



Running an AEFLA Competition: A to Z

2013 Annual State Directors Meeting
Westin Arlington, VA

Session Agenda

- Objectives
- Planning Phase(s)
- Writing the Request for Applications (RFA)
- Pre-application Publicity and Outreach
- Application Rating Considerations
- Review Panel Recruitment & Management
- Post-panel, Pre-award Procedures
- Debriefings and Appeals
- Writing the RFA (revisited)

Objectives

- Identify and understand key processes in running a grant competition
- Identify AEFLA and EDGAR requirements related to these key processes
- Convince you to keep your state agency's administrative guidelines for grant competitions at your side every step of the way
- Identify and assess (costs-benefits) possible "good practices" if not "best practices" for each phase of a competition
- Pique interest for Community of Practice (CoP)

Planning, Planning, and Planning

- Identify key processes
 - Drafting RFA
 - Releasing RFA and responding to questions
 - Developing ratings framework
 - Getting reviewers and managing panel(s)
 - Other post-panel, pre-award procedures
 - Debriefings and appeals
- Make a plan
 - How do you *ideally* want to run this process?
 - What State guidelines or regulations exist on this process?
 - What is in AEFLA and EDGAR regarding this process?
 - Who do you need to coordinate with? How long will it take?
 - What is the best course of action based on the above?

Writing the RFA

- Key Content (minimum)
 - Program Purpose
 - Eligibility
 - State Priorities
 - Evaluation/Scoring Method
 - Budget Guidance
 - Administrivia (page length, submission method, etc.)

RFA Publicity and Outreach

- Dissemination of RFA
 - To whom?
 - Via which media?
 - Consistent with process in State Plan? Or an improved process?
- Technical Assistance and Response to Questions
 - Possible forums: bidders conference(s)
published Q&As
 - Formal modifications to RFA, if necessary
 - Standard process, equitable access

Rating Applications

- Developing a scoring rubric
 - What are you measuring?
 - How are you assigning points?
 - Defining the standard
- AEFLA's 12 considerations

Recruiting & Managing Reviewers

- Desired Experience and Qualifications
- Potential Conflicts of Interest
 - Questions to ask
 - Written agreements
 - Any waivers?
- Managing the Process
 - Review plan
 - Panel(s) composition
 - Guidance/instructions to reviewers
 - Methods for resolving conflict, arriving at panel recommendations
 - Summarizing overall recommendations

Post-panel Procedures

- Reviewing application budgets
 - Using Federal guidelines – AEFLA, OMB circulars
 - Using the RFA and State guidelines
- Clarifications and revisions
 - Consistency in follow-up (let your review plan guide the process)
 - Clarity about what is “unallowable” and must be changed
 - Cautions – Don’t change a substantive requirement of the RFA, don’t allow a substantive change to their overall approach (i.e., create an unfair, “competitive advantage” for one provider)

Post-panel Procedures (cont.)

- Funding slate and award announcement
 - Funding slate: Last line of agency approval
 - Summarizes review process, explains/justifies any adjustments from peer review process and/or clarifications
 - Award announcement
 - General terms and conditions
 - Any special conditions applicable to only a particular provider(s)
 - Public disclosure requirement under Transparency Act

Debriefings and Appeals

- Under EDGAR, do ***not*** need to offer a hearing ***before*** disapproving an AEFLA application
- Unsuccessful applicant can request hearing within 30 days of action by State
- State agency must hold hearing within 30 days of receipt of request
- Agency must issue written ruling within 10 days of hearing
- If State agency upholds its decision, applicant has 20 days to appeal to ED

34 CFR §76.401(b),(c),and (d)

Writing the RFA (revisited)

- Writing may mean “re-writing” as you plan out each stage
- Why do through multiple draft of plan and RFA?
 - Transparency and clarity of process up-front is not only good practice, it safeguards against program office actions being overturned



Next Steps

- CoP anyone?