Critical Points in RFPs and Contracts

Jacqueline E. LaMuth
Ohio State University
lamuth.1@osu.edu

Extension professionals find themselves caught in the sobering trend of shrinking traditional Extension program funding and growing pressure to actively secure monies from new sources to support their work. Extension agents struggle as they wade through the pages of verbiage in Requests for Funding (RFP), and Notifications of Funding Availability (NOFA). They are overwhelmed as they try to follow the directions and develop a proposal. They are lost as they skim over the language in a contract or agreement. Ohio State University Extension offers its professionals frequent 6-hour workshops and individual assistance to help them become comfortable reading RFPs, writing proposals, and reading contracts for services. Participants’ pre surveys consistently reflect a general lack of knowledge, and poorly developed skills, and a lack of confidence. At the end of the workshop, post-surveys indicate the brief exposure to information and training makes a positive difference in their knowledge of where to find information as well as in their willingness to write and submit a proposal.

Purpose
This poster illustrates a quick way (using a highlighter and post-a-notes) to sort through an RFP or NOFA to determine if it is an appropriate funding opportunity, and which points in a contract are critical must be reviewed by the project developer.

Major Points

Critical details in an RFP or NOFA
- Submission deadlines
- Priorities
- Eligibility
- Allowable and unallowable budget items
- Allowable administrative costs
- Where to submit
- How to submit

Critical points in a contract
- Scope of services (deliverables) match proposal
- Starting and ending dates
- Reasonable process for billing/invoicing
- Arrangements for unused funds
- Modifications can be made by mutual agreement in writing
- Either party may terminate project by notifying the other party in writing.
- Reasonable accountability/reports
- Fast-tracking and pressure
- Indemnify, hold harmless, and insurance expectations

Educational Importance
By finding the critical details of an RFP/NOFA early, only a few minutes are spent assessing the opportunity. Legal Affairs reviews contracts for legal issues, but only the professional involved in developing the project and the arrangement can know if the details of the contract are accurate and acceptable. By checking the accuracy of the program details, professionals are confident about the contract that will be signed.