

Following Agency Submission Requirements Is Critical To Your Success

This article originally appeared in the Sept. 21, 2009, issue of Thompson Publishing Group's Local/State Funding Report. For more information, go to: www.thompson.com.

Ask most federal program managers which single mistake grantseekers make that sabotages their chances of winning federal funds and they will tell you: Many of those grantseekers do not follow simple directions.

If you have gone to the trouble of locating a federal grant program that is an appropriate funding source for your project and have taken the time and effort to develop an application package, don't kill your chances for funding by not following the application instructions.

Fortunately, most federal agencies make it easy for grantseekers to submit acceptable application packages. For example, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration provides all prospective grantees with a list of standard requirements that every single applicant must satisfy in order to even be considered for funding. This two-page guidance memo, known as the "Checklist for Formatting Requirements and Screenout Criteria for SAMHSA's Grant Applications," clearly spells out how you must format your proposal in order to be considered for funding. It warns, in the very first paragraph, *"If you do not adhere to these requirements, your application will be screened out and returned to you without review."*

SAMHSA's requirements are straightforward and easy to meet if you take the time to familiarize yourself with them. Basic rules include:

- All pages must be white paper and 8.5 inches by 11 inches in size.
- All margins must be at least one inch.

- Pages should be typed, single-spaced in black ink, single-sided and have only one column per page. All type should be printed in Times New Roman, 12-point font.
- Page limits for the narrative and any appendices will be explained in the notice of funding availability and must be strictly followed.
- When sending the application packet, do not use staples, paper clips or fasteners. Nothing, advises SAMHSA, should be attached, stapled, folded or pasted.
- Do not use heavy or lightweight paper, or any material that cannot be copied using automatic copying machines.
- Always send the original application and two copies to the mailing address specified in the notice of funding availability.

These are just a few of SAMHSA's requirements for grant application packages. Clearly, they are very specific, and present countless pitfalls for any applicant that develops a proposal without first studying the ground rules. But by adopting the agency's requirements at the outset of the proposal writing process, you can be confident that your carefully prepared application won't suffer a rejection due to a technicality.

So the bottom line for those seeking federal grant funds is: If you follow the directions from the beginning, you can concentrate on writing the best possible proposal that will get a full review from the grantor agency.