BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY & IMPACT

West Virginia Grant Resource Centers

Huntington • Morgantown

Powered by: Marshall University and West Virginia University

Our Mission

To help small communities and other eligible applicants maximize federal and private dollars from grant applications to support economic development initiatives across the state.

This is a free resource.

Team Overview

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Thank You

Years of Work & Experiences Incorporated Into this Project
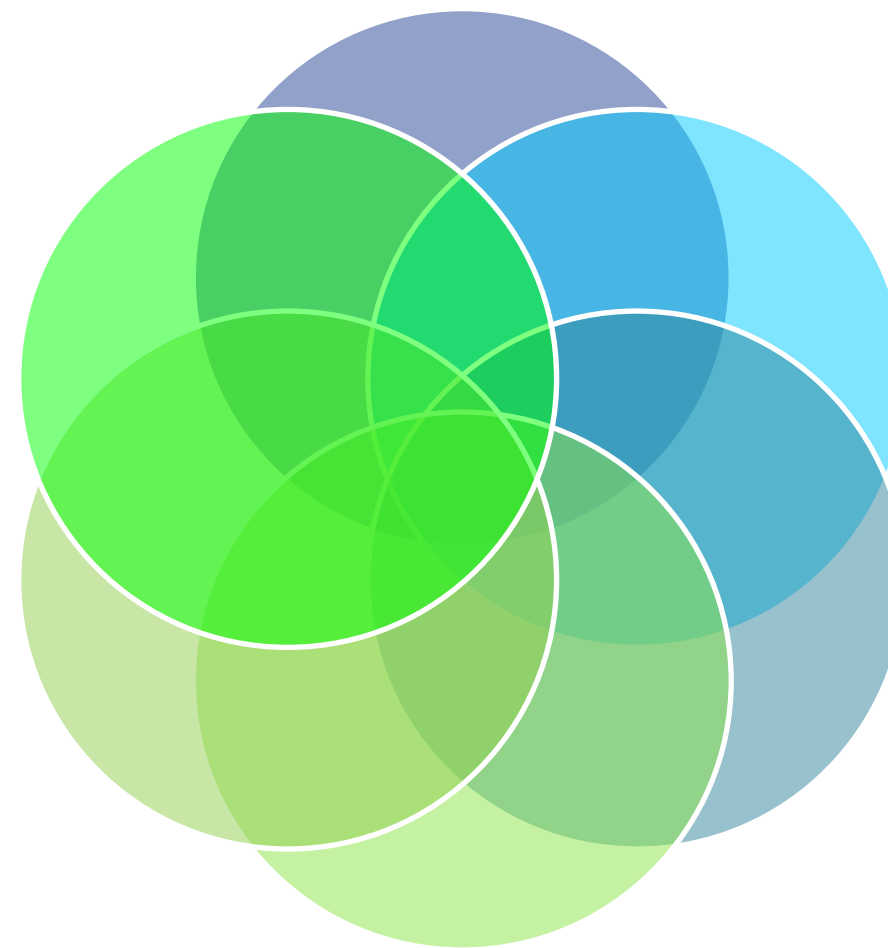
WV Forward

Government Experience

Startup WV

Grant & Project Development Experience

Small Communities, BIG Solutions

40 TOP Online Series

Socialized this Project

- WV Community Development Hub
- WV Department of Economic Development
- WV Economic Development Council
- WV Association of Counties
- Appalachian Regional Commission
- Foundations
- WV Governor's Office

What We Found in Conversations:

Common Barriers:

Short turnaround on application i.e., partnerships support and board support

Inexperience with large project management i.e., compliance and staffing

Alignment of technical assistance

Application doesn't meet funding agency requirement/description/metrics

The need for more partners & relationships with entity

Compliance i.e., auditing, bidding, reporting

Submission Issues

The identification of **matching funds prior to submission**

https://www.umt.edu/research/ORSP/propdev/grants/grantrejection.php

What Our Survey Showed:

77% Responded **Extremely Likely** to take advantage of free services offered by the Grant Centers.

83% Responded **No** to having a full-time grant writer on staff.

The top five areas where respondents need grant writing support.

- **Data Collection**
- **Technical Assistance**
- **Writing**
- **Match**
- **Budget**

When considering grants, what is the biggest issues for your organization?

Survey Results:
325 Respondents – statewide

Topics of Focus

Workforce Development & Training

Economic Development

Community Development & Outdoor Recreation
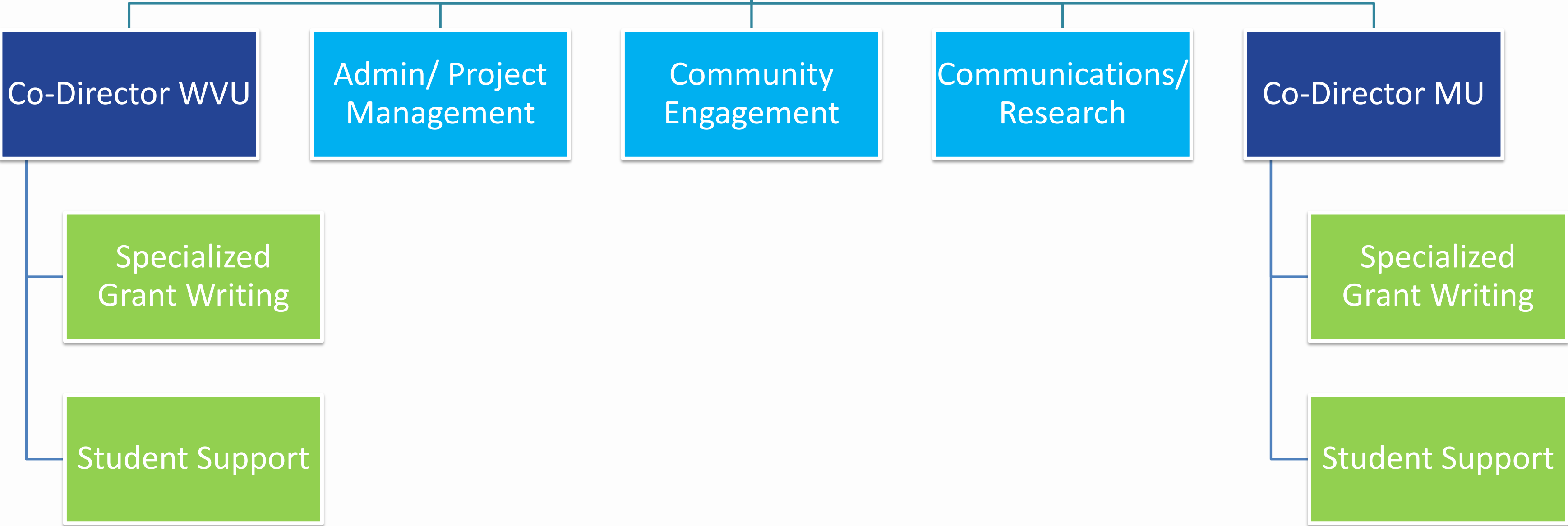
Job Creation and Retention

Infrastructure & Site Development

Deliverables for the West Virginia Grant Resource Centers

Research & Pull Stats	Facilitate Connections	Leverage University Assets	Build Grant Writing Capacity
Host Workshops & Convenings	Develop State Fact Sheets	Offer Grant Writing Certification	Provide Annual Report

Need assistance elevating your proposal?

Submit an application today or sign up to join our mailing list to receive updates from the West Virginia Grant Resource Centers.

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West Virginia Grant Resource Centers

Serving all 55 counties of West Virginia to build capacity and generate impact

Contact Us

SCAN HERE

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Finding Funding Opportunities

- **Finding Federal Grants**
  - Grants.gov
  - Federal Agencies Websites
- **Finding Foundation Grants**
  - Candid. Foundation Directory
- **Other Funding Opportunity Databases**
  - IWG's Clearing House of Funding Opportunities
  - NGA's IIJA Formula And Competitive Grant Program Tracker

What are Letters of Intent

Letters of Intent are completed prior to proposal completion

Letters of Intent are usually required but not always part of an application package

Letters of Intent usually have a form document of completion

Letters of Intent provide an overview of the project proposed.

Overview of Letters of Intent

- **Overview Letters of Intent**
  - Letters of Intent offer the grant organization insight into your proposed project
  - They help grantors "weed out" potential candidates
  - Letters of Intent can be a substantial part of the grant writing process.
  - There is usually a deadline associated with the LOI that predates grant submission

Letter of Intent (LOI) Instructions

Applicants are encouraged to submit a "Letter of Intent to Submit an Application" by the Letter of Intent due date specified in the RFA for the AFRI Program Area Priority of interest. Although a letter of intent is not required, is not binding, and does not enter into the review of a subsequent application, the information that it contains allows program staff to estimate the potential review workload and plan the review.

Please the following guidelines for LOI submission:

1. The Letter of Intent must adhere to the following formatting guidelines:
   a. Font size must be at least 12 point
   b. Margins must be at least one inch in all directions
   c. Line spacing must not exceed six lines of text per vertical inch
   d. Page size must be letter (i.e., 8.5 inches × 11 inches)

2. The Letter of Intent is limited to three pages for CAP grants and two pages for all other grant types.
   a. On Page 1, provide only the following information:
      i. the name, professional title, department, institution, and e-mail address of the lead project director (PD) and name, professional title, department, and institution of all collaborating investigators
      ii. the Program Area or the Program Area Priority that is most closely addressed in the application
   b. On Page 2, include:
      i. a descriptive title
      ii. rationale
      iii. overall hypothesis or goal
      iv. specific objectives
      v. approach
      vi. potential impact and expected outcomes

Building Your Project Narrative

- **Study the Application Instructions**
- **Basic Components of a Project Narrative**
  - Project Summary
  - Statement of Need
  - Scope of Work
  - Expected Outputs and Outcomes
  - Evaluation and Measures of Success
  - Organizational Capacity
  - Budget and Budget Narrative
  - Sustainability
- **Dos and Don'ts and Best Practices**

Source: Intrumentl

Study the Application Instructions

- <u>Read, read, and reread</u> the application instructions
- Funders use different names to refer to the application instructions. Here are some examples:
  - Notice of funding opportunity
  - Broad agency announcement
  - Request for proposal
  - Funding opportunity announcement
  - Notice of funding availability
- There is no across the board application review criteria. Each funder has a different requirement. However, the next slides outline the basic components of a project narrative

Project Summary

- This section provides a high-level overview of your project
- Your project summary is your selling point, so you want to make sure that you make a good first impression and attract the reviewer's attention
- Introduce the funder to the problem your project is trying to solve and your proposed solution
- Create anticipation
- Write your project summary last
- Guiding Questions
  - What does your organization want to do?
  - Why does your organization want to do it?
  - How does your organization plan to do it?
  - How will your organization know if it succeeds?
  - What benefits could accrue if the project is successful?

Statement of Need

- The statement of need drives your entire proposal
- Describe the issue within your community that your organization is seeking to tackle
- Use stories and compelling, recent data from credible sources to create a persuasive argument
- Your statement of need must be clearly aligned with the federal agency's or private foundation's mission and funding priorities
- Guiding Questions
  - What is the unmet problem/urgent need that your project is trying to address?
  - Is the rationale for your project compelling and relevant to the funder's mission and funding priorities (i.e., is your project addressing a funder-relevant problem)?
  - What are the consequences of not addressing this issue now?
  - Are you backing up your statements with reliable data?

Scope of Work

- Describe your organization's approach to addressing the important, unmet problem
- This is an opportunity to show the funding agency or private foundation the work that their investment will support
- Assume that the reviewer does not know anything about your organization and project idea
- Explain your project in detail — including proposed activities, goals, and a timeline — to demonstrate to the funder that you have a solid, well-thought-out plan
- Guiding Questions
  - Are you providing a detailed explanation of your scope of work and project activities?
  - How is your project uniquely positioned to address the unmet problem?
  - Are you providing evidence that your organization has identified a feasible plan to address the problem identified in the statement of need?

Expected Results and Outcomes

- Describe what your organization hopes to achieve from the project
- Use the SMART Framework: Expected outcomes need to be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-Bound
- Describe the return on investment (ROI) to the funder — funders are interested in supporting grants that will make a significant impact in communities
- Explain how you arrived at these estimates and how these outcomes will help to advance the agency's or private foundation's mission
- Guiding Questions
  - Are you clearly describing what your organization expects to achieve as a direct result of the project?
  - What is going to be the ROI to the funder and is it proportional to your funding request?
  - Are your anticipated results and outcomes realistic and attainable (SMART approach)?

Evaluation and Measures of Success

- Explain how your organization will determine and demonstrate that it has achieved the desired outcomes and results
- Usually involve the collection of quantitative and qualitative data
- Focus on process evaluation and outcome evaluation
- Federal and state grants often require applicants to provide a detailed evaluation plan – accountability mechanism for the use of taxpayer dollars
- The evaluation plan/approach should be linked to the proposed project activities, goals and objectives, and expected outcomes
- Guiding Questions
  - Are you describing to the funder the approach and tools that your organization will use to consistently track, evaluate, and report the project's processes and outcomes?
  - Is your evaluation approach linked to the activities, goals and objectives, and expected outcomes of your project?
  - Are you addressing process evaluation and outcome evaluation?

Organizational Capacity

- Explain why your organization is well-positioned to implement the proposed project and successfully manage the grant award
- The goal is to convince the funder that your organization has the right expertise and qualified staff to carry out this work
- Include information about partner organizations that will be involved in implementation
- Describe your staff's background and qualifications and prior experience managing awards (i.e., your track record)
- Guiding questions
  - Are you providing information about your organization's structure, financial and fiscal systems, staff's qualifications, and other mechanisms to successfully implement the project, manage the award, and meet reporting requirements?
  - Are you demonstrating why your organization is uniquely positioned to carry out this work and address the unmet problem?

Budget and Budget Narrative

- The budget shows the funding agency or private foundation how your organization plans to use the grant funds
- It is one of the most important components of your application
- This information will usually be uploaded separately
- Align each budget item with your project's scope of work
- Your budget needs to be realistic and include information about all funding sources, including match (if required/available), in-kind contributions, other funding sources, etc.
- The budget narrative provides a description of each line item, including how your organization calculated the costs and how they tie to the scope work
- Guiding Questions
    - Are you using the funder's recommended format for the budget and budget narrative?
    - Is each budget item realistic and consistent with your project's scope of work?

Sustainability

- Explain how your organization will continue to advance the project's goals and objectives after the end of the period of performance
- Funders are interested in supporting projects that will continue in some fashion after the grant period ends
- Broad-based coalitions have a better chance of sustaining projects long-term
- Mention other funding sources that might allow your organization to continue carrying out the project activities (e.g., if your project will generate revenue, attract private investment, and/or other funding will become available)
- Guiding Questions
  - What is your plan for your project's longevity?
  - Have you identified alternative funding sources and relevant partners that can ensure the sustainability of your project?

Dos and Don'ts and Best Practices

- Follow the funder's application instructions to a T!
- Make an outline — use headings and subtitles — and follow the order of the questions listed in the application instructions
- Pay attention to language that reads: "must" and "required"
- Focus on the story you are trying to tell and support it with compelling data (not adjectives)
- Know your audience
- Avoid jargon and technical terms and do not use slangs and contractions
- Keep your writing brief yet specific
- Review successful proposals and consider serving as a reviewer
- Proofread the narrative multiple times and ask colleagues to review your proposal
- Bad grammar may undermine an otherwise solid, fundable project
- Use active voice and do not use first person