



Nonprofit Founders Society

Implementation Guide

November 2021 | Create Your Grant Ready Signature Program

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Video Transcript

Introduction

Hi and welcome to November's lesson: Create Your Grant Ready Signature Program. This month we are learning what a signature program is, why we put one on paper, why what I'm teaching helps you get grants, and how step-by-step to put your program together. This is a meaty lesson so grab your favorite drink, get comfortable, and let's dig in.

What is Grant Ready?

I get asked often what grant ready is. Let's go ahead and define grant ready.

Being grant ready is the process where an organization assesses, plans for, and executes their plan to research/find, apply for, win, and manage a grant successfully. There are four areas of the organization you will focus on to be grant ready- Organizational, Operational, Financial, and Programs.

When an organization focuses on being grant ready, they are dramatically increasing their odds of receiving the much needed funds from grants.

Creating a Signature Program that incorporates the ten common grant questions helps you write winning grant proposals. It falls under the program focus area.

What is a Signature Program?

A signature program is the program or service the community knows you by.

A challenge I see around programs with new nonprofits is that their very first program doesn't connect with their mission. Your first program is your Signature Program and will become what your nonprofit is known for in the community. This program needs to be deeply connected to your mission so people will understand your mission.

Why do we need a Signature Program?

Programs are how you fulfill your mission in the world. If you've seen the Fundamentals of Success (mission, vision, values) training, you know that your

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mission is the roots and your programs are the leaves and fruit. The program is the outward expression of your mission and how you change the world.

Developing a program is crucial to your organization's prosperity. Programs help you with funding. Many funders and donors like to give to specific things or projects. Having a program allows them to give for specific needs. It is legal for your organization to collect fees for services. These fees can be on a sliding scale or a flat fee for people who meet certain criteria. Typically, income is the criteria used for both sliding scale and flat fee. Either way, there is always a segment of your target population that will get services for free. Fees for services allows your organization to offset expenses.

Programs allow you to deliver a service and measure its success. The way I have you develop a program makes you walk through exactly how the service will be delivered and built in ways to measure success. You will have these ready to go from the first day of implementation.

What/How

You can follow along in the Implementation Guide. We are looking at the Worksheet.

Background:

Tell about the committee, date of meetings and what they were tasked with. Explain any rationale the committee used. This is useful when thinking about changes to the program or if the program needs to continue to exist.

An Example:

A committee of Board members Jane Doe, Alice Here, and John Doe was formed to develop a meal program for XYZ Nonprofit, Inc. On 8/29/17, the program was approved by the Board.

The Committee began putting the framework of the program together with the following definition in mind: A nonprofit program is an integrated set of services conducted to meet specific, verified community needs by achieving certain specific benefits and changes (outcomes) among specific groups of clients in that community.

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We further saw the program as a system with inputs, processes, tangibles, and outcomes (impacts on clients) - with ongoing feedback among the parts. These systems would make grants a viable source of funding in the future.

Purpose of Program

Why are you putting this program together?

(Was it assigned by the Board? Why did the Board want this program created?)

Chronicling why the program is being implemented now will help you decide later if the program needs to be changed or scrapped. This is important because all programs have a life cycle and, at some point, will need to either be changed to meet the current environment and needs or retired and something new take its place. We are trying to avoid the, "Because we've always done it that way" mentality.

What is the need and how did you establish the need?

There should be a need in the community for the program. This section wants quantifiable reasons for the program.

An example:

1 in 4 of Our County's senior population do not get the nutrition they need. This causes health problems like diabetes to get worse causing hospitalizations and a stress on our health system. Our seniors are in need of nutritious meals to be independent and healthy longer. Local Hospital General conducted a needs assessment dated January 30, 2017 which brought to light these statistics and the effect on the healthcare system. Our own surveys confirmed the results.

How does it fit the mission of the organization?

Mission creep is a term used to describe the gradual broadening of the original objectives of a mission or organization. It happens slowly over many years but it becomes a serious problem. Mission creep drains resources and puts your 501(c)3 tax exemption in jeopardy. Understanding and defining here how this program directly and clearly falls into the organization's mission

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statement will help everyone avoid mission creep. If your program doesn't easily fall into the mission of the organization, then you need to rethink your program.

An example:

The mission of XYZ Nonprofit, Inc. is to improve the lives of seniors by feeding the mind, body and spirit of adults over the age of 60 in Our County. Creating a nutritious meal program for seniors in Our County will further our mission in the body focus.

Program Overview

Program Inputs (resources needed to run the program)

Clients

Who will be the clients? Where will the clients come from? (How will you get clients)?

Include demographics here and where the clients will come from. Do not put how to qualify for the program here. That is another question. The answers here will help you market the program later.

- **What challenges will they have getting in your program or even physically getting to your program?**
- **How can your program eliminate those barriers and stay within your mission?**
- **Is there another organization you can partner with to eliminate the barrier?**

An example:

Clients of the Senior Meal Program will be over 60 years old and living in Our County. They will come from a referral relationship with the local Senior Center, Churches, and the local AARP chapter.

Budget

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What is the estimated budget for the project? You can give a range by calculating the low and high end of services. Use a table for the estimated budget. Give a written description of the most likely scenario under the table.

Facilities/Equipment

What facilities or equipment will be needed to execute the program? (Don't forget to put those items in your budget!)

Program Staff

Who will be required to execute and maintain the program? How will you get those people- hire, volunteers, or Board members? What qualifications will they need? (Don't forget this in your budget!)

Process (how the program services are delivered)

Participant Qualifications

Who qualifies for the program? How will they be qualified- application process, etc? What makes a person eligible for the services? What checks and balances are you putting in place to keep abuse of the program to a minimum?

Delivery

How will the program operate? What are the steps of the program? In other words, tell the reader how the program will be carried out.

This question is asking- from the application to graduating your program- what are the steps a client will take? From an organization perspective, what steps will need to be taken? A process for when clients become ineligible should also be considered.

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Evaluation

How will you evaluate the program to know if it's working or not? How will you get feedback to improve the program and get outcomes?

This is extremely important so you know if the program is a success. You will also have the data to prove the success. Again, programs have a shelf life. You will need to know when to grow a program and when to close a program. Program evaluation is necessary.

Once an evaluation has occurred, how will change recommendations be made and implemented in the program?

Possible evaluation methods are surveys and tracking metrics.

Outputs (units of service)

What are your outputs or units of service? Is it the number of people? Number of homes? Number of families? Do you see any growth potential?

Outcomes (impacts on the clients being served)

What are your expected outcomes from this program? How can they be measured?

What are the expected (and later actual) outcomes or impacts on the clients being served? Give firm numbers along with intangible impacts. An example for a homebound meal recipient may be a 30% decrease in medication due to healthy eating and an increased sense of independence knowing they will not have to go to a nursing home. These statistics should be measured in the evaluations.

Is there any growth potential? Do you establish a wait-list that will give you firm numbers on growth potential? This is helpful when you need to expand.

Create Your Deliverables

Deliverables are all the tangible items you outlined in your plan. Did you say there would be an application for clients to fill out? Was that a paper and online form? Were there forms to be signed off on for accountability? Is a written policy or process needed? Are there regulations that need to be

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followed? Were there forms to measure progress? What evaluation forms need to be created? It's important to include these as an appendix to the program document.

Glossary of Terms:

Grant ready-Being grant ready is the process where an organization assesses, plans for, and executes their plan to research/find, apply for, win, and manage a grant successfully. There are four areas of the organization you will focus on to be grant ready- Organizational, Operational, Financial, and Programs.

Signature program- A signature program is the program or service the community knows you by. It is deeply rooted in your mission.

Sliding fee schedule or sliding fee- Charging clients for services based on a demographic like income. Many nonprofits charge a sliding fee based on the % of poverty they fall into. The range may be from 40% off of services to free, depending on income.

Grant Funder/Funder- A grant funder is the organization or entity that gives grant awards. These organizations can be public or private foundations, federated funds like Community Foundations, local or state government agencies, and federal agencies. Also called grantor or used in the larger sense of funder (which includes anyone individual or organization that provides funding).

Donor- a person who donates something, especially money to a fund or charity.

Target population-the segment of people you serve in your community

Flat fee- A flat fee, also referred to as a flat rate or a linear rate refers to a pricing structure that charges a single fixed fee for a service, regardless of usage.

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Inputs- The human, financial, and physical resources that support your program.

Processes- a series of actions or steps taken in order to achieve a particular end

Tangibles- the materials that can be produced, measured, monitored, and controlled in a program

Outcomes- something that follows as a result or consequence; the difference you've made as a result of the outputs

Outputs- units of service

Deliverables- all the tangible items you outlined in your plan.

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Worksheets

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Program Worksheet

Background:

Tell about the committee, date of meetings and what they were tasked with. Explain any rationale the committee used.

An Example:

A committee of Alesha Mathis, Dorothy Perry, and Nancy Terry was formed to develop a meal program for From the Heart of Georgia to Yours, Inc. On 8/29/17, Alesha Mathis and Dorothy Perry met. Nancy Terry was unable to meet that day.

The group began putting the framework of the program together with the following definition in mind: A nonprofit program is an integrated set of services conducted to meet specific, verified community needs by achieving certain specific benefits and changes (outcomes) among specific groups of clients in that community.

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[Program Template](#)