

A Review of General Grant Components:

- Proposal or Executive Summary
- Organizational Introduction, including history and mission statement
- Needs Statement
- Goals and Objectives
- Program Outline or Narrative
- Evaluation
- Sustainability
- Budget w/narrative
- Attachments

Ideally, the statement is comprehensive but not boring.

Through the use of data, you want to:

- Demonstrate that you have a thorough understanding of the problem and those you seek to serve.
- Demonstrate that you are knowledgeable of the types of interventions that are successful in addressing this problem for your client base.
- Indicate that you are aware of barriers that may hamper the provision of service to this population.
- Demonstrate that yours is the same issue that the funder wants to address. (See We Have a Need- Handout)
- Lay the groundwork to lead the funder to the conclusion that your approach is participant/client centered and clearly one of the best possible choices to address this problem.

What is a Needs Statement?

It is a component or document within a grant proposal, which supplies an overview of the organization's recognition of a specific community-based issue, or problem, and supplies the research and statistics on this community issue.

Avoid Circular Reasoning

- This occurs when one argues that the problem is a lack of the service that one is proposing.
- Ex. The problem facing many teens is that they do not have access to teen peer support.

An effective Needs Statement does six things:

- Uses supportive evidence to describe clearly the nature and extent of the problem/need facing those you plan to serve.
- Illuminates the factors contributing to the problem or the circumstances creating the need.
- Is related to the purposes and goals of your organization.
- Includes quantitative and qualitative documentation and supporting information.
- Identifies current gaps in services or programs.
- Where applicable, provides a rationale for the transferability of "promising approaches" or "best practices" to the population you seek to serve.

What is the problem with this?

- The statement failed to identify the needs teens have that can be met through a peer support group:
 - Loneliness
 - Isolation
 - Depression
 - Etc.

Consider how the following statement better addresses the need:

An adolescent spends an average of ____ hours per day in contact with other teens in school and after-school. Research indicates that teens obtain approximately ____% of their information on drugs, sexuality, and health-related topics from their peers (source of data, year). From a developmental perspective, teens are moving away from parental and other adult authority and into the development of their own personal authority. In this process, teens begin to attach and relate to their peers.

Comparing local and state or national data

If the incidence of the problem is greater than the state or national rates, the next sentence might sound like this:

In fact, in (year) the homeless rate in (your county) was _____, which exceeded the state rate of _____ and the national rate of _____ in the same year (source of data).

If the rate is lower than the state or national rates, study available data for compelling trends. You may be able to use something like this:

Although lower than the state and national rates of ____ and _____, respectively, (your county) has seen a significant increase in homelessness over the past five years and, without intervention, will meet and exceed national rates within the next five years (source of data)

A working template for development of a successful Needs Statement!

- Section One- The Nature and Extent of the Need/Problem
- Section Two- Factors Contributing to the Problem or Condition
- Section Three- Impact of the Need/Problem
- Section Four- Promising Approaches for Improved Results

Relationship between data sets

In the above example, the data are effectively presented within the context of the community. When you place data in relationship to other data (state or national) or other associated problems, you strengthen your request and increase the sense of urgency.

For example compare the following two statements:

- Fifty percent of the young people in the county do not graduate from high school.
- Fifty percent of the young people in the county do not graduate high school, while the dropout rate is only 10% in the state and 27% nationally.

Section One: Nature and Extent

Begin with a factual opening that states the topic, captures the reader, and begins to define the problem and those experiencing it in the geographic area to be served.

EX. The majority of families are only one paycheck away from homelessness, and for (number of people) in (your geographic area), this fact is all too real. The majority of homeless in (your county) are single mothers with children, representing the fastest-growing segment of the homeless population. These circumstances lead to poor school attendance and childhood health problems.

Section Two: Factors Contributing to the Problem or Conditions

Here we seek to address the causes of the problem and the needs of the clients. These may stem from a variety of factors:

- A lack of skill, knowledge, or awareness
- Debilitating attitudes or harmful values
- Physical or mental challenges and limitations
- Dysfunctional or problem behaviors
- Limited resources or access to services, etc.

You want to account for each of the factors that cause the problem

The following paragraphs are a beginning to that end:

A variety of conditions may ultimately lead to homelessness. Of the homeless population, _____% have severe and persistent mental illness, _____% have experienced the loss of a job, _____% have recently divorced, and _____% are _____. (source of data, year).

The top reason for job loss in the past year was personal health problems, including depression, followed by poor work performance, a lack of job-related skills, absenteeism, and health problems with other family members. In most cases, homelessness does not happen all at once. The family utilizes all available resources to maintain housing and often have one to three months of financial struggle before ending up on the streets.

Laying the groundwork

The example uses the Needs Statement as a way to lay the groundwork for its proposed early intervention project. It does not speak directly about the proposed intervention because that belongs in another section. It does show a solution that is cost effective and reduces the negative consequences associated with homelessness.

Section Three: Impact of the Need/Problem

Here we look to identify the impact of the problem on the client, client's family, and the community at large and the benefits to be derived through intervention, treatment, or prevention of the problem.

Section Four: Promising Approaches for Improved Results

Here we will use theoretical perspectives that have proven useful in designing interventions and successful approaches used in other geographic areas, and more than likely discuss existing barriers to improving the problem.

The following paragraph begins this process

The problem of homelessness exacts a significant toll on the homeless person and family. Children who are homeless are often uprooted from their schools and their friends, suffer from poor nutrition, and lack even the most basic of preventative care service (healthcare). If one is an adult, one has no address or phone number to use to obtain employment.

Once an individual is homeless, the demand on community resources are great. The Government Accounting Office has estimated that it costs taxpayers approximately \$35,000 per homeless family per year to provide for the family's basic needs. In a study by _____, it was shown that timely intervention targeted at a family in crisis costs approximately \$15,000 per year, a savings of over half the cost of delayed intervention. In addition to the significant financial savings, homeless children suffered less days lost from school and improved health outcomes.

Example Paragraphs

Several promising strategies have been developed to address the problem of homelessness. The first is the Homeless Project based in Seattle, Washington. This project targeted a subset of homeless, drug-abusing adults using the psychosocial rehabilitation approach, treatment incentives, and comprehensive services. The program helped over 67% of participants kick the drug habit, and after a year, 87% of those were employed and paying their own housing.

Other projects have been extremely successful in helping individuals in crisis avoid homelessness altogether. One project, in Michigan, opened a one-stop service center for struggling families. Through a combination of debt counseling, psychological services, educational remediation, job training, and health services, a full 90% of clients maintained their homes. In addition, this approach has the advantage of avoiding public resistance to a homeless shelter in the community.

Resources for Needs Statements

- US Census
- American Community Survey
- Reports by Annie E. Casey Foundation, Commonwealth Fund, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Center for Public Policy and Priorities, Children at Risk, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, etc.
- Local governments, including, City, County and State.
- Community surveys, studies and mapping, including for example the “Coalition for the Homeless-Homeless Enumeration Needs Assessment”

Writing Tips

- Use clear statistics that support your argument.
- Use comparative statistics and research.
- Quote authorities on your topic.
- Document all of your data.
- Use stories, but support them in the bedrock of hard data.
- Provide a sense of urgency.

Questions?

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