

Your Proposal is a SHIPP: Steer Your Vessel in the Right Direction

Introduction

What is the intended purpose of the SHIPP model?

You have reached a stage in your grantseeking efforts where you have identified the appropriate funding opportunity for your project. You start looking into the application materials to begin the proposal development process and become overwhelmed by the requirements. Perhaps it is your first time writing a federal grant, or any type of funding proposal at all. The good news is that regardless of the grantmaker, there are common components where you can focus your efforts and distinguish your proposal. The SHIPP model streamlines the grantwriting process by focusing on the five crucial components of the proposal development process. The SHIPP model works because it not only breaks down the grantwriting process into five core foundation areas, providing a step-by-step approach to proposal development, but also serves as a tool to conceptualize the process. You must think of your proposal as a vessel for your project. If you steer your SHIPP in the right direction, your project will be on the path to funding.

Is there anything I should be cautious about in using SHIPP?

There are three C's that can be used to describe a competitive grant proposal: comprehensive, compelling and compliant. The SHIPP model is a resource that has been created to equip grantwriters with the tools to develop a comprehensive and compelling grant proposal. However, the first line of defense for any grantmaker developing a competitive grant program is to ensure the submission is compliant. There is NO SUBSTITUTE for thoroughly reading the grant guidance in its entirety and understanding all the components that must be addressed to make the submission compliant. You must be sure to dot every "i" and cross every "t". The grantmaker can and will dismiss your proposal without review for failing to comply with submission requirements. This can be as simple as using the wrong font, going over page limitations, or failing to include an attachment dealing with lobbying activity disclosure. Every program is unique and there will likely be application requirements not addressed in the SHIPP model... careful attention to detail is essential.

What component of the proposal will SHIPP help me with the most?

The key area where you distinguish yourself when applying to a competitive grant program is in the project narrative. By addressing the five core elements laid out in the SHIPP model, you are essentially piecing together the narrative. You will likely find that the information you gather in addressing the five core components will prove useful in other areas of the grant proposal as well. However, SHIPP is not specific to any particular grant, which means you must still make the connections between your project and the priorities of the funding opportunity for which you are applying. In developing the narrative, the SHIPP model is designed to assist you with addressing various components of the proposal, including the statement of need, implementation plan, organizational capacity, matching requirement, and collaborative efforts. You will craft a budget and accompanying narrative to support the plan as

articulated in the project description, but the budget should be much easier to draft once the overall project narrative is complete.. In this way, the SHIPP model indirectly assists with development of the project budget. You will also need to address other important pieces of the submission, such as reporting requirements and sustainability of the project, outside of the SHIPP model.

What are the five components that make up the SHIPP model?

SHIPP is an acronym used to denote the five critical areas of the proposal that will help you articulate your project for any funding opportunity you wish to pursue : **S**etting, **H**istorical Perspective & Future Outlook, **I**nnovation, **P**artnerships/Collaboration, and **P**opulation. SHIPP does not necessarily speak to the particular order that these items will be addressed in the actual proposal. However, distinguishing your project along these five parameters will ultimately provide the bulk of your final proposal. Let's take a look at the five core elements:

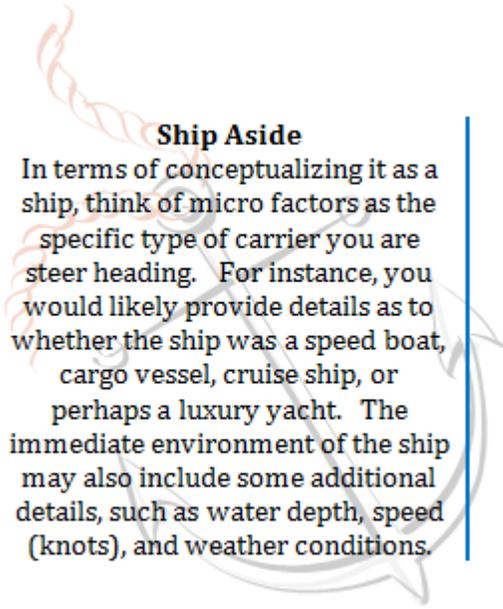
Steps in the SHIPP Model

Setting

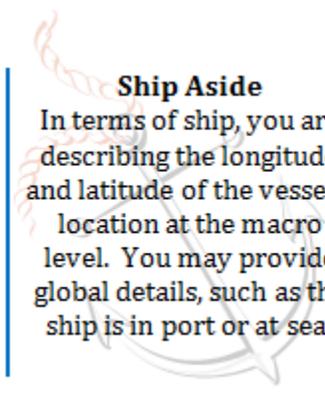
Setting speaks to more than just the mere location of a particular project. You must consider both the broader surroundings (macro level) as well as the immediate environment of the project (micro level). At the macro level, for the most part, you are addressing the geographic location of the project. In your proposal, you are likely to talk about the broader community in which the project and organization operates. Remember, the purpose of articulating the setting is to help make the case for the project's need. You may include information on whether the

area is urban or rural. You may discuss how the topology of the area isolates your community from the rest of the world. The statistics you incorporate will typically demonstrate how your area compares to state and national averages. Depending on the proposal, you will present an array of data, including population figures, poverty rates, officers-per-citizen ratios, and crime statistics, to name a few.

The micro level setting information addresses to the immediate environment of the project. At a practical level, the micro level indicators describe the department/institution/neighborhood rather than the city/region/state. For instance, you may distinguish the specific school-based project environment as charter, public or parochial. Likewise, you may distinguish your 20-bed critical access hospital from a 600-bed major



Ship Aside
In terms of conceptualizing it as a ship, think of micro factors as the specific type of carrier you are steer heading. For instance, you would likely provide details as to whether the ship was a speed boat, cargo vessel, cruise ship, or perhaps a luxury yacht. The immediate environment of the ship may also include some additional details, such as water depth, speed (knots), and weather conditions.

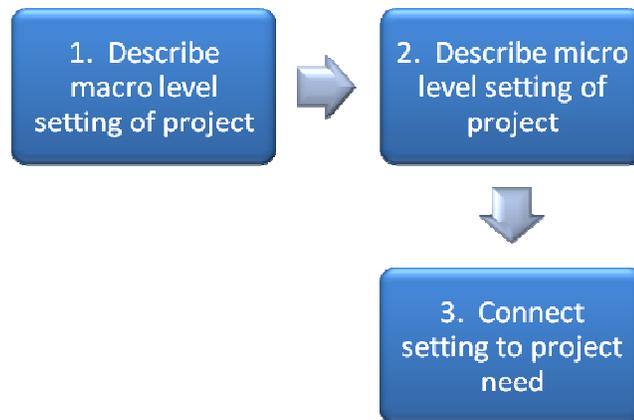


Ship Aside
In terms of ship, you are describing the longitude and latitude of the vessel's location at the macro level. You may provide global details, such as the ship is in port or at sea.

academic medical center. In terms of school suspension and graduation rates, you may be looking at the individual middle school rather than the entire district. Other types of evidence that demonstrate need in the micro setting may come from direct departmental observations. For instance, your police department might be experiencing investigative case backlog that could be reduced by implementing technology solutions.

Every project operates in an environment that is unique at some level. Be careful to incorporate all relevant data even when you feel it may be obvious. When you are going after large state and federal grants, there is a good chance that the reviewers will know very little about the details of your organization and location. *Don't be afraid to be the expert.*

Setting: Step-by-Step Summary



Historical Perspective & Future Outlook

You are seeking funding for a project that will provide some type of future benefit or impact. It is essential for you to articulate what those future outcomes will be and how the project will accomplish the aforementioned objectives. *Use historical perspective as a guide to navigate the present, and ultimately the future.*

When a project is based in theory, history will take the form of peer reviewed journal articles and accompanying evidence that demonstrates strong link between the goals/objectives of the project and the anticipated outcomes. However, this evidence can be supplemented with the experience of the project staff and the institution/organization that is leading the project. Perhaps, the project is not completely based in theory as the institution may have conducted a small, cost-friendly pilot program to study the impact. In this case, you would incorporate statistics and outcomes data gathered during the pilot study that demonstrate why a scale-up project is worthwhile. Whenever you are able to incorporate successful pilot study data, you are helping convince the reviewer of the likelihood that the project will not only be completed, but the intended results will be realized. In some cases, you may not have done a pilot study, but you may be able to include lessons that have been learned through other implementations done previously by project staff or the organization. For instance, it may be that a health center has only paper records and no experience with electronic health records; however, they

may be able to refer to the knowledge they had gained from another type of health information technology implementation, such as telemedicine. In the same fashion, a school's experience with in-house closed circuit television instruction may provide useful feedback for their distance learning implementation plan.

Many grantmakers encourage or require recipients to catalogue and share the knowledge they have developed during their project implementation. Monitoring and feedback loops are typical components that also must be addressed in your proposal. Including past lessons learned and other historical perspective in the proposal is your chance to demonstrate that you are not simply an organization that blindly takes action, but you are one that acts on the information you discover in the process. Essentially, you are providing the dissemination, monitoring and feedback loops that must be addressed for the project for which you are currently seeking funding. *You don't just talk the talk, but you walk the walk.*

Finally, the entire point of looking back, is to inform the present and affect the future. Historical perspective provides context on particular issues or potential solutions to a given problem. In other words, historical perspective is utilized to set the stage for justification of the project and proposed solution. In many ways, historical perspective will provide the basis for the goals that are established for the project. Goals must be presented at the outset and written explicitly and clearly into the proposal. Everything written into the proposal, including all the elements that would potentially be funded with grant dollars, must be connected to the goals of the project. Initially, you want to set broad overarching goals, which will be generic and straightforward. Later in the course of project planning, it is important to be specific whenever possible. If the goals you have identified are too broad, attempt to connect them with specific outcomes that you anticipate from the project and the measures you will ultimately employ for the monitoring and feedback loop we discussed earlier. Next, list a series of objectives that must be accomplished to realize that particular goal. Once the objectives are established, it is important to create a set of detailed tasks associated with each one. The final step should be estimating a time frame to complete each action step and assigning responsibility for that particular task.

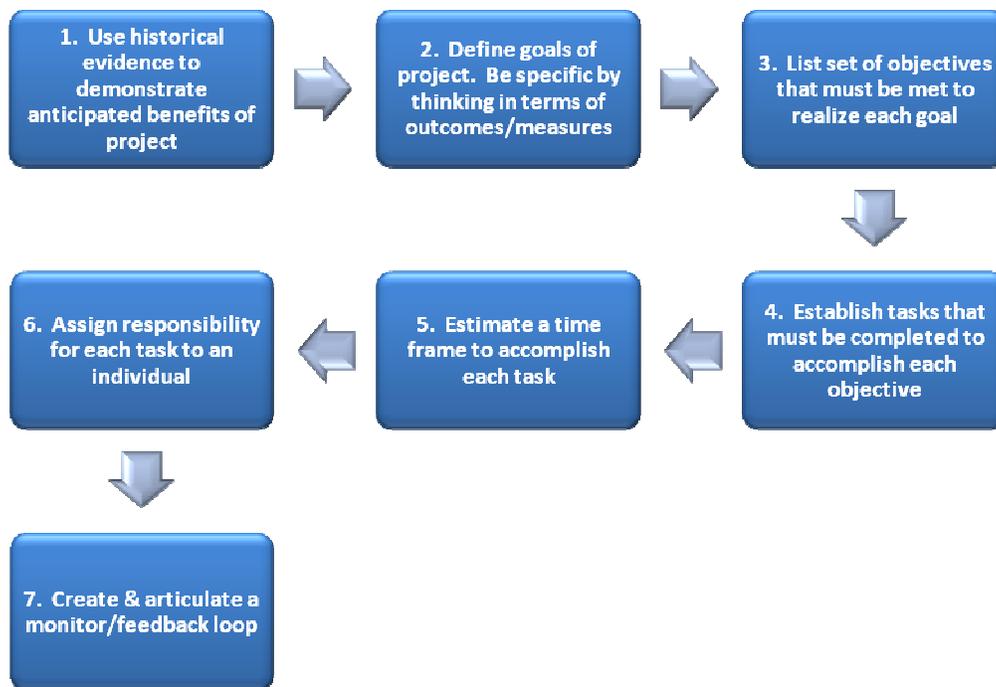
Using this step-by-step process, you can create a comprehensive and detailed implementation plan: action steps, assigned responsibility and a timeline. As an example, a goal for a particular education project may be to prepare the leaders of tomorrow with the proper skills and knowledge to succeed in a 21st century environment. This lacks specificity, so an alternative goal (think outcomes and measures) would be to increase the number of students from the district high schools that submit at least two admissions applications to a college or university. This link assumes a connection between advanced college education and preparing a 21st century workforce. This is a key place to include historical

Ship Aside

The captain of the ship can rely on historical accounts and testimony of the danger lurking in the Bermuda Triangle in avoiding those waterways. Likewise, what may appear as isolated weather patterns to the layperson, are clear cut signs to an experienced captain that a storm front is brewing in a particular direction of the ship. In the latter case, the captain is relying on experience and heuristics, which is equivalent to a form of personal history. Thus, history is the combined knowledge and experiences of everyone, which includes one's self and persons unknown.

context and evidence that makes this connection. One objective necessary to accomplish the goal would be to hold organized college tours for district high school students. An action step that would be necessary to organize the college tours (objective) would be arranging for transport by contacting the district transportation office (task). Arranging for transportation must be done early in the process so that the information is available when you are recruiting students for the trip (another objective/task). A person familiar with coordinating for school-related transportation should be assigned the responsibility. Do not forget to take the last step of creating a set of measures associated with each outcome/goal that you are working towards. For instance, in the example above, you may conduct a survey during senior exit interviews asking about the number of college applications they submitted. The monitoring and feedback loop will be essential to the reporting that will be required with pulling down grant funds. Don't get hung up on the timeline estimations and the sense of commitment you believe funders might associate with them... the best implementation plans allow flexibility, as it is impossible to anticipate all the unforeseen obstacles that will require plan modifications along the way. This is another reason the monitoring and feedback loops play an essential role in the implementation and eventual outcome of the project.

Historical Perspective & Future Outlook: Step-by-Step Summary



Innovation

Grantmakers are always looking at bang for their buck. They are looking to fund initiatives that would not go forward without grant assistance. If there is evidence that an organization should have the means and incentive to commit its own operating funds, but doesn't, the project may be denied funding. Grantmakers are not looking to fund the mundane and routine. They are looking for breakthroughs and creative problem solving. Typically, innovation occurs in incremental steps.

Ship Aside

Egyptians figured out they could improve efficiency and speed of row boats by adding sails and utilizing the wind. The Greeks realized they could create ships with multiple sails (both square and triangular) to increase speed as well as control of the vessel. The Romans expanded upon that philosophy to create massive ships that could carry passengers in addition to cargo on the open sea. At the time, these innovations were seen as incremental changes. However, periodically we witness innovation that alters the very course of history, such as the creation of the steamboat. While these earlier innovations made water travel possible albeit time-consuming and inefficient, the steamboat turned it into a viable form of public transportation as well.

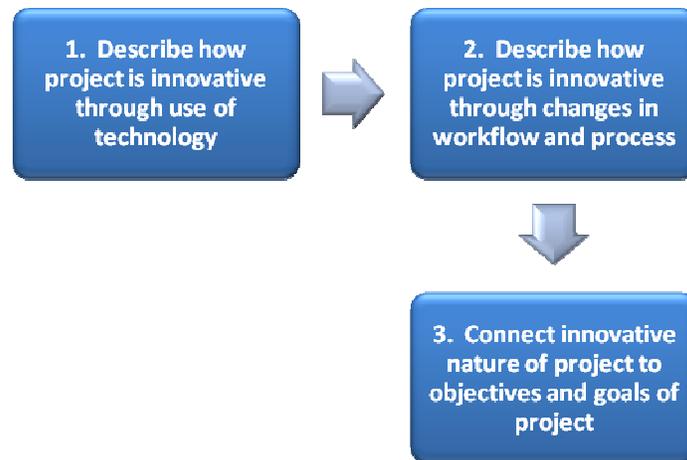
In developing your proposal, it is critical to identify and explain the ways in which your project is innovative, generally expressed in two ways. The project may involve a significant change in technology or an improvement in process or workflow. In terms of technology, the innovation may not be the actual creation of the technology but the particular application or use of it to meet the project goals. The proposal should focus on the features of the technology that will lead to the positive outcomes. While there are some exceptions, most grant proposals should remain vendor neutral. In other words, even when you have a particular piece of technology in mind (from a specific vendor), the proposal should focus on the features you will be seeking in the technology and how it will accomplish

the project objectives. In fact, many grant programs will require you to include a vendor selection plan to ensure there is a deliberate process in place to evaluate and select the most appropriate technology. A well-rounded project will also include personnel, training and other resources that are necessary to properly use the technology.

An innovation in process or workflow is the other area where your project can be distinguished from others. This may involve the reorganization of personnel, work related tasks, or procedures. In healthcare, the typical process when a patient enters the emergency room is to be checked in at the reception desk, triaged by a nurse, go to an exam room, see a doctor, and then the clinical team orders tests and administers treatments as necessary. Several years ago, an innovative process change was established in many hospitals whereby any patient that presents at triage with chest pain receives a blood thinning agent immediately. In other words, you bypass the step where the physician must see the patient prior to a treatment being ordered. The results were a significant improvement in patient outcomes associated with cardiac arrest and stroke. This example is particularly relevant, because it involves a direct link between workflow/process change and health outcomes.

Regardless of the type of innovation, it is essential to articulate how it will be rolled out, which will include a detailed implementation plan and timeline (discussed previously). Remember that the point here is to connect the innovation to the objectives and goals of the project.

Innovation: Step-by-Step Summary



Partnerships/Collaboration

One of the essential ways to distinguish your project is to demonstrate support from relevant stakeholders and community resources that are external to the applicant organization. While there are instances where a single entity has the capacity and resources to successfully implement programmatic objectives, a well-rounded project will typically bring several stakeholders to the table. Some applicants take this particular component of the proposal to an extreme and solicit letters of support from every political representative and community organization in the immediate vicinity of the project. A better approach would be to include collaborators that are bringing key resources and needed capabilities to the project, rather than just providing a laundry list of supporters. Grantmakers will know when you include a form support letter with your application, and they will not respond well to it. Grantmakers want all the collaborators in your project to have a purpose.

This phase of the proposal development process should be devoted to identifying resources both internal and external to the organization that is making an application for funding. The first step is to identify key resources within your organization that will be necessary for completion of the project.

Grantmakers need to be convinced that the applicant organization has the necessary capacity, resources and personnel to follow-through on the plan they are proposing. A section of the proposal will be dedicated to outlining the key strengths of the

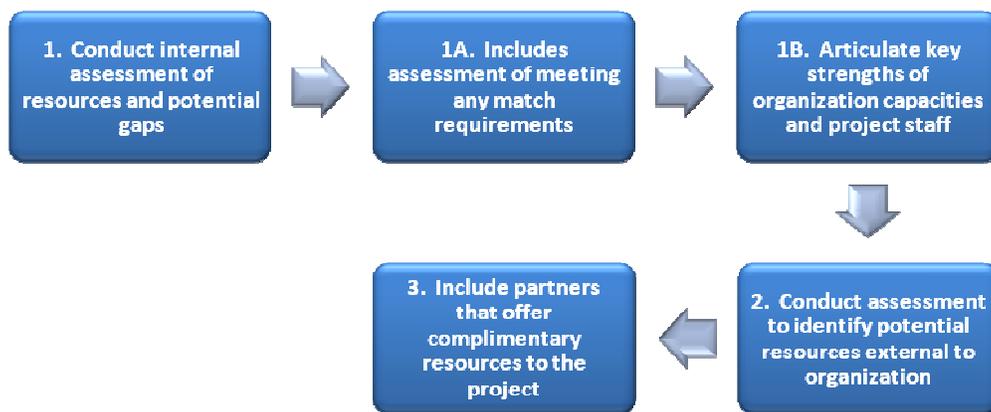
Ship Aside

A naval fleet is a prime example of partnership and collaboration on the open sea as all member ships are unified by a single mission and each vessel has a defined role/responsibility. While the lead ship's primary responsibility may be navigating the entire fleet, the second tier of vessels may have mid-range guns and the necessary equipment to board/capture enemy ships. Meanwhile, the third tier of ships are equipped with long range devices that can launch smoke bombs and other materials to confuse and disorient enemy ship personnel while the closer vessels prepare to board. Bringing along a fourth brigade with no defined role in the mission is simply a waste of time and resources.

organization and project staff. During this stage, it is also crucial to identify any gaps within your organization that may present an opportunity to bring in an appropriate collaborator. For instance, one gap that you may identify is a lack of matching funds. Many grant programs have matching components that require the applicant organization to supplement grant funding with cash or in-kind contributions from other sources. In this context, you may be able to partner with a local foundation (for a cash match) or another stakeholder that may be able to provide certain resources that will work as an in-kind contribution. Even when a match component is not required, grantmakers will look to leverage their funding and appreciate organizations that can contribute to the project through other funding sources.

The simplest method for completing this section of the proposal is by using a *SWOT analysis*. In this model, an internal assessment catalogues "*strengths*" and "*weaknesses*" while the external analysis (potential contributors) is accomplished through identification of "*opportunities*" and "*threats*". The idea is to identify partners (*opportunities*) that can fill in your internal gaps (*weaknesses*). Alternatively, you may bring a partner on that will help you minimize a *threat* to the success of the project. Whatever the reason, be sure any potential partners have a clearly defined role and purpose relative to the project.

Partnerships/Collaboration: Step-by-Step Summary



Note: SWOT Analysis is a good tool to evaluate these components of the project.

Population

Population refers directly to the people that will be impacted by the proposed project. It is a critical component in demonstrating a need for the project. As such, it is closely linked to the facts, figures and data that are presented in the context of the project's *Setting*. Often times the macro and micro indicators of the "Setting" section are correlated to the population that will ultimately be served by the project. You must accomplish two objectives with population data: 1) demonstrate why the project is necessary and 2) identify the outcomes and measures that the project will ultimately address and improve.

Ship Aside

On a cruise ship, the objective for most vacationers is to have fun. However, the primary objective of the crew on any cruise ship is to ensure the safety and security of the passengers on the vessel.

Participation in safety exercises is required in order to provide passengers with the information and tools that are *necessary* to ensure negative *outcomes* are not realized, such as fatalities and injuries.

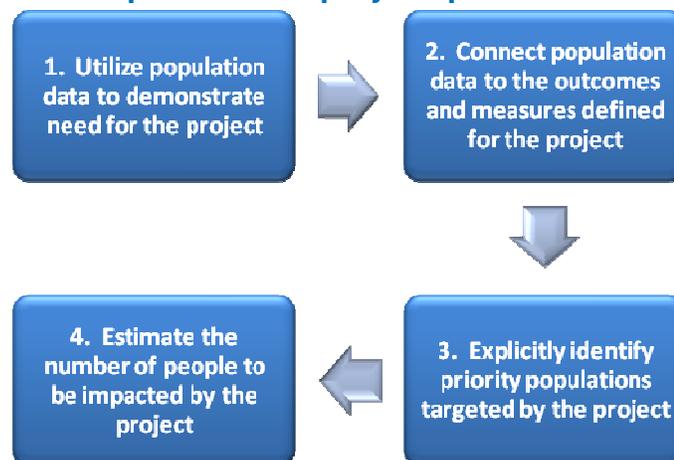
Furthermore, ensuring safety is a *necessary* precursor to secondary *objectives* and *outcomes*, such as having fun.

The focus of this section should be on the unique characteristics and demographics of the population that will be impacted by the project. Some grantmakers include a competitive preference for what they consider priority populations. Priority populations can be distinguished by a variety of indicators, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. Examples of priority populations include the elderly, children, infants, homosexuals, women, African Americans, Latino/Latina, Native Americans, low-income, homeless, mentally ill, and those suffering from HIV/AIDS. Another key consideration is to cross-reference your population information with other areas of the proposal. The information you used to give the proposal historical perspective may offer some insight into how the population may be distinguished. For instance, you may provide evidence from past activities that demonstrated improved outcomes for able-bodied Caucasian men as a

basis to evaluate the effect on a population primarily made up of disabled African American women.

Remember that grantmakers are accountable to somebody at the end of the day. Federal grantmaking agencies must answer to Congress, state agencies are held accountable to their respective legislatures, and private foundations are governed by a board of trustees. In order to ensure grantmakers are meeting their legislative objectives/trustee priorities in the disbursement of grant funds, they are influenced by the number of people that will be impacted (both directly and indirectly) by a project. For this reason, don't underestimate the importance of carefully defining and distinguishing the impacted population within the proposal.

Population: Step-by-Step



Summary

Full Speed Ahead

If you are a novice grantwriter, the learning curve may appear steep. However, familiarizing yourself with the basic core components of a well-written proposal will serve you well on your journey. The great thing about the SHIPP model is that the key components and concepts are relevant to almost any grant program. While there is no guarantee of funding, we are confident that following the process will put you on the right path.