INVESTMENT AND INNOVATION PROGRAM GRANT WRITING TIPS

The following information provides general insights on developing a competitive Investment and Innovation grant proposal.

1. **Read (and re-read) the Program Grant Proposal Handbook.** The handbook is designed to communicate to you what the reviewers are looking for, and how to provide them that information. Spend time with the handbook to understand the process, timeline, and application requirements.

2. **Allow enough time.** The grant writing process is time-consuming. Start early, and plan for how you'll get it done on time. If you don't have the time or in-house expertise, consider hiring a professional grant writer (and engage them as early as possible).

3. **Consider drafting the work plan and budget before writing the narrative.** While this sounds backward, it will help you be clear about exactly what you are proposing and how much it will cost to achieve your project's objectives. Ultimately, it makes writing the narrative easier.

4. **Pay close attention to requirements for the grant proposal.** You will need a high attention to detail. Read questions and instructions carefully to make sure you provide the information requested.

5. **Address anticipated challenges.** Don't try to minimize them; describe how you will overcome them.

6. **Check for consistency throughout the proposal**. Your grant request, match amount, budget, narrative, and related information must be consistent across the proposal.

7. **Write your proposal in Word, then copy-and-paste to ZoomGrants.** Copy the questions in the grant application (see Program Grant Handbook) and type out your answers. Be mindful of character limits—they are merciless, and ZoomGrants will cut your proposal off mid-word if you exceed them.

8. **Remember, real people are reading your proposal.** Make it easy on them. Be clear and concise in your responses. Put yourself in the readers' shoes: what would you want to know when deciding whether or not to fund this proposal?

9. **If the grant review committee has questions about your proposal, provide a complete response.** The committee may have questions or need clarification during the review of your proposal, and will contact you if so.

10. **Allow extra time with ZoomGrants.** Do not wait to the last minute to upload information to ZoomGrants, just in case there are any issues with the technology.

11. Grant proposal deadlines are non-negotiable. If the deadline is 4:00 p.m., do not submit it at 4:01 p.m.; it will not be considered.

COMMON PITFALLS:

1. **Chasing the money ("mission drift").** It can be tempting to create a project just to get grant money for your business or organization. Resist that temptation; those projects are rarely successful.

2. **Failing to understand the competitive nature of the process**. The grant program will almost always receive more requests for funding than the available funds. Even good ideas may not be funded due to limited funding availability.

3. **Failing to understand the nature of the funding.** The grant application process is designed to ensure public money is allocated to well-designed projects with high likelihood of success. Metro cannot award grants to poorly written proposals that do not clearly indicate how the money will be spent, anticipated outcomes, and how the work will be done.

4. **Disregarding the questions or requests for information.** If it is in the application, it is important and requires a complete response.

5. **Being redundant.** Do not re-state information to add "filler" to your proposal.

6. **Math errors**. Double-check your grant budget and match calculations.

7. **Being cryptic about how you calculate costs.** Grant reviewers need to understand what grant funds would pay for if your proposal is funded. Be realistic about project costs and the amount of grant funds needed. Don't create a budget reflecting the maximum amount allowed just because the money is hypothetically available.

8. **Budget inconsistent with narrative.** Make sure the reviewers can make the link between the costs in your budget and the project narrative. In other words, they should be able to look at your budget after reading your narrative, and understand how each line item relates to your project.

9. **Requesting non-qualifying expenses.** Some expenses are not reimbursable by grant funds. Understand these requirements and only include eligible costs.

10. **Proposing a non-qualifying match.** Some project contributions are not eligible to be used as match to the Metro grant. Understand these requirements and only include eligible matching funds or in-kind contributions.

11. **<u>IMPORTANT!</u> Starting your project before receiving a grant award**. A grant award needs to be fully executed before the grant funds will be available to the project. Costs incurred before that time are not reimbursable or eligible as match to the grant.