



So you want to apply for a government grant...

Eva Stricker, Director of Carbon Ranch Initiative

Why I am qualified to give this workshop?

I'm one of those strange people who *enjoys* grant writing.

It's a chance to think big, and in collaborative grants, to hear other people's dreams!

You all will also have tips and experience that will be relevant to others (and me!) so please do share in the chat!



Summary of a grant writing workflow

1. **Have an idea**
2. **Find a potential funding source**
3. **Take notes on the dates, eligibility, limitations, etc. in the rfp and ask questions to the grant program officer**
4. Make a logic model, ballpark budget, and timeline to see if your project can be done in the scope of the grant
5. Reach out to partners for feedback and support
6. Secure match
7. Draft the proposal matching the structure and language provided in the rfp
8. Edit the proposal based on the scoring criteria
9. Scope out grants.gov to make sure there aren't any sneaky forms that you missed
10. Write the budget narrative
11. Upload and hit SUBMIT

Start with an idea...

Sometimes, an opportunity is released close to the deadline and may be too short to come up with an idea, find the relevant background/partners, write it, edit it, etc.

TIP: Engage with the community - see what emerges from listening sessions or roundtable discussions!

TIP: Keep a running list of project ideas so that when you see an opportunity, you're ready!

TIP: Re-use writing and ideas for multiple grants until you can reach your outcomes.



Find funding related to your goals

TIP: Sign up for listservs with relevant topics

TIP: Start list of annual programs with approximate dates so you can check for the request for proposals (RFP) each year.

I don't look directly at grants.gov to search for funding, but I suppose you could.

[RVCC resource](#)

The purpose of CIG is to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies in conjunction with agricultural production. CIG projects are expected to lead to the transfer of conservation technologies, management systems, and innovative approaches (such as market-based systems) to agricultural producers, into government technical manuals and guides, or to the private sector. CIG generally funds pilot projects, field demonstrations, and on-farm conservation research. On-farm conservation research is defined as an investigation conducted to answer a specific applied conservation question using a statistically valid design while employing farm-scale equipment on farms, ranches or private forest lands.

Active, close read of the Request for Proposals (RFP)

Open a working document and start taking notes as you READ THE ENTIRE RFP. Yep, every single word. And take notes as you do it!

First, look at the deadlines AND timezones and add them to your calendar:

- Is it due at 5pm Eastern? If you live in California, you only have until 2pm!
- Does it require a pre-proposal or letter of intent?

Applicants must submit their applications via Grants.gov by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on April 20, 2021. For technical issues with Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Applicant Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov. Awarding agency staff cannot support applicants regarding Grants.gov accounts. Questions regarding this notice of funding opportunity (NFO) may be submitted until March 26, 2021. Responses to questions posed will be posted on Grants.gov approximately two weeks before the application due date.

The agency anticipates making selections by May 21, 2021 and expects to execute awards by July 31, 2021.

Take notes on the Request for Proposals (RFP)

Key pieces of information are sometimes buried so you should write it down for quick reference.

Total funding amount:

The estimated funding floor for this opportunity is \$5,000, and the estimated funding ceiling is \$50,000. The funding floor means the minimum agreement funding amount for the Federal share

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Start date and duration:

Projects may be between 1 and 3 years in duration. Applicants should plan their projects based on an estimated project start date of August 1, 2021.

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Take notes on the Request for Proposals (RFP)

Key pieces of information are sometimes buried so you should write it down for quick reference.

Does it need to be multi-state/multi-institution?

Any award made pursuant to this NFO will be made to a single entity. Applicants that apply as “partnerships” or other similar groupings must clearly describe the relationship between the applicant and the “partner” parties. In all but exceptional cases, it must be reflected in the award as an awardee/sub-awardee relationship.

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What are eligibility criteria?

All U.S.-based non-Federal entities (NFE) and individuals, with the exception of Federal agencies, are eligible to apply for projects carried out in New Mexico. The following entity types are eligible:

- a. City or township governments
- b. County governments

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Can your organization submit more than one application?

An applicant organization may submit more than one application.

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Take notes on the Request for Proposals (RFP)

What can the funding go towards?

- Sometimes there are limitations about relative amounts of money that can be spend on equipment (usually defined as >\$5,000) or contractors

Funds may not be used to pay any of the following costs unless otherwise permitted by law, or approved in writing by the agency in advance of incurring such costs:

- a. Costs above the amount of funds authorized for the project;
- b. Costs incurred prior to the effective date of the award, including time spent applying for this opportunity;
- c. Costs which lie outside the scope of the approved project and amendments thereto;
- d. Entertainment costs, regardless of their apparent relationship to project objectives;
- e. Compensation for injuries to persons, or damage to property arising out of project activities;
- f. Consulting services performed by a Federal employee during official duty hours when such consulting services result in the payment of additional compensation

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Take notes on the Request for Proposals (RFP)

Is match/cost-share required? At what rate?

- Match is the share of costs that the grantee or the grantee's partners are required to contribute to accomplish the purposes of the grant
 - For example, if you receive \$50,000 from NRCS, must account for an additional \$50,000 from non-federal sources (more later)

Selected applicants may receive CIG grants of up to 50 percent of their total project cost. CIG recipients must provide a non-federal funding match or cost-share amount

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What is the indirect/overhead amount allowed?

- Indirect helps pay for administering the grant, helps pay for building expenses, etc.
 - Recipients without an approved indirect cost rate are prohibited from charging indirect costs to a Federal award. (Accepting the 10 percent *de minimis* rate as a condition of award constitutes establishing an approved rate.)

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Take notes on the Request for Proposals (RFP)

What are priority topics, recipients, activities?

CIG Priorities for FY 2021:

a) Increased reliance on natural biodiversity to control pests.

- i. Demonstration of no-till or reduced tillage systems for improved weed control. Systems must note how nutrient management goals are met.
- ii. Development and demonstration of intercropping systems including cash crops,

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For the FY 2021 CIG award process, up to 10 percent of the total funds available for CIG are set aside for proposals from Historically Underserved producers, veteran farmers or ranchers, or community-based organizations comprised of or representing these entities. The regulatory definitions of a Historically Underserved producer and a veteran farmer or rancher may be found at [7 CFR 1466.3](#).

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TIP: Match the language and order as closely as possible so that it is easy for reviewers to see how you meet the criteria.

So you've read the entire RFP and you still have questions...

- “My project idea is pretty close to the RFP, but is it worth applying for?”
- “This agency released two almost identical calls - what's the best one for me to apply?”
- “In one part of the proposal it says a 10 page proposal, but in another part it says 12 pages - which is the real page limit?”

TIP: Call the program officer. Note, this is different than the grants.gov help desk

G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACT

For questions regarding this opportunity, please contact one of the following individuals with the NFO number in the subject line:

Administrative Contact (Primary Contact)

Nawar Dabbia Williams

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SMART objectives

I find it helpful to start with objectives

Specific

Measurable

Achievable

Relevant

Time-bound

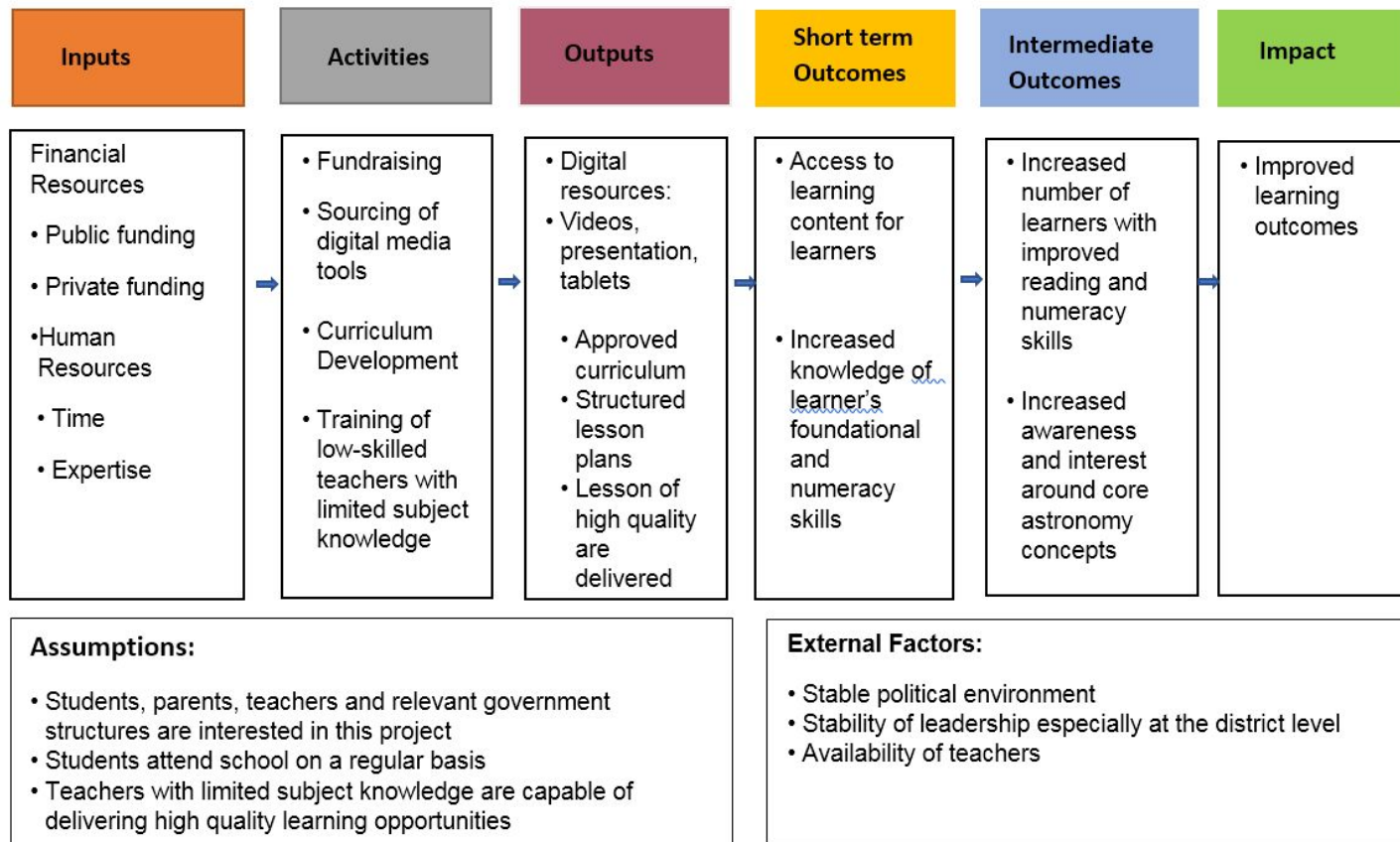
Eg. Our goal is to improve resilience through erosion control, therefore I request funding to support five ranches in building one rock dams in 2021.

Try writing a 1-2 sentence SMART objective in the chat

Logic Model Framework



Logic Model



SMART objectives

I find it helpful to start with objectives and work backwards.

Specific

Measurable

Achievable

Relevant

Time-bound

Eg. Our goal is to **improve resilience** through **erosion control**, therefore I request funding to support five ranches in **building one rock dams** in 2021.

activity **impact** **outcome**

Take a moment to match your SMART objective with a logic model template



Ballpark the Budget

This can save you time in the long run - if you only have funding to run one workshop, then there's no point in spending time writing about how great three workshops would be...

TIP: Write out the budget narrative *last* - you will probably make little changes to your budget and you don't want to forget to make changes in multiple places.

Ballpark the Budget

TIP: Use a consistent template in your organization and then convert it into whatever form is needed by the granting organization. Also, write yourself lots of notes!

Eg. 5 trips x 200 miles x \$0.56/mile = \$560

8h per workshop x 5 workshops x \$28.54/hour = \$1,141.60

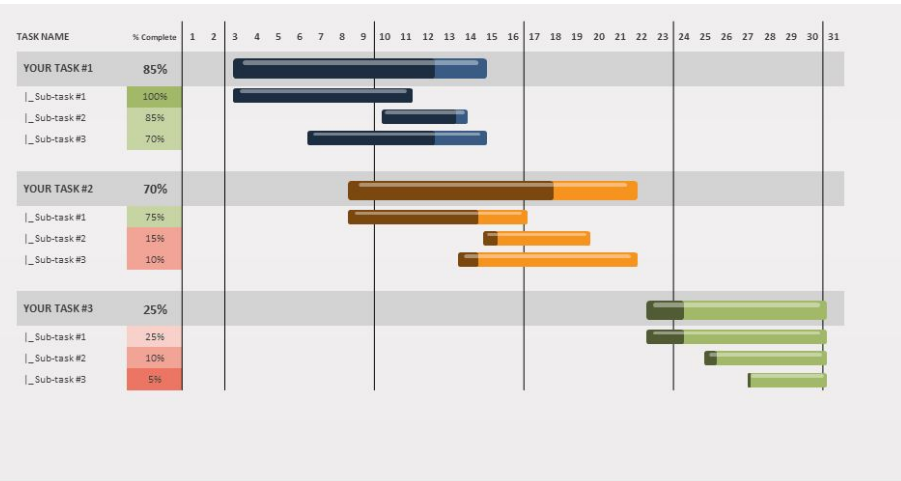
TIP: Make sure you are tracking how much you need in each quarter of the first year of project, and then by year for each subsequent year because that will go into form SF-424a

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
135	7020 Grants to Organizations							
136	7030 Grants to Foreign Organizations							
137	7040 Other Direct Assistance	10,000.00		Stipends to individuals or entities for participation (20 people/entities * \$500)				
138	7050 Grantee Reimbursements			10000				
139	Total 7000 Grants & Direct Assistance	\$ 10,000.00						
140	7030a Specific assistance 7030 (deleted)							
141	7040a Benefits paid to/for members 7040 (deleted)							
142	7200 Salaries & Related Expenses				n hours	rate - note - this	total	
143	7210 Salaries & Wages			Maria	160	26.5	4240	
144	7211 Officers & Directors			Jerry	340	26.5	9010	
145	7212 Salaries & Wages - other	17,490.00		Ash	160	26.5	4240	
146	Total 7210 Salaries & Wages	\$ 17,490.00						
147	7220 Simple IRA Contributions	350						
148	7230 Employee Benefits	1,749						
149	7235 Commuter Pre-tax Benefit	0						
150	7240 Payroll Taxes	1,924						
151	7250 Payroll Service Fees	100						
152	7260 Vacation Leave	109						
153	7270 Sick Leave	0						
154	7290 Workers Comp	350						
155	Total 7200 Salaries & Related Expenses	\$ 22,072						
156	7500 Contract Service Expenses							

6. Object Class Categories	(1)	(
a. Personnel	\$	
b. Fringe Benefits		
c. Travel		
d. Equipment		
e. Supplies		
f. Contractual		
g. Construction		
h. Other		
i. Total Direct Charges (sum of 6a-6h)		
j. Indirect Charges		
k. TOTALS (sum of 6i and 6j)	\$	
7. Program Income	\$	

SECTION C - NON-FEDERAL RESOURCES					
(a) Grant Program		(b) Applicant	(c) State	(d) Other Sources	(e)TOTALS
8.		\$		\$	
9.					
10.					
11.					
12. TOTAL (sum of lines 8-11)		\$		\$	
SECTION D - FORECASTED CASH NEEDS					
	Total for 1st Year	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter
13. Federal	\$				
14. Non-Federal	\$				
15. TOTAL (sum of lines 13 and 14)	\$				
SECTION E - BUDGET ESTIMATES OF FEDERAL FUNDS NEEDED FOR BALANCE OF THE PROJECT					
(a) Grant Program		FUTURE FUNDING PERIODS (YEARS)			
		(b)First	(c) Second	(d) Third	(e) Fourth
16.		\$		\$	
17.					
18.					
19.					
20. TOTAL (sum of lines 16 - 19)		\$		\$	
SECTION F - OTHER BUDGET INFORMATION					

Timeline



www.presentationgo.com

[illegible]

Why take the time to do a logic model/timeline if they are not required for the grant?

Grant partners and reviewers will be more confident in your ability to do the project you propose if you've invested the time to turn the idea around and around in your head and error-check it.



Make an elevator pitch to collaborators

As early as possible! Give them time to provide feedback and help guide the proposal direction.

A few bullet points or paragraphs with the key parts of your ideas to send to others in your organization and your external partners. Keep it snappy and think of the **who, what, where, when, why.**

Hint: all that work you did on writing SMART objectives should get you most of the way there!

Make an elevator pitch to collaborators

Be EXTREMELY clear and transparent about who would receive how much funding - make sure that anyone designated as a subcontractor in the grant agrees in writing to the terms laid out in the grant narrative and budget.

“Hello Sam! Quivira is working on a proposal to improve resilience through erosion control, and we’re looking for ranches interested in building one rock dams in 2021. We would provide approximately \$1000 to each ranch to support time and materials and ask that ranches provide use of a tractor for 2 days and one acre of land as match. Would XYZ Ranch be interested in talking more about it?”

Take a moment to put an example “pitch” to a collaborator in the chat.

Bring in partners/stakeholders

If you're asking for a letter of support, draft a template letter and send it around to people to fill in.

[Organizational letterhead, address]

[DATE]

RE: Support for XYZ proposal.

To whom it may concern:

I am writing in support of the Quivira Coalition's proposal "XYZ."

[I/My organization] understand and recognize the crucial need for ranchers, farmers, and foresters to thin forests and trees to promote forest health and wildlife habitat. Biochar production produces less pollution than traditional prescribed burns and can be used as a valuable soil amendment that increases soil carbon and increases water holding capacity. We are excited that the Quivira Coalition will help train producers and technical service providers to safely and effectively produce and use biochar [Any specific interests or excitement that you have].

[I/my organization] is excited to [DO WHAT – Host a workshop? Attend a workshops? Help distribute promotional material? *optional* valued at \$\$\$] in support of this project.

We urge the NRCS to support this project. Please feel free to contact me with questions.

Sincerely,

[NAME]

[Title]

[Phone, email]

Team Qualifications

Often short descriptions of each person named in the proposal. Sometimes a resume, CV, or biosketch is required.

TIP: Require that staff maintain their professional CV in a shared folder; have everyone include ALL activities, then for each specific proposal, highlight the most relevant experience from each person.

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Find match funding

*confirm with granting agency/lawyer for specifics! *

- Cash
 - A foundation gives you general funding and you can use it to support staff salaries
- Supplies
 - You already have a projector and AV equipment so you don't have to rent it, and you pledge to use it for the proposed project; A rancher pledges to use their tractor to run the no-till drill.
- Travel
 - People traveling don't get reimbursed for mileage; they are donating that amount to the project.

Find match funding

*confirm with granting agency/lawyer for specifics! *

- Contractors

- A contractor that usually charges \$60/h pledges to work for \$50/h and donate the other \$10/h to the project.

- Participants

- Volunteers can be valued at ~\$28/hour. NOTE: Think carefully about your target audience: would it be helpful to pay people to attend?

NOTE: You can not match federal funding to a federal grant!

Eg. if a person attends your zoom call with their US government email, that person's time can NOT count as participant effort.

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After all of that, you can start writing the actual proposal

Read the Request for Proposals (RFP)
AGAIN.

Make an outline of the sections that they require with all of the kinds of information that needs to be included in each section.

a. Cover Page (1 page maximum).

On a single page, provide the following information:

- i. The applicant entity name.
- ii. The project title.
- iii. The proposed start and end dates and the project duration in months.
- iv. The amount of Federal funding requested.
- v. The amount of non-Federal contributions committed.
- vi. The applicant's technical contact (usually project director). (Provide name, phone, email.)
- vii. The applicant's administrative contact (provide name, phone, email) (usually an individual in a grants office or project manager working under a project director. The administrative contact often handles the budgetary and reporting requirements for a CIG project. NRCS will use the applicant's technical and administrative contacts identified as the primary applicant contacts throughout the life of the project, unless notified of personnel changes).
- viii. The geographic location of the project.
- ix. The state priority that is addressed by the project. List only one priority from [Section A. 4](#). If the proposal addresses more than one priority, **you must select a primary priority** for your application to be considered under.

c. Project Narrative

Each page must be numbered and have one-inch margins. The text of the project narrative must be single spaced and typed in a standard typeface (e.g., Times New Roman, Arial, Courier) with no smaller than 12-point font. The project narrative must not exceed 15 pages. This page limitation applies to the project narrative only.

TIP: Use the exact words or phrases in the RFP so it is easy for the reader to find the information.

- Write “Project design and methods”; don’t write “Project implementation”,

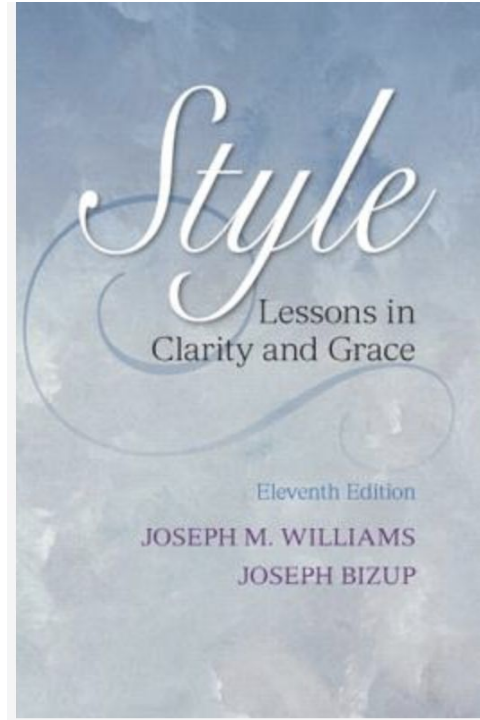
The project description must include the following information, in this order:

- Project background:** Describe the issue or problem driving the need for the proposed innovation. Provide evidence that the proposed innovation has been studied sufficiently to indicate a high probability for success.
- Project goal/objectives:** State the main goal of the project and then outline the supporting objectives to reach this goal. Objectives should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound (SMART¹). Provide supporting information that describes the innovative nature of the project and how this innovation could advance the field of conservation. If the project is addressing innovation of an NRCS conservation practice standard, or proposing a new standard, state this explicitly and identify the standard.
- Project design and methods:** Describe clearly the methodology of the project and the tools or processes that will be used to implement the project. (We encourage new grant writers to consider using a logic model approach to improve clarity of this section.) For more on the logic model, see <https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/programdevelopment/logic-models/>.

General tips for clear writing

Your job is to make it EASY for the reader. You want them nodding along as they go!

Always have someone else read your writing!!!



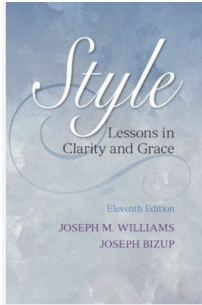
General tips for clear writing

Note - grammatically correct writing does not equal clear writing!

- A. “The lack of media support was the cause of our election loss”
- B. “We lost the election because the media did not support us.”

(Likewise, you can break rules if you do so intentionally and it has a desired effect*)

Children need to eat. And children need to feel safe.



General tips for clear writing

If you have a choice in how you frame the proposal, a solid strategy is

Paragraph 1: Big picture - What is the shared context that we can all agree on and WHY IS IT IMPORTANT.

“The sky is blue and that shows us that the air is healthy for us to breath”.

Paragraph 2: What is the problem? (because you’ve said that the thing is important, it’s easy for the reader to nod along as to why the problem is important too!).

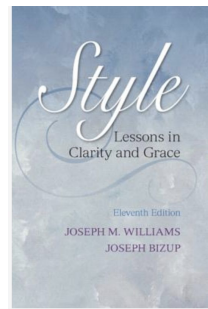
“The sky is turning yellow”

Paragraph 3. How does what you are proposing address the problem? What is unique and awesome about your idea and how does it fit in the budget and time scale of the grant?

“We propose to deploy thousands of blue hot air balloons so the sky looks blue again”

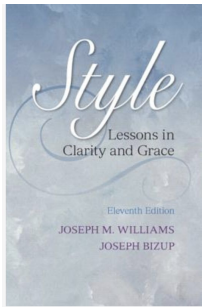
“We propose to train teens to ride and tune-up their bikes to address urban air pollution”

Paragraph 4. Get into the nitty gritty



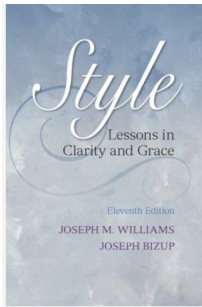
General tips for clear writing

- Let verbs be verbs! (we often try to make them into nouns!)
 - “There was an affirmative *decision* for *expansion*”
 - “The director *decided* to *expand* the program”
- Make the subject of the sentence DO the action
 - “A walk through the woods was taking place on the part of Red Riding Hood”
 - “Red Riding Hood walked through the woods”



General tips for clear writing

- Make sure you have topic sentences, *and* that they match what is in the paragraph
- Pick an order and use the exact same order throughout.
 - If my deliverables are a webinar, a white paper, and a podcast, make sure that every time I mention them, it's always in that same order (including the budget and timeline!)
- Avoid abbreviations
 - It feels repetitive to you, but the reader doesn't remember what "RFP" is when you mentioned it three pages ago and now have a whole new paragraph devoted to it.



Cross-check what you wrote with the review/selection criteria

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

1) Review and Selection Process

Applications will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. Incomplete, noncompliant, and/or applications not meeting the formatting criteria may be eliminated from competition. In that event, the agency will send notification of elimination to the applicant. The agency intends to make a selection and award without

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2) Merit/Technical Criteria

The technical peer review panels use the following criteria, using a 100-point scale, to evaluate applications. These criteria will be applied to the whole project, including federal and non-federally funded parts:

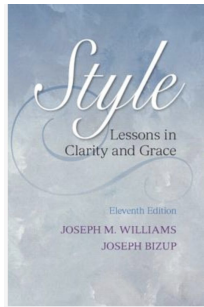
a. Purpose, Approach, and Goals (25 points)

- i. The purpose of the project is clearly explained, the goals and objectives are clearly stated, and the rationale is explicit for why the innovative approach or technology is needed.
- ii. The design and implementation of the project is based on sound methodology and demonstrated technology;
- iii. The project outcomes are stated, measurable, and likely to be achieved; and
- iv. Both beneficial and adverse impacts are considered, and a significant level of improvement will be achieved.

b. Innovative Technology or Approach (25 points)

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TIP: If you have limited time, spend the most time on the sections that give you the most “points”



Start working in Grants.gov before the deadline day

First, make sure you're account works and that you are an entity that is allowed to sign and submit for your organization.

These required documents are not always obvious in the RFP

- List of Congressional districts are often a separate upload
- Area of Work is often a separate upload

workspace Owner: Sarah Venizel-Fisher SAM Expiration Date: Aug 26, 2021 UEL: 0001410000000

FORMS VIEW APPLICATION ATTACHMENTS PARTICIPANTS ACTIVITY DETAILS

Workspace Actions:

Check Application Sign and Submit Delete

Application Package Forms - Users are encouraged to follow [antivirus best practices](#) when Downloading Instructions and Forms: Download Instructions » ?

Include in Package	Form Name (Click to Edit)	Requirement	Form Status	Last Updated Date/Time	Locked By	Actions
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424) [V3.0]	Mandatory	Passed	May 07, 2021 09:37:30 PM EDT	---	Lock Download Upload Reuse Webform

Budget Narrative

TIP. If not provided, ask the program officer for an example budget narrative

SAMPLE BUDGET NARRATIVE

NAME OF Awardee

Project Title

PROJECT TOTAL: \$XXX

Federal Portion: \$XXX

Non-Federal Contribution: \$XXX

A. FEDERAL BUDGET:

1. Personnel

Tom Smith, Project Director, full time, 70% paid by Federal Funds, will advise the project team, assist with demonstration plot establishment, data collection and analysis, and participate in project field days.

Year 1: \$5,000 Year 2: \$5,000 Year 3: \$10,000

Mary Johnson, research technician, 20% time (6 calendar months) for 3 years, 67% paid by Federal funds. Establish the field and demonstration plots, function as the project manager, coordinate sub-award work, draft reports and publications, and participate in all project field days.

Year 1: \$5,000 Year 2: \$5,000 Year 3: \$10,000

2. Fringe benefits

67% fringe benefits paid by Federal funds. Fringe benefits rates are 35% for faculty and permanent staff.

Total Fringe Benefits:

Year 1: \$1,500 Year 2: \$1,500 Year 3: \$3,000

Upload to Grants.gov

Give yourself *at least a half a day* to upload, check, and fix errors.

TIP. Read the Request for Proposals (RFP) again and confirm that all optional attachments are uploaded, that the budget numbers match in each location, etc.

TIP. Download the whole application and check that the conversion to pdf didn't mess up your page limits or figures.

TIP. Make sure you hit “submit” or “send” (really! I've almost missed a deadline because I almost forgot to hit submit after the hours of uploading!)

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10. Upload and hit SUBMIT and CELEBRATE!

