

A Presentation for the
**National Forum on Tribal
Environmental Science**

Quinault Beach Resort & Casino

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Crater Lake

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An Overview:

Developing a Competitive Grant Application

1. Introductions
2. Application Approach
3. “Dissecting” the Application Package
4. Packaging the Narrative Application I

Break 9:45 – 10:00 Reconvene 10:00

5. Packaging the Narrative Application II
6. The Budget
7. Submitting the Application
8. Negotiating the Final Package
9. Questions

Simplifying the Application Process:

The Cookbook Approach:

- * Is the product something we want to create?
- * If so, identify the necessary ingredients.
- * Do we have the ingredients? If not, is it worth our while to get them?
- * What grant application instructions (recipe) do we have to follow to (1) achieve the desired results, and (2) have a successful grant?

Simplifying the Application Process:

The Journalistic Approach (5 Ws & 1 H)

- * *Who, What, When, Where, How and Why*
- * Who will do this work?
- * What has to be done to succeed?
- * When does it have to be done?
- * Where will it be done? (In-house or other?)
- * How will it be done? (By staff or consultants?)
- * Why will we do it in this manner?

Dissecting the Application Package

Who is eligible?

In our example, eligible applicants included

- Federally recognized tribal governments
- Intertribal consortia
- Public and private universities & colleges
- Other public or private nonprofit institutions
- Individuals

Note that neither large nor small *for profit* businesses were listed as eligible entities.

Dissecting the Application Package

Description of Project:

Is this a project that we think is worthwhile?

Is it consistent with our values and experience?

Funding Opportunity Description:

Is it the project – or is it only the \$\$\$\$\$ - that are driving our interest?

Do we still consider this a worthwhile project?

Dissecting the Application Package

Project Description (more detailed):

Critical Project Elements: *Critical = Required*

Can we meet the critical project objectives with the funding that is available?

Do we have the experience, knowledge and expertise needed to meet the critical project objectives? If not, are we willing to acquire the experience, knowledge or expertise by partnering or collaborating with others?

Dissecting the Application Package

If we cannot acquire the experience, knowledge or expertise in time to accomplish the goals of the grantor, who might we partner or collaborate with?

- * Another tribe or tribal consortia?
- * Another organization?
- * A university? (*If so*: an academic department? An Indian program at the institution? A professor?)
- * Other professionals? (*If so*: Tribal member professionals? other Native professionals? nonIndian professionals?)

Note: It is worthwhile to consider how an external partner/ collaborator will contribute to building tribal capacity, and what the potential budgetary impacts might be.

Dissecting the Application Package

Anticipated Environmental Results:

Do the anticipated results seem realistic and accomplishable with the resources at hand and those provided by the funding agency?

Dissecting the Application Package

Award Information:

Is this an outright grant or a cooperative agreement?

If it is a Cooperative Agreement, are we comfortable with a project that requires

“substantial involvement between the EPA Project Officer and the applicant” ?

Dissecting the Application Package

Eligibility Information:

If my organization is a nonprofit organization, does it engage in lobbying activities as described in Section 3 of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995?

Are there cost-sharing or matching requirements? If so, can my organization meet those requirements?

Dissecting the Application Package

The application for Federal Assistance (SF-424) requires a DUNS number – do you have one?

Never take anything at face value.

Even though certain documents are listed in the “*Optional Documents*” box, they may actually be required.

Dissecting the Application Package

In our process, the RFA explained that a number of “optional documents” were actually required (if applicable), including

- * *Disclosure of Lobbying Activities,*
- * *Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement,*
- * *Biographical Sketches for the Project Manager(s).*

Dissecting the Application Package

Pay attention to mandated page limits.

Following are examples from our project:

1 page: Biographical sketches/annotated resumes for each major project manager. (BUT we were allowed to attach full resumes in the appendix – and did.)

20 pages or less: Application Content (Narrative), including

1 page: Table of Contents

1 or 2 pages: Executive Summary

leaving 17-18 pages for the rest of the *Narrative work plan*.

Dissecting the Application Package

Application Review Information: Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria may be provided in a narrative description, a matrix, or both. This section is critical to your success, since it identifies the number of points assigned to various elements of the application. It is used to provide a more objective evaluation process.

Following is an abbreviated example:

EVALUATION CRITERIA (based on a 100 point scale)

CRITERION ONE: Technical Approach to Project

- * 4 points – Clearly articulated approach to establish a Tribal Water Council and transition
- * 5 points – Comprehensive strategy to develop and implement a Council leadership structure....
- * 4 points – Approach to sustain communication....
- * 7 points – Clearly articulated milestone timeline....

20 points

Packaging the Narrative Application I

As noted, thoroughly dissect the application package before you even begin to write.

- * It pays to “overdo” this task to ensure that you understand what the agency is “really” looking for.
- * Make lists of what you perceive is being asked for.
- * Highlight key phrases.
- * Note anything that is repetitive or strongly stated.

Keep this in mind: The application will identify a contact person, but that person must be cautious in providing information in order to avoid “*even the appearance*” of a conflict of interest or preferential treatment.

Packaging the Narrative Application I

The application package will have a section labeled something like: **Application Content: Narrative work plan** with guidance for what should go in each section of the work plan. Our application called for:

- a) Cover Page, one page.
- b) Table of Contents, one page.
- c) Executive Summary, not to exceed two pages.
- d) Objectives – a numbered list.
- e) Proposal Narrative
 1. Technical Approach and Milestone Schedule
 2. Four Year Milestone Schedule.
 3. Relevant Prior Experience – Programmatic Capability
 4. Tracking Progress Toward Achieving Environmental Results
 5. Specialized Experience

Packaging the Narrative Application I

Once you start writing the application, there are two rules:

1. Be Responsive
2. Make It Easy for application evaluators.

Packaging the Narrative Application I

Most applications will guide you through the process. Follow directions, such as these:

Cover Page – include a *descriptive project title* and *applicant information*.

Table of Contents – one page, immediately following the cover page.

KEEP IT SIMPLE, CLEAN and DIRECT

Executive Summary: The executive summary should be a stand alone document, not to exceed two pages. The summary should provide: (list)

It is sometimes tempting to draft an executive summary because two pages seem so “doable” compared to the rest of the work to be done.

- * Avoid this temptation if you can – it steals your time.
- * Write a first draft of the executive summary only after the rest of narrative work plan has been drafted.
- * Again – be responsive. Provide exactly the information requested. You can embellish within that framework if you have space left.

Packaging the Narrative Application I

Objectives: A numbered list (1, 2 etc.) of concisely written project objectives. In most cases, each objective should be stated in a single sentence.

Grant terminology can be very confusing. The Request for Application articulated “outputs” (deliverables) and “outcomes” (long term benefits) that the agency anticipated as a result of the project. We relied on the outputs and outcomes (what the agency wanted) to develop our “objectives” list.

Sometimes, you just “regurgitate.” Following are some examples:

OBJECTIVES

The quantifiable outputs for the Tribal Water Program Council grant includes:

1. Establish and facilitate a new national forum where tribal environmental managers will ...
2. Identify and contact appropriate participants for an Interim Council. (etc., through number 13.) Then -

Grant Objectives or Long-term Benefits

1. Establish a network of a wide variety of stakeholders who are protecting the aquatic resources of Indian country....

Packaging the Narrative Application I

PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

1. Technical Approach and Milestone Schedule

Note: Details for the following are articulated in the Four Year Milestone Timeline Tables.

Reminder: It is your job to make it as easy as possible for the proposal reviewers to find the information they have asked you to provide.

In order to do this, we started out as above, then added subheadings such as *Develop a strategy to create the Tribal Water Council* as guidance for the reviewers.

Packaging the Narrative Application I

We also noted that this section was reflected in the Evaluation Criteria section as **CRITERION ONE: *Technical Approach to Project***, which had a value of up to 20 of 100 points.

Break Time!

After the Break:

Packaging the Narrative Application II

Submitting the Application

Negotiating the Final Package

Region 7's Regional Overview on Grant Workplans
and Accountability

Hands-On Grant-Writing Exercise

Dr. Willard Gilbert (*Northern Arizona University*)
talking about the Navajo Nation National Science
Foundation Grant

Packaging the Narrative Application II

2. Four Year Milestone Schedule. The proposal narrative must include a milestone schedule that covers four years and provides:

- * A breakout of the project into phases with associated tasks.
- * Time frames for completion of each task and phase.
- * A descriptive list of deliverables, including indication of ongoing and/or repeated tasks and deliverables.

Packaging the Narrative Application II

We were old-school, so we started out with a nice excel spreadsheet.

TWPC Project Objectives per Funding Year (Quantifiable Outputs)

(The x marks in the month column are the time schedule mileposts for monitoring progress.)

1. Establish and facilitate a new national forum.

- a. Research successful tribal forums and natural resource councils
- b. Confer with EPA re: model tribal forums and natural resource councils
- c. Obtain governance documents re: successful councils.
- d. Assess strategic options for council governance.
- e. Prepare model governance language for council consideration.
- f. Provide guidance for project development.

Year One

Jun July Aug Sept Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar Apr May

	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	
a.	x	x	x										
b.	x	x	x										
c.	x	x	x										
d.	x	x	x										
e.		x	x										
f.			x	x									Ongoing Activity

etcetera.

This obviously broke Rule #2:

Make It Easy for application evaluators.

Packaging the Narrative Application II

... and, quite honestly, we knew what a spreadsheet was, but we didn't know what a "Milestone Schedule" was – so it was time to hit the Internet.

Based on what we had been told would be a June, 2006 start date, we ended up using the following format in order to best transmit our plan to the reviewers:

Packaging the Narrative Application II

Table I: Four-Year Milestone Timeline with Tasks and Anticipated Deliverables

Outputs/Outcomes	Tasks	Timeline/Milestone
1. Establish and facilitate a new national Tribal water forum.	* Research successful models.	June-July 2006
	* Confer with EPA re successful models.	June – July 2006 July 2006 [Complete]
	* Obtain governance documents from successful Councils.	July 2006[Complete]

Packaging the Narrative Application II

In the negotiation process – and the change in start dates, we have submitted a draft a *Milestone Matrix* that looks something like this:

Packaging the Narrative Application II

Schedule of Milestones

Grant # _____

Project Period: Year One

Table 1: Milestone Timetable with Tasks and Anticipated Deliverables

Output/ Outcome	Activities & Tasks	1 st Qtr.	2 nd Qtr.	3 rd Qtr.	4 th Qtr.	Ongoing
Objective #1	Establish and facilitate a National Tribal Water Council.					
1.1	Research successful models.	X				
1.2	Confer with EPA re Successful models.	X				
1.3						

Packaging the Narrative Application II

3. Relevant Prior Experience – Programmatic Capability

In order to ensure that we didn't miss any of the items, we utilized them as section subheadings (such as *Past performance in successfully completing projects similar in size, scope and relevance to the proposed project*), then wrote the narrative for that section.

Since we were familiar with the application packet, we also knew that this section reflected **CRITERION FOUR: Programmatic Capability/Past Performance**, and was worth up to 40 of 100 potential points.

4. Tracking Progress Toward Achieving Environmental Results.

The information listed under #4 referred the applicant to Section I.D. for discussion of anticipated environmental results, so we were able to utilize that information in this section of the narrative.

Again, since we were familiar with the application packet, we also recognized that the requirements in this section were reflected in **CRITERION THREE: Environmental Results**. The matter reflected therein had a value of 20 points, so we took care to address the relevant criteria.

Packaging the Narrative Application II

5. Specialized Experience

This section directs the applicant to provide information as to prior experience working on such matters as (1) human health and environmental issues related to water, (2) coordinating environmental and health issues with federal agencies, (3) working with tribes or other minority populations and (4) coordinating conferences, workshops and training.

This section correlated to **CRITERION TWO: *Specialized Experience***, so we knew that it could be worth up to 20 points.

Packaging the Narrative Application II

The Appendix - Resumes

The final documents attached to the Narrative section of the application were our resumes, which were in the Appendix. We knew that we could not possibly include all of our relevant experience in the Narrative itself, and still meet the other requirements.

We have no idea whether anyone looked at our resumes, but it gave us a certain level of comfort knowing that we could include them “just in case” someone needed to know more about us.

The Budget

- * Use the budget categories provided in the application packet.
- * Match the budget to the narrative.
- * Provide basic calculations, i.e., for travel – how many trips? how many people?
- * Remember that the grantor will still only see the tip of the iceberg – each item needs to be carefully worked through.
- * In multi-year projects, the grant application may require a sum of all the years by budget category.

Submitting the Application

Plan ahead – be prepared to submit the documents in a timely manner.

If submitting electronically, be aware that the application will not be accepted if there are ANY errors.

If sending a hard copy, be aware that the grantor may not accept copies sent by U.S. postal service.

Negotiating the Final Package

Be prepared to provide references if asked for them.

Be prepared to negotiate:

Timelines

Budget

Workplan



Thank you for sharing your time with us.

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