

Some suggestions for community organizations.... especially potential or new DHS providers

Use DHS resources:

[The Directory of Contracted Services](#)

Lists the currently funded DHS services by the DHS contracting office or divisional contracting unit; and is updated annually. Useful for identifying contacts and requesting to be placed on contact lists, assessing the types and costs of services funded in each contracting office, and for requesting copies of contracts (through the OPRA custodian) to gain a perspective on models.

[The Service Dictionary 2006](#)

Lists the categories and names of services provided in DHS. Helps assure that you are using the current service names and definitions.

[The DHS Contract Policy and Information Manual \(CPIM\)](#)

Contains the DHS contracting policies for third party (direct service) contracts.

[The DHS Contract Reimbursable Manual \(CRM\)](#)

Contains the fiscal guidelines and policies for third party contracts.

[The DHS and the OCPM websites](#)

Posts RFPs and Public Notices and other pertinent announcements and information about all the DHS services, initiatives, reports etc.

Respond to invitations for representation

On DHS task forces, committees, advisory boards, etc. as well as community invitations.

Partner with other providers!

New and small organizations need to promote their visibility. Meet with larger businesses that contract with DHS as well as those in the community to assess opportunities for being a subcontractor, an outpost or satellite office/service. You might be able to save on some administrative costs and “get your foot in the door”. Collaboration is often valued when proposals are scored and offers less risk to the funding source. Also, offer to share your facilities for joint training forums, workshops or meetings.

Be visible!

Assure your visibility and participation in constituent organizations. (There are statewide, local and special groupings of representative provider associations).

Assure your visibility in state and local human service organizations, committees and task forces.

Meet with the Chair, assess opportunities for your participation, attend meetings, be visible and be

active. Make sure the service needs you represent are known as well as what you need to meet the service demands.

Assure that you are on the mailing list (for agendas and minutes) for all applicable meetings.

Assess the agenda for your need to personally attend, always read the minutes and at least periodically offer comments and concerns in response to the minutes to demonstrate your interest and investment in the issues. Your oral or written participation will get noticed and you will probably get recruited for committee work or possibly a board or officer position.

Your grant proposals

Follow instructions!

- Keep to the word count when specified. Be short but complete, concise and clear;
- If you insist on including more information than asked (e.g. brochures, sample forms, etc.), add these as an attachment and reference these in the text. Be careful, as excess information can effect your scoring. Better to list the material that can be “provided upon request” and keep your packages slim. Large proposals are not necessarily impressive, more often they are seen as excessive; and
- Have a table of contents and follow your order. Number your pages.

Check, check and check again!

- Have someone read your proposal that is unfamiliar with your project to see if the concepts are clear and see what questions they have;
- Have someone proof read your proposal for errors and inconsistencies;
- Assure all of the required documents are attached; and
- Assure that you provide the correct number of copies and that each copy is correct. Reviewers that have incomplete copies may then have scoring concerns.

Letters of support

- Be relevant. If your proposal deals with any type of linkages to other services, letters of support from those organizations that you will potentially be working with are helpful;
- Don't write the *same* sample letter of support for others to complete;
- If you want to make life easier for the potential supporters, draft a very simple endorsement note that stresses their willingness to collaborate if you are awarded the grant; and
- Don't use outdated letters or letters that have clearly been doctored or refer to another grant.

MOUs (Memorandums of Understanding) or Affiliation Agreements

- If you are required to submit these agreements to show your collaboration with other organizations that you will be working closely with, assure they minimally include:
 - ◆ Who the agreement is between;
 - ◆ How long the term of the agreement is for;
 - ◆ What the intent/purpose of the agreement is;
 - ◆ Where the services will be provided (location);
 - ◆ Who will do what specific services;
 - ◆ How the funds and/or fees will be managed;
 - ◆ How reporting to the funding sources will be managed;
 - ◆ How any dispute in the agreement and/or with services will be managed and by who; and
 - ◆ Signatures by the authorized signatories (and dates).

Needs assessments

- If this is required, do your homework. First research if *the source of the RFP* has done any studies, surveys, or has any task forces that have generated information about the needs as outlined in the RFP;
- Research any county statistics and any material generated by the County Human Services Advisory Council (HSAC) and its committees;
- Use the web and census data;
- Show that you are familiar with your community by identifying the constellation of relevant services. If there are other providers in the same business as what you are proposing show how you are meeting a specific unmet need; and
- Show the impact if your service is *and is not* funded. Include dollars where you can (e.g. criminal institutional care costs versus the value of post incarceration after care programs).

Service descriptions

- Where applicable, include more than just how you will provide the service, but also how you will assure that you generate referrals, and how you will transition or refer clients to the next step in the service continuum and provide follow-up if appropriate.

Budget & Personnel issues

- Typically there are two types of budgets: a preliminary and a detailed budget;
- A preliminary budget is rough, simple and usually is for services that are not complex or the funding is very specific in intent. This budget may evolve into a more detailed budget during the negotiation of the awarded grant/contract and also most likely if there is a renewal;
- A detailed budget distinguishes costs by typical categories/line items such as personnel, administrative, materials and supplies, equipment, facility costs, consultants, etc;
- The DHS Contract Reimbursement Manual provides budget examples and policies on allowable costs;
- Research typical salary costs. Call professional organizations and provider associations and ask for suggestions. Defend your costs in the narrative where necessary;
- You are usually safer with emphasizing direct staff costs over administrative costs. Wherever you can have another resource pick up administrative costs, do so. When you can't, be lean;
- Be clear about staff's education and experience requirements and then assure that your staffing costs match their experience and educational requirements;
- Put in your basis for allocation and projections: such as the "number of staff"; or "estimated number of miles to be driven at \$.32 per mile"; "number of clients currently seen times 2 additional staff" etc; and
- When in doubt of actual numbers, use a range where it is appropriate.

Feedback to funding sources

- Nurture your funding agencies! Share periodic successes and any press coverage you get. Share your newsletters and annual reports.
- If you run into problems, ask for technical assistance from your contract administrator. Also, ask other seasoned providers and provider associations for suggestions.

Grant writers & consultants

If you use a grant writer or consultant, be sure that you approve of the final interpretation of what you wanted written. It is usually evident when a proposal has been written by an “outsider” as it lacks the passion that the provider would include. Grant writers/consultants do not always write in a language that is reflective of the community the organization is from nor does the proposal reflect the true level of “maturity” of a grass roots or new organization. Proposals written by a consultant may be perfect in content but may not instill a confidence that the provider can pull the project off. Reviewers will look past some naiveté and inexperience if there is a strong commitment to do the job and the provider has a well established foundation in the community.

You can do this yourself! Just have others help you and carefully edit your work.

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