



Grant Applications 101:

A Plain English Guide to ETA
Competitive Grants



U.S. Department of Labor
EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION



Purpose and Introduction

- ❖ This guide was designed to:
 - Provide you with information about the ETA grant application and evaluation process; and
 - Assist your understanding of responsive applications for ETA grant funding.
- ❖ Companion tools are available at https://grantsapplicationandmanagement.workforcegps.org/resources/2017/Applying_for_ETA_Competitive_Grants- A_Web-Based_Toolkit-for_Prospective_Applicants
 - Web-based Resources for applying for ETA competitive grants



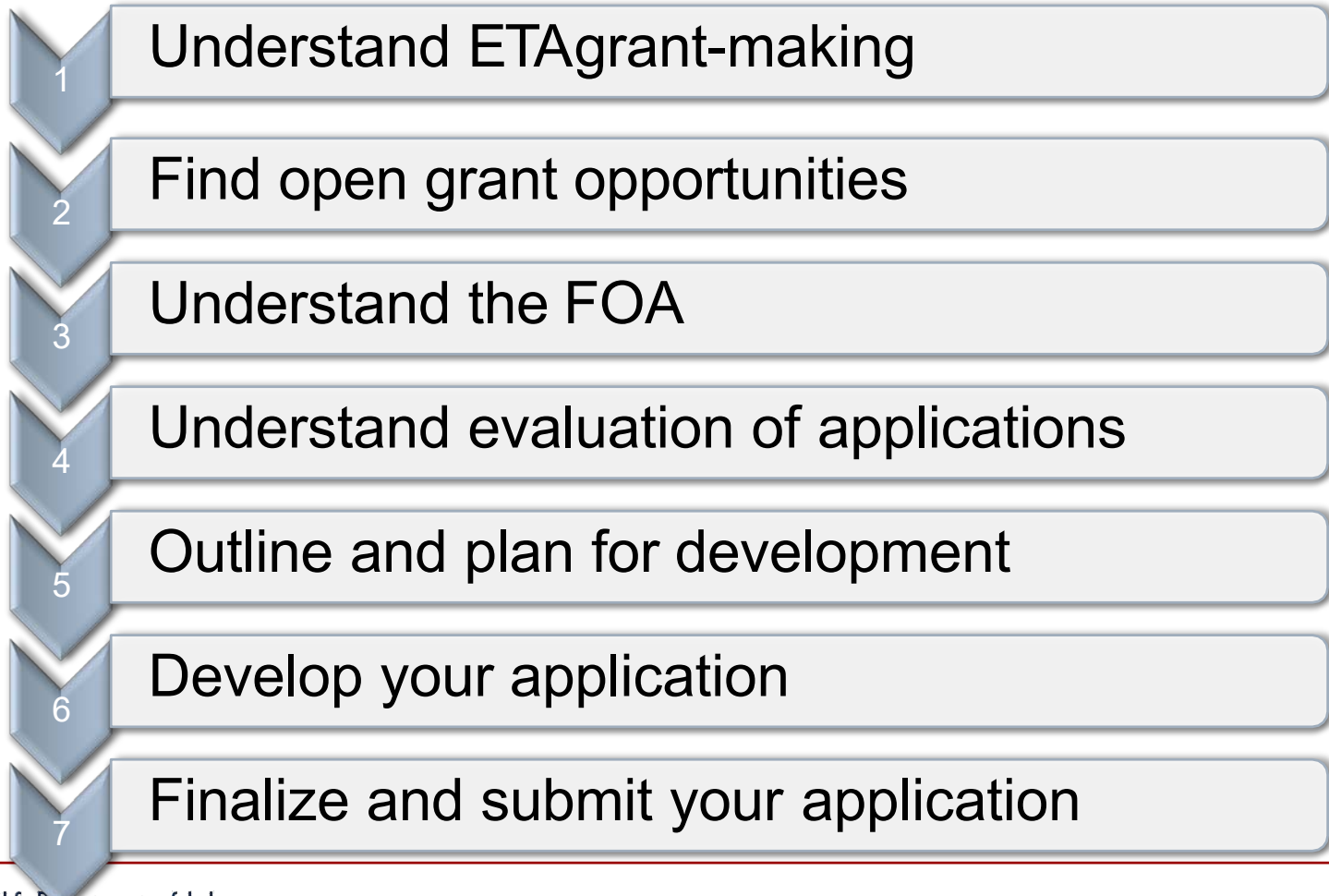


Guide Learning Objectives

- ❖ Understand ETA's mission and grant-funding activities;
- ❖ Locate open competitions for grant funding;
- ❖ Understand ETA's grant application solicitation and evaluation processes;
- ❖ Understand the process for responding to an ETA FOA;
- ❖ Understand key elements of comprehensive, responsive, and potentially competitive applications for grant funding; and
- ❖ Locate additional resources that may be helpful in the grant application development process.



Guide Overview: The Grant Application Process





Become Familiar with ETA Grant-Making

- ❖ ETA oversees workforce development programs and services throughout the country.
- ❖ ETA funding is distributed either by formula, or by open competitions for grants.
- ❖ Competitive grants are typically awarded to organizations to create or expand innovative workforce development programs for workers and employers.

ETA's Mission

ETA MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Employment and Training Administration is to contribute to the more efficient functioning of the U.S. labor market by providing high quality job training, employment, labor market information, and income maintenance services primarily through state and local workforce development systems.



Find Open Grant Competition Opportunities

- ❖ Grant competitions are formally announced through formal Funding Opportunity Announcements, or FOAs.
- ❖ FOAs are published:
 - In the Federal Register:
<https://www.federalregister.gov/>
 - On the Grants.gov Web site:
<http://grants.gov/>
 - On ETA's Grants and Contracts Web site:
<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/grants/apply/financial-opportunities>
- ❖ Sign up to receive email alerts about new FOAs on the home pages of these Web sites.





Understand the FOA: Introduction

- ❖ Step 1: *Read the FOA thoroughly and become familiar with all of its contents and requirements!*
 - The FOA provides you with the framework for your grant application.
 - Applications that don't meet all requirements may be deemed “non-responsive” and may not be reviewed or considered for funding.
- ❖ A Web-Based Toolkit for Prospective Applicants
 - Review the tool to better understand FOAs and how to respond to them.
 - Available at:
https://grantsapplicationandmanagement.workforcegps.org/resources/2017/Applying_for_ETA_Competitive_Grants-A_Web-Based_Toolkit-for_Prospective_Applicants



Understand the FOA: Critical Questions for Your Initial Review



- ❖ Application submission process, methods, and closing date and time:
 - Do you have time to respond before the closing date?
- ❖ Background on the funding effort and types of projects to be funded:
 - Are these the types of projects that your organization is in a position to support?
- ❖ Organizations eligible to apply for funding:
 - Is your organization among those eligible to apply for grant funding?



Understand the FOA: Other Key Components for Your Review

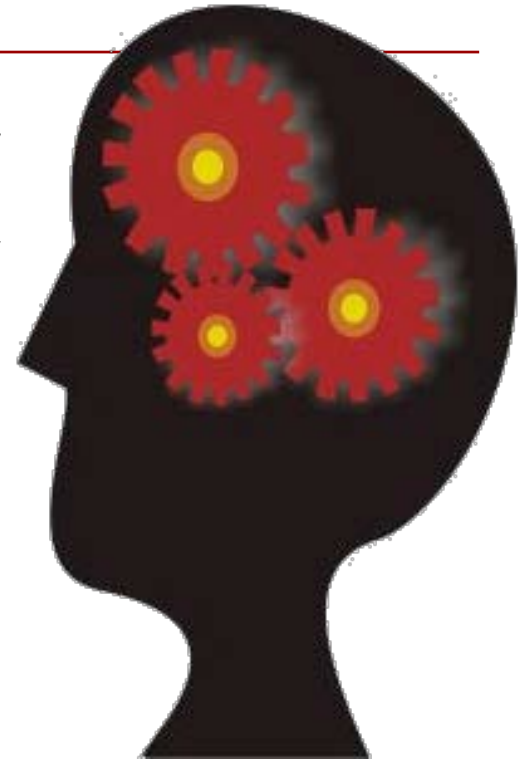


- ❖ Anticipated grant award amount range and limits, and grant performance period;
- ❖ Allowable grant activities and eligible grant participants;
- ❖ Partnership requirements;
- ❖ Cost-sharing/matching requirements;
- ❖ Other administrative requirements and restrictions;
- ❖ Application evaluation criteria;
- ❖ Information about ETA's application review, selection, and grant award processes; and
- ❖ ETA point of contact for the FOA.



Understand the FOA: Informational Opportunities for Applicants

- ❖ Often, ETA will host Webinars or other events about new FOAs for prospective applicants.
 - These will be discussed in the FOA.
- ❖ These events offer you the opportunity to learn more about the specifics of a particular grant competition.





Understand ETA's Evaluation of Grant Applications: Overview

- ❖ Each application is evaluated by a technical review panel of Federal staff and other workforce development experts.
- ❖ Reviewers evaluate and score applications based solely upon the evaluation criteria in the FOA.
- ❖ Ranked application scores serve as the primary basis for ETA's selection of applications for funding.
 - The SGA will note other evaluation considerations, which may include geographical and organizational diversity.



Understand ETA's Evaluation of Grant Applications: Sample Criteria

- ❖ Statement of Need: 15 points
- ❖ Project Management and Organizational Capacity: 15 points
- ❖ Strategy and Project Work Plan: 50 points
- ❖ Outcomes and Deliverables: 15 points
- ❖ Suitability for Evaluation: 5 points



Outline and Plan for Application Development: Introduction



- ❖ Start early to give yourself and your project partners ample time!
 - FOA deadlines are not negotiable, and late applications are not reviewed.
- ❖ Create an outline of your application based upon the evaluation criteria framework.
 - Make it easy for reviewers to find your responses to each criterion.
- ❖ Create a concrete project plan for the entire application development process.
 - Define tasks, roles, timelines, and a checklist for completion.





Outline and Plan for Application Development: Content and Format

- ❖ Cost Proposal, or budget request:
 - Make sure that your budget amounts are consistent throughout the application.
 - ❖ Technical Proposal, or a description of your proposed project and capabilities:
 - Follow the outline of the evaluation criteria.
 - ❖ Attachments to the Technical Proposal, such as a letter(s) of commitment from project partners, a project Abstract, etc.
 - Only include letters of commitment as required by the FOA.
 - Make sure that your project Abstract is complete and gives reviewers a great first impression.
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Develop Your Application: Introduction

- ❖ Be sure that your application is comprehensive, clear, and easy for reviewers to follow.
- ❖ Demonstrate your capacity and a clear project plan.
 - Show the “how,” don’t merely tell the “what.”
- ❖ Avoid using jargon and acronyms.
- ❖ Don’t merely reiterate language from the FOA.





Develop Your Application: Understand the Context

- ❖ Demonstrate familiarity with existing programs, models, and strategies.
 - Don't ask for funding to “reinvent the wheel.”
- ❖ To learn more about existing programs and competitive grants awarded in the past, visit:
 - WorkforceGPS: <https://www.workforcegps.org/>
 - ETA Grants and Contracts page: http://www.doleta.gov/grants/grants_awarded.cfm



Develop Your Application: Use Data to Establish Need



- ❖ Document your need for Federal funding with authoritative data, not anecdotes.
 - Bureau of Labor Statistics: <http://www.bls.gov/>
 - Census Bureau: <https://www.census.gov/>
 - ETA Catalogue of Workforce Information Sources: <http://www.doleta.gov/Programs/pdf/environmental-scan-report-final.pdf>
 - State and local workforce system partners: <http://www.servicelocator.org/contactspartners.asp>





Develop Your Application: Align Your Project with the FOA

- ❖ Your project plan and strategies should directly address the challenges outlined in your application's statement of need.
- ❖ Your proposed project and project activities should reflect the funding opportunity description and allowable activities discussed in the FOA.
- ❖ Don't propose activities not called for in the FOA.





Develop Your Application: Demonstrate Experience and Capacity

- ❖ Demonstrate your project management expertise and organizational capacity to manage a Federal grant.
 - Previous Federal grant management experience should be discussed but is not required for ETA grants.
- ❖ Discuss your previous relevant grant management success and results.
 - Show how you will bring previous management experience to scale in support of this Federal investment.



Develop Your Application: Provide Evidence of Partnerships

- ❖ Provide evidence of robust strategic partnerships that can support your project.
 - Don't merely "list" potential partners.
 - Don't provide generic "form" letters of commitment.
- ❖ Describe in detail:
 - Relationships among partners;
 - Each partner's role;
 - Partners' specific resource commitments; and
 - How each partner's strengths and resources will be leveraged and coordinated for the grant effort.





Develop Your Application: Discuss Leveraged Resources

- ❖ Describe how you and your partners will contribute non-Federal resources to the project:
 - Source, nature, and amount of resources;
 - How resources will be used; and
 - How they will add value to the project.
- ❖ Leveraged resources may demonstrate:
 - Your interest in magnifying the impact of the Federal investment; and
 - Your capacity to sustain the project after the Federal investment ends.





Develop Your Application: Connect with Other Efforts

- ❖ Demonstrate how you will connect your project to other ETA-funded programs in your state or region.
- ❖ Discuss how you will work with state and/or local workforce system partners.
 - National Association of State Workforce Agencies:
<https://www.naswa.org/>
 - National Association of Workforce Boards:
<http://www.nawb.org/>
 - Find Workforce Investment Boards and One Stop Career Centers:
<http://www.servicelocator.org/contactspartners.asp>



Develop Your Application: Discuss Outcomes and Deliverables



- ❖ Proposed outcomes should be appropriately challenging, reasonable, and attainable.
- ❖ Outcomes should align with your statement of need, your project plan, and your budget.
- ❖ Provide targets for all performance measures noted in the FOA.
- ❖ Specific strategies, budget, outcomes and deliverables proposed in your application will be incorporated into your formal grant agreement if you are funded.



Develop Your Application: Offer a Reasonable Budget



- ❖ Your funding request should be reasonable relative to your statement of need, level of effort, project activities, and outcomes.
 - Don't request more than you can manage.
 - Don't request "contingency funding."
- ❖ Budget form and budget narrative:
 - Make sure amounts are consistent throughout.
 - Justify all budget line items in your budget narrative.





Finalize and Submit Your Application

- ❖ Do a final review of your application, project plan, and checklist.
- ❖ Submit your application on time and through the acceptable method(s) noted in the FOA.
- ❖ ETA will contact applicants selected for funding directly.
 - Awarded grants are announced on ETA's Web site at <http://www.doleta.gov/>.
- ❖ If you are unsuccessful, request the review panel's feedback from ETA's Grants Office.





Summary: Key Tips for Applicants

- Confirm that you are eligible to apply.
- Start developing your application early.
- Register early on Grants.gov.
- Meet all FOA requirements for application content, structure, and format.
- Provide data to document need.
- Document your relevant experience and organizational capacity.





Summary: Key Tips for Applicants,

continued

- Don't propose unallowable activities or ineligible participants.
- Provide evidence of required partners and partnerships.
- Propose reasonable outcomes.
- Make a reasonable budget request.
- Don't exceed page limitations.
- Submit your application on time, through accepted channels.





Thank You, and Good Luck!

ETA Grants and Contracts Page:

<http://www.doleta.gov/grants/>

ETA Grant Application Toolkit Page:

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