I. Webinar objectives
II. Overview of grant review process
III. General issues related to non-selection
IV. Opportunities for improving applications
V. Plans for FY2018
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
Polling Questions

Question One

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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordination with other programs</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion confidence</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
II. Grant Selection Process

- Teams of subject matter experts in VA Homeless Programs nationally are selected to participate in the review process.
- Teams are –
  - Trained on the review and scoring process
  - Brought to Tampa and assigned grant applications
- 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
Questions
General Issues Related to Non-selection
III. General Issues Related to Non-selection

- Application was incomplete
  - Pages of the application missing
  - Application failed to respond to a section of questions
- 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
- Cutting 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
Questions
Polling Questions

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

A. Yes
B. No
Opportunities for Improving Applications
• Feedback from grant review teams
• Feedback specific to scoring areas and models
• Reminder that scoring areas are based on GPD regulations 38 CFR 61.13 (b)(c)(d)(e)(f) and (g) and 61.32
Opportunities for Improving Applications
Scoring Area Specific
IV. Opportunities for Improving Applications

- Overall, the project plan lacked specificity
- Limited to no details on:
  - About how Individual Service Plan would be monitored, evaluated and documented.
    - Housing plan
  - How barriers to admission would be lowered
  - 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
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 documented little to no involvement with the Continuum of Care assessment or 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
• Documentation of staff qualifications was limited or missing
• Additional staff needed to provide the model or services being described in the application
• Same staffing plan used in multiple applications
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 provided, but no discussion of, or connection to, a Low Demand housing program
- Limited or unclear data sources
- Anecdotal information used to establish need
- No clear gap analysis
IV. Opportunities for Improving Applications

- Limited or no evidence of coordination or planning with:
  - Other community providers
  - Local VAMC
  - Continuum of Care
- No letters of support or documents of coordination
IV. Opportunities for Improving Applications

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
Questions
Opportunities for Improving Applications
Model Specific
IV. Opportunities for Improving Applications

Reviewers comments:

• Incorrect labeling of Service Intensive Transitional housing as Low Demand housing
• Limited information on how to ensure safe environment
• Limited information on how applicant would manage safe environment if Veteran returns impaired
• Few specifics about safe rooms or plans to address relapse
IV. Opportunities for Improving Applications

Reviewers comments:
• Focus of services (medical, mental health, both) was unclear
• Applicant did not indicate coordination with local VAMC
• No description of outreach to raise awareness of new services
• Limited or no indication of the functional level of the Veteran (e.g., managing activities of daily living)
• Use of bunk beds inconsistent with the population to be served
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)
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
- Punitive relapse response
IV. Opportunities for Improving Applications

Reviewers comments:

• No description of outreach efforts to identify Veterans for the service center program
• Data did not support number of proposed visits
• No information on services provided
• Limited information on how clean and sober environment would be provided
• Considerations for medication control system missing
IV. Opportunities for Improving Applications

Reviewers comments:

- 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
Questions
Plans for FY2018 NOFA
V. What’s Next

• VA plans to publish a NOFA in early FY2018
• Even if an organization applied to and was not selected for the FY2017 NOFA, it can still apply for the next NOFA
• 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
Polling Questions

Question Three

Do you plan on applying for the upcoming NOFA in FY2018?
A. Yes
B. No
Questions
Thank you