

Writing a Winning Narrative

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Learning Objectives

- Participants will have a better understanding of the following:
 - How to use a RFP/NOFO to structure and write a Project Narrative
 - Tips to strengthen your application
 - Common mistakes to avoid

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Using the RFP/NOFO to Structure Your Project Narrative

Using the RFP/NOFO - Project Narrative

- Read ALL instructions thoroughly
- Pay attention to page limits and what is included, and any formatting requirements
- Answer the questions as presented
- Copy the question into your proposal
- Using the scoring criteria in your narrative
- Use language from the RFP/NOFO for project alignment
- Look for data sources within the RFP/NOFO

Project Narrative – Copy Question into Narrative

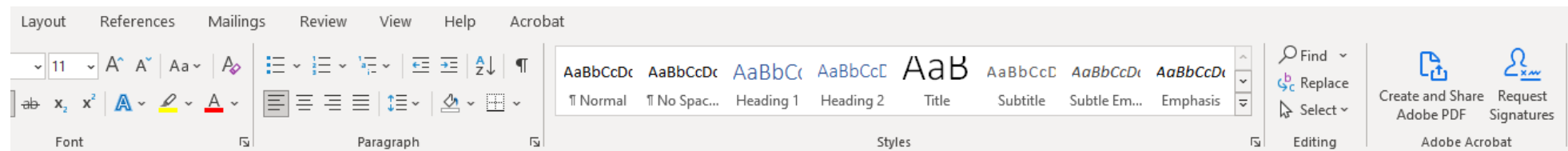
- For example...

Your proposal must include the following information and section headers for the narrative:

- Overview of the service area and target population to be served
 - Specifically outline the States/regions/counties and specific target populations you will serve. Describe how you identified the needs of the proposed target population(s) and area(s) that are the most vulnerable and medically underserved and your capacity to reach this population.
 - Provide a demographic overview of the population to be served, including racial and ethnicity data, as available. Include information on any impacted subpopulations who have historically experienced poorer health outcomes, health disparities, and other inequities.
 - Provide data and statistics from appropriate, reliable sources for your proposed service area or population that reflect the most recent timeframe available (see [Section IV.7](#)).

Project Narrative – Copy Question into Narrative

- Project approach to address identified needs
 - Provide details of how you propose to serve your target population/ service area based on the needs identified. Include how you will monitor your progress and make adjustments as needed to ensure target population(s) are served.
 - Provide a clear overview of the partnerships or collaborative organizations you propose as part of this project, if any. NOTE: A partnership is not required, but may be helpful to accomplish the program activities and meet the needs of your selected target population. Letters of Intent from these organizations may be included to demonstrate support in the application but are not required. Please outline the names and point of contact of the organizations involved in the project and a brief overview of their responsibilities in this project. Please provide any related experience these organizations have in public health projects or outreach to your proposed target populations.
 - Include specific activities you propose to engage in. Include your proposed staffing approach (e.g., the workforce roles you will employ) and vaccine-related activities to meet the identified needs of your target population(s). Note that activities and approaches may be tailored to best fit the needs of individual target population(s).
 - Describe your ability to quickly hire or otherwise engage and train community outreach workers and other staff, specific activities of the staff, and demonstrate a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, and hiring staff from the communities they serve.
 - Include a high-level timeline for completing activities after award, including specifying which activities will be completed in each quarter of the 12-month period of performance.



SET UP FORMATTING AND STRUCTURE

1. Copy and paste questions
2. Format it so you can fill in answers and know exactly what you are answering (also reviewers will know exactly what they are reviewing)
3. Good time to set font, size, margins, page numbers, footers, etc.

Overview of the service area and target population to be served

Specifically outline the States/regions/counties and specific target populations you will serve.

Describe how you identified the needs of the proposed target population(s) and area(s) that are the most vulnerable and medically underserved and your capacity to reach this population.

Provide a demographic overview of the population to be served, including racial and ethnicity data, as available. Include information on any impacted subpopulations who have historically experienced poorer health outcomes, health disparities, and other inequities.

Provide data and statistics from appropriate, reliable sources for your proposed service area or population that reflect the most recent timeframe available.

Project approach to address identified needs

Provide details of how you propose to serve your target population/ service area based on the needs identified. Include how you will monitor your progress and make adjustments as needed to ensure target population(s) are served.

Provide a clear overview of the partnerships or collaborative organizations you propose as part of this project, if any. NOTE: A partnership is not required, but may be helpful to accomplish the program activities and meet the needs of your selected target population. Letters of Intent from these organizations may be included to demonstrate support in the application but are not required. Please outline the names and point of contact of the organizations involved in the project and a brief overview of their responsibilities in this project. Please provide any related experience these organizations have in public health projects or outreach to your proposed target populations.

Include specific activities you propose to engage in. Include your proposed staffing approach (e.g., the workforce roles you will employ) and vaccine-related activities to meet the identified needs of your target population(s). Note that activities and approaches may be tailored to best fit the needs of individual target population(s).

Describe your ability to quickly hire or otherwise engage and train community outreach workers and other staff, specific activities of the staff, and demonstrate a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, and hiring staff from the communities they serve.

Include a high-level timeline for completing activities after award, including specifying which activities will be completed in each quarter of the 12-month period of performance.

Project Narrative – Scoring Criteria

■ For example...

1. Review Criteria

HRSA has procedures for assessing the technical merit of applications to provide for an objective review. HRSA will use the following criteria in order to complete the review and score applications. HRSA will conduct reviews for completeness, eligibility, and allowable costs. HRSA reserves the right to request budget modifications, scope changes, and/or narrative revisions if an application is not fully responsive to the instructions or if ineligible activities or purchases are proposed.

Service Area/target population (35 total points)

1. To what extent does the application clearly identify vulnerable target population(s) using data from a reliable and recent data source such as the [CDC Social Vulnerability Index](#)? (20 points)
2. To what extent does the application outline the needs of the population to be served? (10 points)
3. To what extent does the application provide a demographic overview of the service area and target population to be served? (5 points)

Project Approach (45 total points)

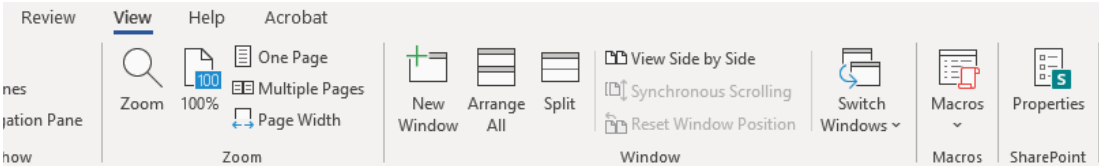
4. To what extent does the application describe a plan to address the identified needs of the population as related to COVID-19 vaccinations along with a timeline for completion of these activities? (10 points)
5. To what extent does the application propose organization(s) with capacity/experience engaging the identified target population(s) to address the identified needs of the service area/target community? (10 points)
6. To what extent does the application propose regional and local organization(s) capable of quickly hiring community outreach workers, engaging the target population(s), and assisting people in getting the COVID-19 vaccination? (15 points)
7. To what extent does the application describe the applicant's ability to quickly hire, train, and deploy outreach staff with a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, and hiring from the communities they serve? (10 points)

Budget (20 total points)

8. To what extent does the application provide a 12-month budget and budget narrative that explains how the requested budget aligns with the activities and project timeline being proposed? (10 points)
9. To what extent does the budget reflect the proposed approach and size of the service area? (10 points)

Can use scoring criteria to determine page length for each section

Can copy and paste into narrative to make sure you address it



Overview of the service area and target population to be served

Specifically outline the States/regions/counties and specific target populations you will serve. To what extent does the application clearly identify vulnerable target population(s) using data from a reliable and recent data source such as the CDC Social Vulnerability Index? (20 points)

Describe how you identified the needs of the proposed target population(s) and area(s) that are the most vulnerable and medically underserved and your capacity to reach this population. To what extent does the application outline the needs of the population to be served? (10 points)

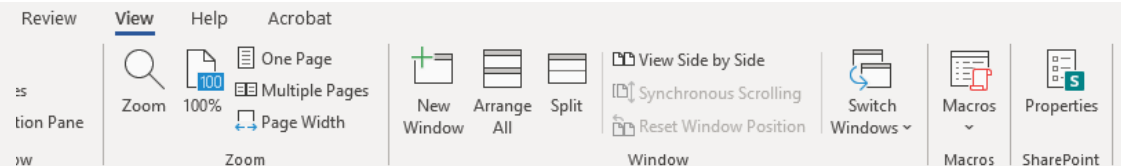
Provide a demographic overview of the population to be served, including racial and ethnicity data, as available. Include information on any impacted subpopulations who have historically experienced poorer health outcomes, health disparities, and other inequities. To what extent does the application provide a demographic overview of the service area and target population to be served? (5 points)

Provide data and statistics from appropriate, reliable sources for your proposed service area or population that reflect the most recent timeframe available.

Project approach to address identified needs

Provide details of how you propose to serve your target population/ service area based on the needs identified. Include how you will monitor your progress and make adjustments as needed to ensure target population(s) are served. To what extent does the application describe a plan to address the identified needs of the population as related to COVID-19 vaccinations along with a timeline for completion of these activities? (10 points)

Provide a clear overview of the partnerships or collaborative organizations you propose as part of this project, if any. NOTE: A partnership is not required, but may be helpful to accomplish the program activities and meet the needs of your selected target population. Letters of Intent from these organizations may be included to demonstrate support in the application but are not required. Please outline the names and point of contact of the organizations involved in the project and a brief overview of their responsibilities in this project. Please provide any related experience these organizations have in public health projects or outreach to your proposed target populations. To what extent does the application propose organization(s) with capacity/experience engaging the identified target population(s) to address the identified needs of the service area/target community? (10 points)



Include specific activities you propose to engage in. Include your proposed staffing approach (e.g., the workforce roles you will employ) and vaccine-related activities to meet the identified needs of your target population(s). Note that activities and approaches may be tailored to best fit the needs of individual target population(s). To what extent does the application propose regional and local organization(s) capable of quickly hiring community outreach workers, engaging the target population(s), and assisting people in getting the COVID-19 vaccination? (15 points)

Describe your ability to quickly hire or otherwise engage and train community outreach workers and other staff, specific activities of the staff, and demonstrate a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, and hiring staff from the communities they serve.

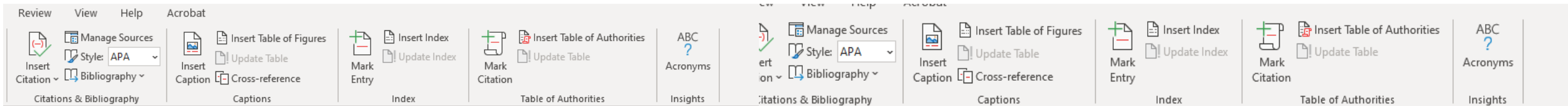
To what extent does the application describe the applicant's ability to quickly hire, train, and deploy outreach staff with a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, and hiring from the communities they serve? (10 points)

Include a high-level timeline for completing activities after award, including specifying which activities will be completed in each quarter of the 12-month period of performance.

Added scoring criteria to my word document in red to make sure it is addressed. Will delete before submission...or not.

Project Narrative – Other Formatting Tips

- Use tables or maps to display data and for timelines
- Make sure it prints in black and white clearly
- Make sure maps, tables and charts are easy to read
- Keep it in portrait layout
- Use tables and bullet points up front for place savers
- Make sure track changes are all saved
- Save final document as a PDF



Overview of the service area and target population to be served

Specifically outline the States/regions/counties and specific target populations you will serve. **To what extent does the application clearly identify vulnerable target population(s) using data from a reliable and recent data source such as the CDC Social Vulnerability Index? (20 points)**

Describe how you identified the needs of the proposed target population(s) and area(s) that are the most vulnerable and medically underserved and your capacity to reach this population. **To what extent does the application outline the needs of the population to be served? (10 points)**

Provide a demographic overview of the population to be served, including racial and ethnicity data, as available. Include information on any impacted subpopulations who have historically experienced poorer health outcomes, health disparities, and other inequities. **To what extent does the application provide a demographic overview of the service area and target population to be served? (5 points)**

	County	State
Median Income		
Race		
Ethnicity		

Provide data and statistics from appropriate, reliable sources for your proposed service area or population that reflect the most recent timeframe available.

Provide a clear overview of the partnerships or collaborative organizations you propose as part of this project, if any. NOTE: A partnership is not required, but may be helpful to accomplish the program activities and meet the needs of your selected target population. Letters of Intent from these organizations may be included to demonstrate support in the application but are not required. Please outline the names and point of contact of the organizations involved in the project and a brief overview of their responsibilities in this project. Please provide any related experience these organizations have in public health projects or outreach to your proposed target populations. **To what extent does the application propose organization(s) with capacity/experience engaging the identified target population(s) to address the identified needs of the service area/target community? (10 points)**

Organization Name	Point of Contact	Responsibilities	Related Experience

OR

- Organization Name – Point of Contact
 - Responsibilities -
 - Related Experience -

Add tables (or bullet points) to add demographic information and partnerships for an easily read format



Project Narrative – Timeline of Implementation

- Timeline for Implementation
- Table format
- Divided into 4 quarters
- Outline activities to be completed in each quarter
- Include evaluation/data collection in your timeline
- Include dissemination of information

Timeline of Implementation Example Format

Include a high-level timeline for completing activities after award, including specifying which activities will be completed in each quarter of the 12-month period of performance.

1st Quarter	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hire 5 community outreach <u>workers</u>• Develop marketing <u>materials</u>• Work with partners to schedule vaccine <u>clinics</u>• Work with partners to arrange transportation to vaccine <u>clinics</u>• Create data collection <u>tools</u>• Hold 5 vaccination clinics weekly
2nd Quarter	
3rd Quarter	
4th Quarter	

Workplan Example

- Takes timeline a step further
- Adds in objectives and start/end dates
- Includes evaluation

Sample Work Plan Template (<http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/grants/technicalassistance/worktemplate.docx>)

This is a sample Work Plan template. It is provided as one example of the type of Work Plan required in grant applications for HRSA's Bureau of Health Workforce. Other types are acceptable. The requirement can be found in the FOA at Section IV.2.ii. Project Narrative, Response to Program Purpose (b) Work Plan.

Goal:

Measurable Outcome(s):

*** Time Frame (Start/End Dates by Month in Project Cycle)**

Major Objectives	Key Tasks	Person(s) Responsible	Start Date (By Month/Year in Project Cycle)	End Date (By Month/Year in Project Cycle)
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				

Note: You can add as many major objectives as necessary for your program.

Project Narrative – Using Language from the NOFO

1. Purpose

The purpose of the program is to establish, expand, and sustain a public health workforce to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19. This includes mobilizing community outreach workers, which includes community health workers, patient navigators, and social support specialists, to educate and assist individuals in accessing and receiving COVID-19 vaccinations. This includes activities such as conducting face-to-face outreach and reaching out directly to community members to educate them about the vaccine, assisting individuals in making a vaccine appointment, providing resources to find convenient vaccine locations, assisting individuals with transportation or other needs to get to a vaccination site. The program intends to address persistent health disparities by offering support and resources to vulnerable and medically underserved communities, including racial and ethnic minority groups and individuals living in areas of high social vulnerability.

HRSA will fund recipients that have demonstrated experience and expertise in implementing public health programs, particularly in medically underserved areas.

Award recipients will need to clearly describe how the funding will directly serve and impact vulnerable communities; and demonstrate how they will prioritize hiring individuals from the communities they will serve by providing outreach, education and assistance related to the COVID-19 vaccine.

Project Narrative – Using Language from the NOFO

2. Background

This program is authorized by Section 311(a) of the Public Health Service (PHS) Act (42 USC §243) and Section 2501 of Public Law 117-2 (American Rescue Plan Act of 2021).

COVID-19 has disproportionately affected racial/ethnic minority groups and individuals living in areas of high social vulnerability, including those who are socioeconomically disadvantaged. A January 2021 study confirmed that a wide range of sociodemographic risk factors, including socioeconomic status, racial/ethnic minority status, income, household composition, and environmental factors, were significantly associated with COVID-19 incidence and mortality.¹ Another large study analyzing electronic health records data for patients from 53 health systems across 21 states found Black, Hispanic, and Asian patients had significantly higher rates of infection, hospitalization, and death compared to their White counterparts, even after controlling for sociodemographic characteristics and underlying health conditions.²

Given the existing inequities in COVID-19 morbidity and mortality burden, it is critical to improve the vaccination coverage in communities with high proportions of racial/ethnic minority groups and individuals who are economically and socially marginalized. On March 26, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released a Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) that discusses the County-Level COVID-19 Vaccination Coverage and Social Vulnerability.³ Since the U.S. COVID-19 vaccination program began, vaccination coverage has been lower in counties of high social vulnerability nationwide, demonstrating that targeted efforts are needed to achieve health equity for those most affected by COVID-19. Early studies also show that there are significant differences in vaccination rates among different racial and ethnic groups. While information on race and ethnicity was available for approximately half of the COVID-19 vaccine recipients in reports, data shows that the percentage of vaccine recipients who are Hispanic and Black are lower than expected based on the proportions of the total U.S. population.⁴ Ensuring equitable access to vaccines remains a national priority, and this program will be critical in achieving that goal.

This program will target resources to the most vulnerable and medically underserved communities within counties to ensure that challenges such as vaccine confidence and assisting with vaccine accessibility are addressed. This program will build upon national vaccine education and outreach efforts (including the HHS-funded programs listed in [Section IV.7](#)), while tailoring approaches to meet the unique needs of the community. Further, this funding will directly support a community outreach workforce to serve as trusted messengers to build vaccine confidence and address any barriers to vaccination for vulnerable individuals and communities.



Using the NOFO – Data Sources

- Take note of data sources within NOFO
 - Hyperlinks
 - Footnotes
- Be sure to cite your sources either parenthetically or footnoted in your application

Other Tips

- Answer everything
 - Especially when more than one person is working on the same document
- Be concise
- Be consistent throughout your application
- Avoid redundancy
- Think and write chronologically
- Avoid jargon
- Acronyms – Spell them out first, and then you can use the acronym throughout the rest of the narrative
 - Ex. Cox Medical Center Branson (CMCB)
- Have someone read it who knows nothing about the program
- Come up with a catchy name for your program



Common Mistakes

- Including sales tax exempt letter instead of 501c3 designation letter
- Forgetting a required attachment
- Submitting with track changes
- Using generic boiler plate language
- Not being clear about what you need funding for
- Submitting the same budget for program and organizational
- Applying for unallowable expenses or too much funding
- Budget guesstimates
- Mission drift
- Submitting even though your organization does not qualify
- Grant consultant considerations



FAQ's

- Is it better to cite sources parenthetically or in footnotes?
- What if I don't have room to leave the questions from the RFP/NOFO within my text?
- Do I have to use tables and graphs?
- What if I accidentally submit a document with track changes in it?
- Will I receive scoring and feedback on my application?

The background features a series of concentric circles in light gray, some solid and some dashed, creating a subtle pattern. A large, solid blue rectangle is centered on the page, serving as a backdrop for the text. The rectangle has a small triangular point at the bottom center.

Thank You!

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