Strategic Planning for Grants

BOC Community Impact Meeting

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MASTERED IN
TENNESSEE
TNECD.COM

05/15/2024

AGENDA

- **WHY PLAN?**
- **WHEN TO PLAN?**
- **HOW TO PLAN?**
- **WHO CAN HELP?**
- **TIPS & TRICKS**
- **CASE STUDY**

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Why Plan?

- Align projects with funding priorities

- Bundle projects and/or grant sources to maximize funding

- Develop comprehensive funding strategy for large projects

- Secure your local match

- Free up local budget for other priorities (e.g. O&M)

- Create a more competitive application

- Engage funding agencies for informal input

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When to Plan?

Proactively review your projects against funding program requirements to develop a plan of attack.

Review grant reference materials.

Some grants take a long time to prepare, with a short duration between the official Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) opening and the application due date, so start now!

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How to Plan?

- **Establish a process for effective decision making with your Board / Commission**

- **Communicate with regional, state, federal agency partners and staff**

- **Watch for program announcements and award announcements**

- **Participate in forums, webinars, conferences, etc. to know latest guidance**

- **Talk to successful applicants – people love to talk about their wins**

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☒ **PROJECT IDENTIFICATION**	• **Identify, evaluate, and prioritize needs**
☐ **FUNDING SOURCE(S) IDENTIFICATION**	• **Break those needs into projects based on funding priorities**
☐ **ELIGIBILITY SCREENING**	• **Identify baseline project components:**
☐ **MERIT CRITERIA**	• **Type of project (capital, operational, planning)**
☐ **BUDGETING PROCESS**	• **Funding amount range**
	• **Timeline to complete**
	• **Partnership opportunities**
☐ **APPLICATION STRATEGY**	• **Consultants/resources needed**

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☒	**PROJECT IDENTIFICATION**
☒	**FUNDING SOURCE(S) IDENTIFICATION**
☐	**ELIGIBILITY SCREENING**
☐	**MERIT CRITERIA**
☐	**BUDGETING PROCESS**
☐	**APPLICATION STRATEGY**

- **Identify potential funding programs and application timelines**

- **Assess readiness for application:**
  - **Scope, definition, purpose/need**
  - **NEPA/environmental needs**
  - **Project schedule**
  - **Project budget estimated**
  - **Public engagement conducted**
  - **Design percentage completed**
  - **Status of procurement/ contracting**

- **Identify which projects match the most appropriate funding opportunities and revise project prioritization accordingly**

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- ☒ PROJECT IDENTIFICATION

- ☒ FUNDING SOURCE(S) IDENTIFICATION

- ☒ ELIGIBILITY SCREENING

- ☐ MERIT CRITERIA

- ☐ BUDGETING PROCESS

- ☐ APPLICATION STRATEGY

- **Evaluate alignment with grant program eligibility requirements and application milestones**

- **Determine lead applicant and potential partnerships**

- **Assess feasibility of timing and resources to prepare applications:**

  - **Assess minimum requirements**

  - **Are there engineering costs or cost estimates needed?**

  - **What are the procurement requirements?**

  - **Is there a NEPA process?**

  - **Is there a public process?**

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☒ PROJECT IDENTIFICATION

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☐ BUDGETING PROCESS

☐ APPLICATION STRATEGY

- **Is the application competitive?**

  - **Assess merit criteria**

  - **Consider project alignment with state/regional/local priorities and goals**

  - **Determine any additional efforts (e.g. public outreach) that could strengthen application**

  - **Identify outstanding questions and potential for project/application refinements**

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☒ PROJECT IDENTIFICATION

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☒ MERIT CRITERIA

☒ BUDGETING PROCESS

☐ APPLICATION STRATEGY

- **Budget for any upfront costs or local matches**

- **Budget for additional costs associated with grant compliance (e.g., procurement requirements, grant administration)**

- **Prepare a 5-year funding strategy to validate longer term feasibility**

- **Revisit that strategy annually with the Board to identify budgetary needs**

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☒	APPLICATION STRATEGY

Prior to NOFO

- **Adjust project scope as needed to fit the funding criteria**

- **Engineering, environmental, & fiscal analyses**

- **Political support**

- **Identify grant application team & workflow**

- **Update SAM.gov registration or grants.gov as appropriate**

During NOFO Response Time

- **Gather letters of support**

- **Write grant narrative**

- **Adjust story and graphics to fit the NOFO format**

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- **Development Districts**

- **Outside Consultants**

- **TNECD**

- **MTAS/CTAS**

- **West TN Planning**

Please attend the July 30 (SW and MidSouth) and 31 (NW) Rural Roundtables to network with ECD, USDA RD, TVA, TDEC, THEC, EDA, Labor, DHS, etc.

Who Can Help?

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Funding & Implementation

- ✓ Resource Identification

- ✓ Funding Identification

- ✓ Grant Technical Assistance, as requested

- ✓ Coordination with Development Districts, Grant Administrators, and State Agencies

- ✓ Coordination with MTAS/CTAS

Ongoing

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Tips & Tricks
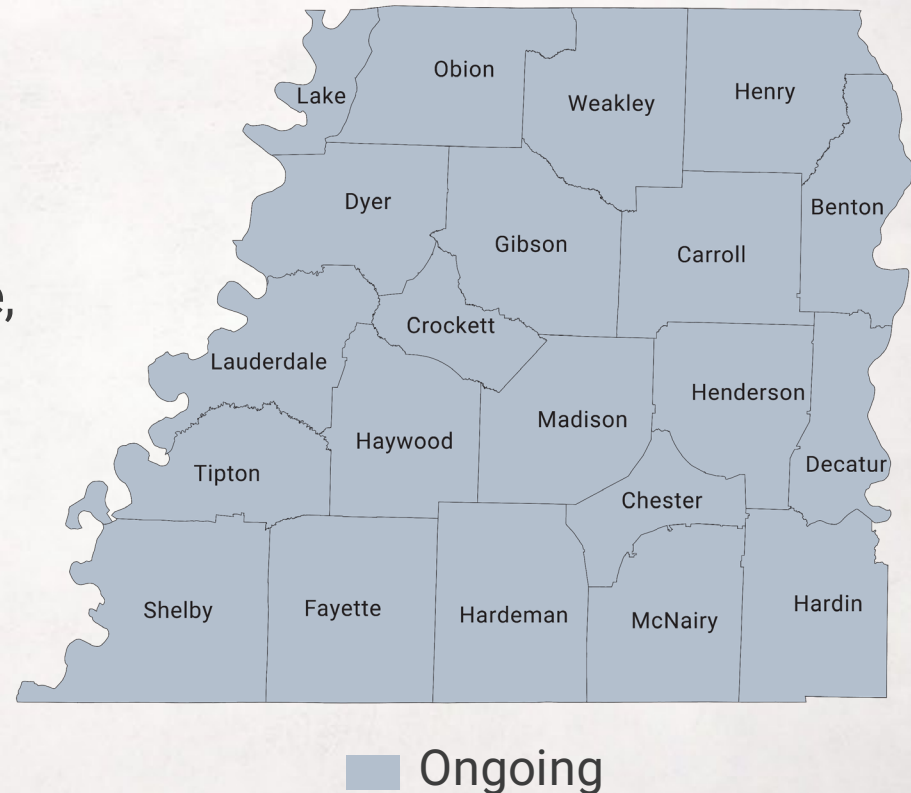
**Complete due diligence prior to NOFO release

- Use language that highlights grant priorities (e.g., resiliency, benefits to disadvantaged communities)

- Formulate clear statement of needs/impacts that align with grants

- Collect data from partner agencies

- Make easy to read text, maps, graphics

- Check (and recheck!) applications for errors and omissions before submitting

- Reference relevant studies

- Engage the public, and garner political and stakeholder support

- **Give them everything and only what they ask for in the number of pages they ask for**

- **Plan for implementation**

- **Plan for outputs and outcomes**

- **Plan for sustainability**

- **Include cushion and contingency**

- **Phase out the work if necessary**

- **Realize the reviewers are looking at dozens of apps**

- **Give the funder a reason to work with you again**

Tips & Tricks

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Case Study

- **BUILD Grant Case Study**

- **Unicoi County Case Study**

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Questions / Discussion