2018 GPD NOFA Lessons Learned

• Options for joining the presentation today
  • Adobe Connect
  • Pull the presentation down via the GPD website https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/GPD.asp
  • Presentation will be recorded and can be provided upon request via email gpdinquiry@va.gov
• Call will be in lecture mode for the benefit of the participants
  • Questions in the chat box
  • GPDgrants@va.gov email
I. Webinar objectives
II. Overview of grant review process
III. General issues related to non-selection
IV. Opportunities for improving applications
V. Plans for FY2019
I. Objectives

• Review the grant selection process
• Offer suggestions for strengthening grant applications
• Discuss lessons learned from applications submitted
  • Common issues with unsuccessful applications
  • Feedback from grant review teams
Did you participate in the technical assistance webinars offered by the GPD office during the last Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA)?

A. Yes
B. No
Grant Selection Process
II. Grant Selection Process

Threshold Review

- Applications must meet **threshold requirements**
- Questions asked during the threshold review include:
  - Did the application arrive on time?
  - Is the applicant an eligible entity?
  - Is the applicant requesting an eligible activity?
  - Is the application complete?
- The GPD office is responsible for ensuring the entity is eligible to apply, but does not evaluate the application
II. Grant Selection Process

- Described in GPD regulations 38 CFR 61.13 and 61.32
- Must receive at least 750 points out of a possible total of 1,000 points to be eligible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating Criteria</th>
<th>Points Possible</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project plan</td>
<td>300</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outreach to persons on the streets and in shelters</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability of applicant to develop and operate a project</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need</td>
<td>150</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coordination with other programs</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion confidence</td>
<td>50</td>
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</tbody>
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II. Grant Selection Process

- Teams of subject matter experts in VA Homeless Programs nationally are selected to participate in reviews.

- Teams are –
  - Trained on the review and scoring process
  - Brought to Tampa and assigned grant applications
    - Support unbiased review
    - Review all applications for same EIN same medical center

- Each application is scored independently by two reviewers
  - Review teams convene with a team leader and come to a consensus on the rating of the application
General Issues Related to Non-selection
III. General Issues Related to Non-selection

- Applicant submitted more than two applications, however per the NOFA only two applications could be awarded per EIN
- Requests did not meet minimum requirement per the NOFA
- Application arrived late
  - Confusing TIP and PDO deadlines
III. General Issues Related to Non-selection

Incomplete Application or Weak Scores

- Application was incomplete
  - Pages of the application missing
  - Application failed to respond to a section of questions
  - Failed to answer question(s) in a section
- Responses lacking detail
  - Brief response to a question requiring detail
  - Response(s) seem to repeat language in NOFA
- Application did not meet the minimum scoring requirements to be eligible for consideration
III. General Issues Related to Non-selection

- Typographical and grammatical errors inhibited understanding of the project
- Copying and pasting from multiple applications provided conflicting information
- Purpose of certain documents attached to application was unclear
- Application indicated that the applicant did not understand the model for which they applied
  - Clinical treatment model application but used language related to bridge housing
Questions
Polling Questions

Question Two

Did you use the gpdgrants@va.gov email to seek technical assistance during the last NOFA?

A. Yes
B. No
Opportunities for Improving Applications

Scoring Area Specific
IV. Opportunities for Improving Applications

• Barriers to access
  • 90 day sobriety requirement
  • Must be willing to work pre-requisite for admission

• Responses to relapse was punitive versus engaging Veterans leading to negative exits

• Application described multiple step process to admission, reviewers concerned about responsiveness of process

• The application appears to describe a shelter rather than a transitional housing program
IV. Opportunities for Improving Applications

• Limited to no details:
  • How Individual Service Plan would be monitored, evaluated and documented.
  • How clean and sober environment will be provided
  • Who is providing what services
  • How Veterans will be prepared for employment or permanent housing
  • How the medication control system will work
  • Not clear how after hours emergencies handled (use of senior resident or paid staff)
  • How “required” leases would work
IV. Opportunities for Improving Applications

- Applicant did little to no outreach
- Outreach plan was not specific
  - Target population not addressed
  - Frequency was not clear
- Applicant did was not specific as to how their organization was involved in Coordinated Entry System
- Limited or no outreach plan documented other than referrals from VA medical center
IV. Opportunities for Improving Applications

• No confidence that the applicant had the ability or past experience to effectively deliver proposed services

• Staffing table issues
  • Documentation of staffing table did not match up to project service table that listed staffing
  • Example mentioned medication service being provided by Med Tech not listed on staffing table
  • Staffing table confusing—same table multiple applications

• Additional staff needed to provide the model or services being described in the application
IV. Opportunities for Improving Applications

- Documentation of unmet need was limited in scope, quality and quantity
  - Characteristics of population
  - Limited or no data to support specific need for this model
- Data used to support need was not recent
- Only national data on Veteran homelessness provided
- Anecdotal information used to establish need
- No clear gap analysis
IV. Opportunities for Improving Applications

- Weak or lacking letters of coordination or documents of coordination/evidence of coordination
  - Listed multiple agencies involved in project but no letters for support documenting commitment
  - General letter of support- lacking date of letter or detail of project
  - Unsigned letters and Memorandum of Agreement included
- Level of support for beds differed than the request in the application
- Did not connect with VA
When multiple areas of the application are weak, it negatively impacts **completion confidence**

- Limited or no evidence the applicant could provide the services and housing as described

**Completion Confidence in the Proposed Project** Impacted by other Rating Criteria
Questions
Opportunities for Improving Applications
Model Specific
IV. Opportunities for Improving Applications

- Limited information on how to ensure safe environment
- Information about applicant would manage safe environment if Veteran returns impaired or concern about program practice
  - No plan to check on safety of Veteran returning intoxicated
  - Plan to ask Veteran to leave facility until they sober up
- Did not address safe environment question regarding use of sober lounge/safe room
IV. Opportunities for Improving Applications

- Missing Memorandum of Understanding at time of application.
- Model described as short stay with transition to other GPD models, inconsistent with program expectation
- Population focus unclear
- Applicant could be strengthened by more detailed discussion of the need for Hospital to Housing model
IV. Opportunities for Improving Applications

Reviewers comments:
• Individualized Service Plan did not reflect housing
• Outreach plan did not distinguish between various housing models submitted by organization
• No indication of coordination with housing partners in the community
• Model selected and application narrative did not match (e.g., Veteran was offered and accepted a permanent housing intervention)
IV. Opportunities for Improving Applications

Reviewers comments:

- Limited information about lowering barriers to services
- Insufficient response to question on how applicant would ensure homeless Veterans would be offered available permanent housing resources before entering treatment
- Unidentified diagnostic treatment model (mental health, substance use disorder, both)
- Lack of clinical staff to provide treatment services
- Provided program schedule with limited detail
IV. Opportunities for Improving Applications

- No description of outreach efforts to identify Veterans for the service center program
  - Would like to see discussion on how Coordinated Entry System used to identify homeless Veterans
- Wide range of support services described by partners but lacking letters of support or commitment for confirmation
- Data used to describe need did not support number of proposed visits
- Concern about staffing to support project
Little case management provided, very few specifics as to how services are coordinated

- Limited evidence of services being individualized
- Housing focus came late in program stay, with primary referral to HUD-VASH and SSVF
- Questionable understanding about model (use of another model to define SITH)
IV. Opportunities for Improving Applications

• Question understanding of TIP
  • Requirement of 12 month lease for admission
  • Shared living with requirement of equal rent
  • Application description of housing appeared to be congregate living versus sharing an apartment

• Discussion of furnishing of units could be strengthened
  • More detailed discussion
  • Letters of coordination with sources described in application would strengthen
Plans for Future NOFA
V. What’s Next

- Next grant cycle for transitional housing would be in FY 2020
- FY 2019 there will be NOFA for a new case management grant
- Details for the next NOFA will be provided in separate technical assistance presentations. Monitor the GPD website for more information: www.va.gov/homeless/gpd
Final Thoughts

• Carefully read the published NOFA
• Participate in technical assistance offerings (webinars, conference calls, etc.)
• Involve local community organizations in your submission planning process
• Important to clearly understand what type of transitional housing is needed within your community and how much of the service is required
• Ensure your application is well organized, concisely written, complete, and provides specifics
  • If you have not done so, consider engaging an experienced grant writer
Questions
Thank you