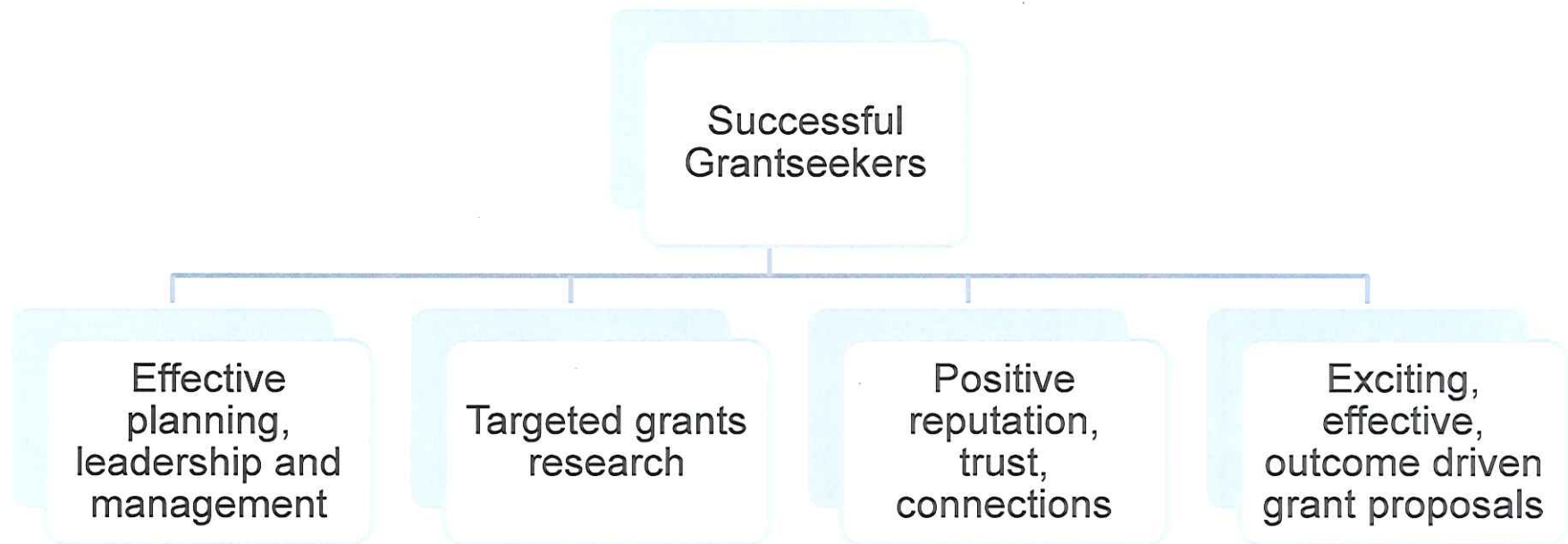




# **Grant Writing: Best Practices and Inside Insights**

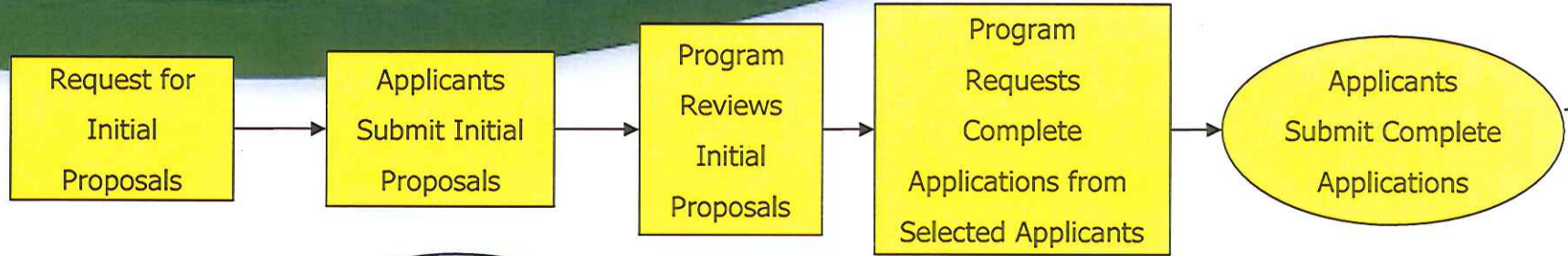
Views on the Perfect Proposal: The  
Writer, Reviewer, and Administrator

# Key Traits of Successful Grantseekers

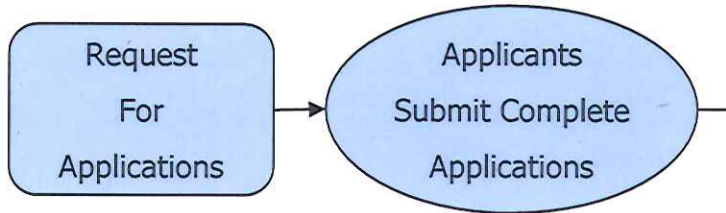


# Grant Award Process

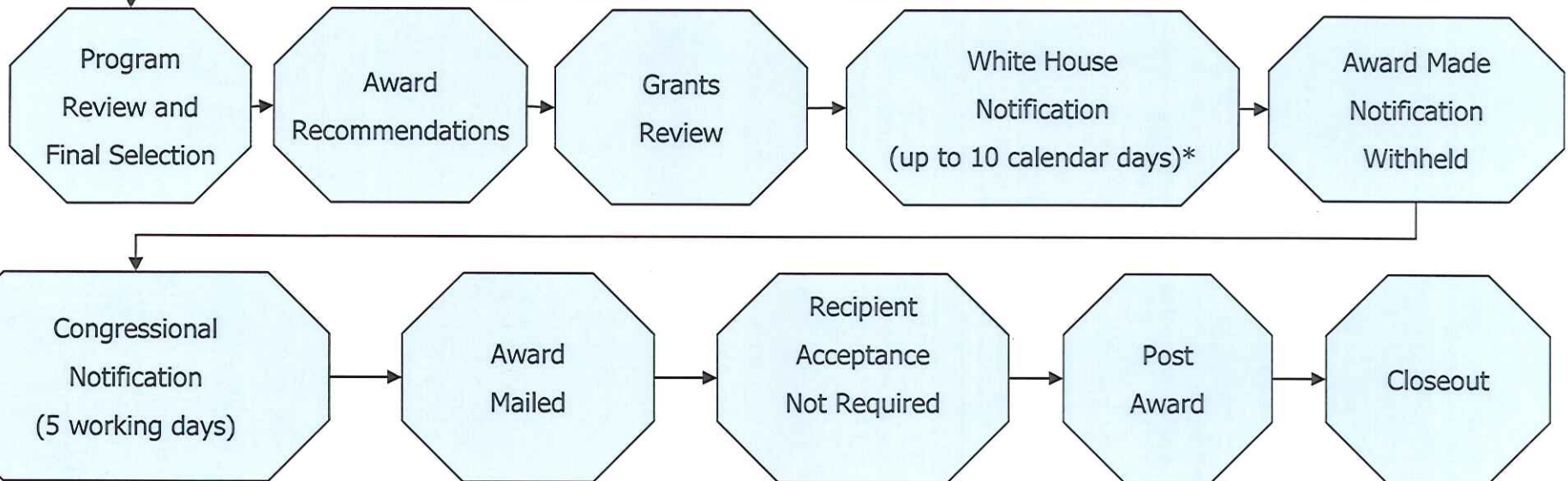
## Request for Initial Proposals



## Request for Applications



## Non-Competitive



# Knowing Federal Grants

- Evaluated by Independent Reviewers
- Request for Proposals
  - One time / once per year, specific purpose, specific guidelines
  - Multiple year funding
- Writing Style-Focus on FACTS
- Time Commitment
- Reimbursed for Expenses-not a one-time check



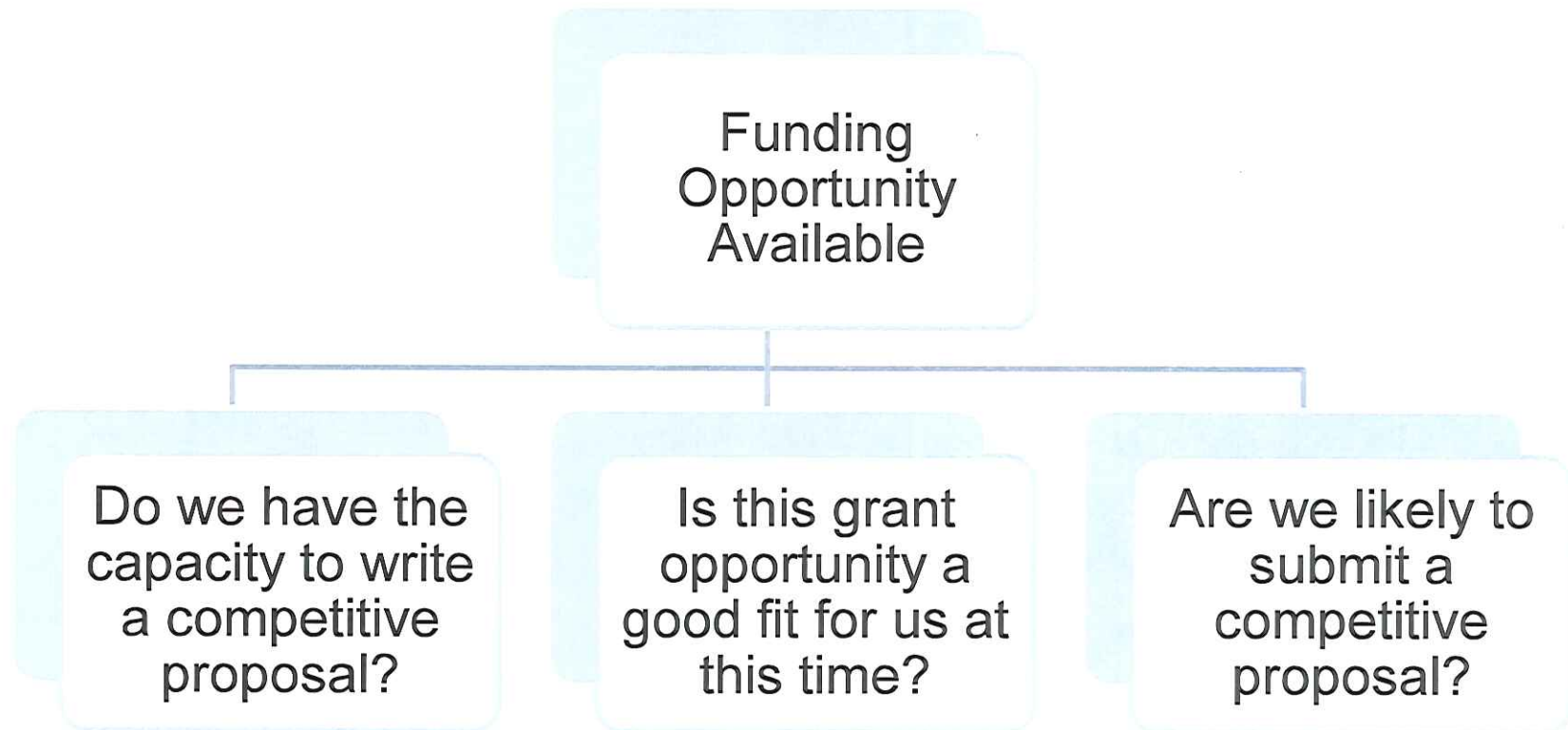
# Identify Funding Opportunities

- Grants.gov
- Agency websites
- List serves / Engage with Funders
- Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance

# Getting More Information

- Teleconferences, webinars, question and answer periods
- Before grant is announced, agency staff can answers specific questions about your project
- After grant deadline, it is reviewed and awarded. After the award announcements, can request debriefing conference.

# Planning a Federal Grant Proposal



# Capacity for Writing a Competitive Grant

- Do you have resources in place for:
  - Program planning and design
  - Securing partnerships
  - Budget development
  - Writing and proofing the proposal
  - Grant submission (Grants.gov)
- Capacity Builders:
  - Can gain experience as a sub-grantee before applying on own.
  - Seek partners to serve as mentors and/or team members



# Getting Started

- Understand program requirements
- Register on [Grants.gov](https://www.Grants.gov)
- Identify who can help plan and develop grant proposal
- Sketch out budget
- Plan to obtain required letters of commitment
- Identify if other local groups are applying
  - Consider partnering with those groups?

# Grant Guidelines

Grant guidelines include information describing:

- Summary of purposes
- Amount of funding available, and number of grants to be awarded
- Eligible applicants
- Eligible activities
- Proposal submission format (outline), page limit and content
- Scoring information
- Contact for questions

# Grant Review Process

- Every federal grant application is evaluated by criteria described in the RFP/NOFA
- Typically a 100 point scoring system – with points assigned to each major element of the application
- **Tip:** Use these scoring elements as your constant guide



# Grant Review Elements

<b>Elements</b>	<b>Evaluation Points</b>
<b>Extent of environmental public health problems</b>	<b>15 points</b>
<b>Project Goals and Performance Plan</b>	<b>25 points</b>
<b>Community Involvement/Collaboration/Partnerships</b>	<b>25 points</b>
<b>Alignment with our strategies</b>	
• How will you provide info, tools and technical assistance	<b>5 points</b>
• Explain how you will use our resources	<b>5 points</b>
• Explain how you will build effective, long-term partnerships	<b>5 points</b>
<b>Tracking and Measuring Results</b>	<b>10 points</b>
<b>Programmatic Capability/Reporting Environmental Results</b>	
• Explain how you have met past reporting requirements from past projects	<b>2.5 points</b>
• Explain your organizational experience & timeline to manage the project	<b>2.5 points</b>
• Explain your past performance of completing past projects	<b>2.5 points</b>
• Explain staff expertise/qualifications	<b>2.5 points</b>





## The Evaluation and Scoring Process has Two Main Components

- **Threshold Review**
  - Proposals are evaluated to ensure applicant meets minimum requirements
- **Competitive Review**
  - Scoring criteria in grant application used to evaluate grant request
  - Proposals scored by independent reviewers
  - Highest scored proposals awarded funding

# Common Strengths

- Broad based community support
- Identifies who will be involved
- Good outline of a complex problem
- Budget matches each goal
- Outputs Identified
- Innovative ideas and creative thinking
- Clearly described project
- Robust partnerships



# Common Weaknesses

- Left out something critical
- Community members not included
- Not specific enough in budget
- Applicant is not eligible to apply
- Program is too ambitious
- Activities are not appropriate for the type of grant
- Did not follow the Guidance





A decorative graphic at the top of the slide, consisting of a dark green curved shape on the left that tapers into a lighter green shape on the right, resembling a stylized leaf or a swoosh.

## General Tips: Grants as Sales

- **Know your Product:** Start with a clear vision of your idea.
- **Know your Purpose/Customers/Client.** This deals with why, who, for whom.
- **Communicate Clearly.** If your mother can't understand what you are proposing, you haven't communicated clearly.



# DO Sweat the Small Stuff

- READ the solicitation in its entirety
- Be sure you UNDERSTAND the solicitation
- Be sure to follow all instructions carefully
- Have you included all requested documents?
- Be sure to adhere to guidelines such as:
  - page limits
  - font sizes
  - number of copies required
  - submission methods, submission dates and times

# Specific Tips

- **Don't try to sell fish to a fisherman.** Have a clear understanding of what the funding opportunity/donor is looking for. If it isn't what you want to do, don't spend your time trying to make a project fit, find an RFP that matches your work.
- **Don't try to do it all yourself.** Look for support for various components such as evaluation, budget, following-up with partners, etc.
- **Project rationale.** Focus on a handful of superlative problems in your area and document them, making the connection to your project strategy for addressing them.
- **Know your strengths and weaknesses.** Honestly and critically examine your organizations strengths and assets (especially as they relate to your competitors) and build your proposal around them.
- **Don't write, answer questions.** Build your proposal with one clear sentence that really answers each proposal heading or requirement at time. Only add more information that clearly relates and supports that main item. Knowing when to stop writing is important. Get to the point, document it and stop writing.
- **Write your Summary Last.** Proposal guidelines often move you into areas you may not have originally considered. Your proposal isn't complete until you've answered the main headings/questions. While your core strategy may be clear from the start, your project summary will likely need to be written last to capture all the other elements of your project that evolved during the writing.
- **Don't just say what you will do say what you have done.** Be confident in what you propose based on your organization's experience and don't be afraid to reference your successes.
- **Don't Plan on Finishing on the Day the Proposal is Due.** Plan on finishing your proposal at least a week prior to the deadline for submission (full disclosure: I never managed to do this myself, but always wish I had).
- **Simple and Consistent.** If you can create a table (e.g., Log Frame), a diagram, a summary, timeline, and budget that all match seamlessly, then you will have created a clear picture for the reviewer. and if you can provide a simple diagram to reinforce it, do so.
- **Don't make Evaluation an Afterthought.** Learn about project evaluation and how much evaluation the donor is looking for. Some are very picky about this. Be comprehensive with your evaluation plans, but don't try to measure everything and the kitchen sink
- **Fill in gaps and weaknesses with Partners.** Bring in partners as needed, but be prepared to do everything yourself.
- **Be Prepared to do the work of your Partners.** Draft separate letters of support for the people/organizations you'll be seeking them from, but ask them to edit and refine as needed.
- **Know your costs.** Establish how much you plan to spend on the main line items of your budget and work out the details within those amounts.
- **Give your proposal to others to review a week before due date.** Make sure you have others review your proposal (ask some to look at the numbers, others to look at the voice, and others to look at clarity). Walk through the evaluators criteria as a group.



## Helpful Hints

- **FOLLOW DIRECTIONS**
- **Write as though the reviewers know nothing about your community**
- **Address all criteria- if it doesn't apply say so and explain why**
- **Use any proposal check lists**
- **Be kind to your reviewers**



# Grant Review Process

## What makes a Grant “good”?

- Have you explained the nitty gritty?
- Have you connected the dots?
- Is the story of your grant unique?
- Have you done your homework? (e.g. included stats, facts, maps, pictures, testimonials, commitment letters)
- How well connected is your budget with your narrative?



# Budget Categories

- Personnel
- Fringe Benefit
- Travel
- Equipment (Note: More than \$5,000)
- Supplies
- Contractual
- Other/In-Kind
- Indirect Cost Rate

# Sample Budget Detail

<b>I.</b>	<b>Personnel</b>	
	<b>0.5 FTE Bilingual Community Outreach Worker at</b>	<b>\$9,600.00</b>
	<b>0.2 FTE Project Coordinator at \$12.00/hr</b>	<b>4,600.00</b>
		<b>14,200.00</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b>Fringe Benefits at 17% (negotiated ) *</b>	
	<b>0.5 FTE Community Outreach Worker</b>	<b>1,632.00</b>
	<b>0.2 FTE Project Coordinator</b>	<b>782.00</b>
		<b>2,414.00</b>
<b>III.</b>	<b>Local Travel at \$0.26/mile</b>	<b>500.00</b>
<b>IV.</b>	<b>Equipment</b>	<b>0.00</b>
<b>V.</b>	<b>Supplies</b>	
	<b>Projector Rental</b>	<b>500.00</b>
	<b>Postage</b>	<b>500.00</b>
	<b>Paper &amp; Printing</b>	<b>1,800.00</b>
		<b>2,300.00</b>
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$19,914.00</b>



# Sample Budget Detail

## ❖ EPA Policy

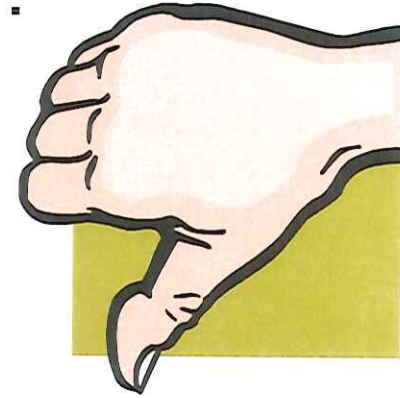
If the applicant does not have a current negotiated (indirect cost) IDC rate, the applicant may include a flat IDC rate of 10% of salaries and wages (see 2 CFR Part 230, Appendix A).

**Please note:** Recipients that opt to use the 10% flat rate are obligated to use the flat rate for the life of the grant award .



# Examples of Funding Restrictions

- Grant funds **CANNOT** be used for:
  - Matching other federal grants
  - Construction
  - Furniture
  - Lobbying
  - Personal gifts (such as t-shirts, buttons, hats, etc.)
  - Litigation
  - Meals (except on budgeted travel)
  - Intervention in Federal Regulatory or Adjudicatory Proceedings



# Costs Allowed

- Reasonable
  - “incurred by a prudent person”
  - “necessary for the operation”
- Allocable
  - “benefits received”
- Allowable
  - Circular, law, T&C, local regulation
  - Food under certain conditions



# Sub-grants & Contractors

- **Sub-grant – (Partner on the project)**
  - “a non-Federal entity that receives Federal funds to carry out a project as a partner to the grant recipient.
- **Contractor- (provides a service)**
  - “a dealer, distributor, merchant or other seller providing goods or services that are required for the conduct of a Federal program. These goods or services may be for an organization's own use or for the use of beneficiaries of the Federal program.”



# Finally, Did you...?

- 1) Conduct a final quality control check
  - a) All changes have been made
  - b) All requirements are addressed
  - c) Application materials are complete
  - d) Included forms (if required)
  - e) The application is signed
  
- 2) Meet the submittal deadline?



# Non-Profit Organization Mandatory Training

[www.epa.gov/ogd/training/index.htm](http://www.epa.gov/ogd/training/index.htm)

- Applying for a Grant
- Demonstrating Management System Capabilities
- Accepting a Grant
- Carrying out Grant activities
- Closing the Grant

# D&B D-U-N-S # Required

- A DUNS Number is *required* for all organizations who apply for grant funding from the Government.
- It only takes one day to get a number.
- Website: [www.dnb.com](http://www.dnb.com)
- Phone #: 1-866-705-5711





# SAM – System for Award Management

- Registration in SAM *required* for all organizations who apply for grant funding from the Government.
- Replaced CCR – Central Contractor Registration system
- Website: [www.sam.gov](http://www.sam.gov)



# Grant or Cooperative Agreement?

- Grant
  - The government has limited involvement in the implementation of the grant
  - Grantee is expected to contact the granting agency with questions or concerns, as needed
- Cooperative Agreement
  - The Agency is a partner and will be directly involved in some of the tasks in the project

# Grant (and Cooperative Agreement) Management

- Agency will assign Regional Project Officers to assist recipients with project management
- Post-award monitoring by the Project Officer will be conducted during your grant period





# Reporting Requirements

- Project progress reports will be specified in the terms and conditions of the agreement
- All recipients must submit a final report package which includes the following
  - Final technical report
  - Final Financial Report
  - Final Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Report
  - These requirements are described in the grant award agreement

# Elements of a Work Plan

## V. Appendices

- Resumes
- Letters of commitment



# Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPP)

- A QAPP will be required if you are doing any type of data collection.
  - Primary data collection
    - sampling wells for water quality
  - Secondary data collection
    - bringing together data from the State Health Department, EPA, and Local Conservation District to see where data gaps need to be addressed





# Grant Information Resources

EPA Region 4 homepage

[www.epa.gov/region4/](http://www.epa.gov/region4/)

Non-Profit Resources

[www.usa.gov/Business/Nonprofit](http://www.usa.gov/Business/Nonprofit)

Federal Grants

[www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov)

EPA Grants & Debarment

[www.epa.gov/ogd](http://www.epa.gov/ogd)

❖ <http://www.epa.gov/ogd/>

– [Resources for Communities](#)

