

Chris is a Senior Principal with Stantec’s Environmental Services Group and manages the firm’s national brownfields programs.

Mike is the Managing Principal for Stantec’s New York State Environmental Services Business Center where he specializes in managing Brownfield projects for both municipal and private sector clients.
Stantec’s Experience (Preparing Successful Grant Applications)

- City of Rochester: 2018 Brownfield Cleanup Grant - $200,000
- Greater Syracuse Land Bank: 2019 Brownfield Assessment Coalition Grant - $600,000 (largest in Region 2 since 2013!)
- $7.7M of Successful Grant Applications in FY2019!
How Syracuse and Stantec formed a winning team

- Greater Syracuse Land Bank and Onondaga County Industrial Development Agency each applied unsuccessfully in 2017
- Land Bank procured Stantec for assistance with resubmittal
- Stantec recommended forming Coalition

**Lead applicant responsibilities:**
- Procure consultant
- Coordinate activities with Coalition members & community stakeholders
- Provide background content
- Arrange community outreach event
- Submit application to EPA
How Syracuse and Stantec formed a winning team (cont.)

- **Consultant responsibilities:**
  - Extensive research & content writing
  - Prepare inventory of brownfield sites
  - Guide grantee through application preparation & submittal process

- **Coalition member responsibilities:**
  - Provide information about priority sites & focus areas
  - Provide letter of commitment
  - Execute Memorandum of Agreement
Region 2 Statistics & Comparison to Other Regions

- **Region 2:**
  - 5/24 (21%) applications were funded
    - $1.6M Multi-Purpose
    - $1.2M Assessment
    - $0 Cleanup

- **New York:**
  - 2/13 - $30 (15%) applications were funded
    - Gloversville - $300K Community-Wide Assessment
    - Syracuse - $600K Assessment Coalition
  - Cutoff was ~96/100 points
    - ~50% of applications were above average (>90 points)
    - ~25% of applications were below average (<85 points)

- **Other Regions:**
  - National Average = ~33%
  - Region 1 (New England): 31/70 (44%) of applications funded
  - Region 3 (Mid-Atlantic): 24/33 (73%) of applications funded

**KEY TAKEAWAYS:**
- Region 2 has comparatively less competition.
- Region 2 has comparatively lower success rates.
- Other regions have more established programs.
- Other regions are likely sharing best practices, building on the successes of other applications.
Traits of Top Scoring Proposals

- Full use of all pages (10 assessment & cleanup / 12 RLF)
- Strict adherence to space/point ratio for each section (10%/1 Page)
- Thorough yet efficient budget descriptions/tables
- No glaring omissions
- Differentiators:
  - Compelling story elements (distress factors, specific sites/redevelopment plans)
  - Flow throughout application
  - Programmatic capability was NOT a differentiator
Traits of Lower Scoring Proposals

- Don’t make use of full 10-pages
- Space/point ratios out of whack on one or more subsections
- Missing one or more significant criteria
- Didn’t review new guidelines/format closely enough
  - Legacy criteria addressed
  - New criteria missed
- Programmatic Capability was NOT a differentiator
Tips!

1. Review guidelines/scoring criteria in detail and attend webinars!
   - Create a template that includes response/scoring criteria for each subsection.
   - Don’t delete until the end.
2. Review winning grant applications and learn best practices for each section.
   - Don’t reinvent the wheel.
   - Learn resources and format tricks from other successful applicants!
3. Don’t significantly deviate from point/space ratio for any section/subsection.
   - If you lose a half page from one section, almost impossible to make it up elsewhere.
4. Get started early and incorporate CCLR in the process!
   - Ask for assistance if you get stuck on a section.
   - Schedule an early review and address feedback.
5. Craft a Compelling Story!
   - What makes you unique? (Need pieces of gold in categories of community need, support, opportunity, capability).
   - Create flow/consistency between section.
   - Consider working with a consultant, grant writer or technical editor.
Thank you & Good Luck!

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