September 2007

Developing 5 Year Plans: FAQ

Frequently asked questions about developing a five year plan are grouped below in the following sections:

1. Objectives and Need for Assistance
2. Approach
3. Evaluation
4. Budget
5. Formatting and Supplemental Documentation
6. Understanding the Application Process

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1. Objectives and Need for Assistance

Question: **Should we list our goals, objectives, and activities in both the *Objectives and Need for Assistance* section and the *Approach* section? The RFP refers to them in both sections. How are these two sections different?**

Answer: Depending on the structure of the application, the goals and objectives can be listed in the *Objectives and Need for Assistance* section **and/or** the *Approach* section. There will not be any penalties for placing them in both sections; however, you will be penalized if there are no goals and objectives listed in the 5-year plan. Due to space limitations, it may be more efficient to list the goals and objectives in one or the other section.

The activities should be listed in the approach section only. The activities are essentially strategies that will be used to meet the goals and the objectives of the 5-year plan.

The difference between the *Objectives and Need for Assistance* section and the *Approach* section is the kind of information provided. The *Objectives and Need for Assistance* section provides information that substantiates the goals in the 5-year plan. It should include information about primary data sources such as planning studies and/or needs assessments and secondary data sources such as the DD Council State plan, Medicaid data, IDEA data, and/or findings from needs assessments and research studies. The *Approach* section provides information about how the UCEDD will meet the needs. It outlines the strategies that will be utilized and the activities to be implemented to meet the goals and objectives of the 5-year plan.

Question: **Should we develop our goals to reflect the core functions outlined in the DD Act or areas of emphasis?**

Answer: Each UCEDD takes a different approach to organizing the goals in the 5-year plan. There are three commonly used approaches to structuring the goals. The goals may be organized by:

1. Core function
2. Area of Emphasis
3. Combination of core functions and areas of emphasis

Each UCEDD must determine how they will organize their goals to best meet the organization's needs.

Question: **Is there supposed to be a separate goal for at least one area of emphasis or can we show the areas of emphasis that will be addressed in the work activity chart for each goal as long as you consistently show the same area of emphasis for each goal?**

Answer: The DD Act states that the 5-year plan must have a projected goal related to 1 or more areas of emphasis for each of the core functions. If the goals are written by core function, the area of emphasis must be identified in the goal statement and not merely in a chart. It is important to clearly identify the area of emphasis the UCEDD is addressing related to the goal. If the 5-year plan has goals written by area of emphasis, the area must be stated clearly in the goal.

Question: **In the NIRS dataset, we report projects, activities, trainees, and products according to Type of Activity with the options from which we can select being Capacity Building, Systemic Change, or Advocacy. I don't see anything in the RFP stating that we must develop our 5-year plan with these categories identified in anyway (unlike the requirements pertaining to Core Functions and Areas of Emphasis). Regardless of how we report to NIRS, am I correct that we do not have to specify goals by "Type of Activity" for this proposal?**

Answer: The RFP includes general language that a UCEDD must engage in capacity building, systemic change, and advocacy activities. The law does not require a UCEDD to have goals around these activities - it just requires that you engage in these types of activities. This is why NIRS requires you to identify the type of activity associated with the activity. In outlining the five-year plan, your goals should focus on the core functions and areas of emphasis. However, to show that you will be engaging in capacity building, systemic change, and advocacy activities, you might want to indicate what types of activities will be carried out under these goals. This could be done in a number of ways. Under the goal itself, you could indicate what types of activities will be targeted. If you have objectives, you could identify within the objectives the type of activity in which you are engaging. Also, if you describe some of the activities that will be carried out under the goal, you could indicate whether such activities are capacity building, advocacy, or systemic change.

Question: **We are considering structuring our goals according to programs offered (e.g. dental program goal, an autism clinic goal, etc.) Does ADD want goals formatted according to the core functions outlined in the DD Act (e.g. interdisciplinary pre-service preparation) with objectives written for the various programs being programmatic goals?**

Answer: There is no required format for the goals so you can take any approach for writing them. However, there are several things to keep in mind: You must show a relationship between the goals and input from the Consumer Advisory Committee as well as relevant data that shows the needs within the State. At least one area of emphasis must be addressed in the goals. You must have goals that address the core functions. To address the latter two, some UCEDDs write the goals around areas of emphasis, which often times correspond to programmatic areas. Others write the goals around the core functions. You can take either approach as long as you are meeting the basic requirements. Another consideration is that ADD encourages UCEDDs to work in a cross-disability manner and having disability-specific goals (e.g., Autism clinic) does not convey a cross-disability approach. Similarly, peer review panel members have criticized applications that have disability-specific goals.

Questions: **In the guidance under General Instructions for the *Approach* section, there is one reference to providing "quantitative monthly or quarterly projections of the accomplishments." This is the only reference to these shorter time frames and we intended to set annual quantitative goals and objectives. Could you comment on these much shorter time frames?**

Answer: The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) (ADD's umbrella agency) requires standard language for the program announcements. The reference in the *Approach* section to providing "quantitative monthly or quarterly projections of the accomplishments" is ACF standard language for program announcements. Although ADD does not require such a timeline, as an agency within ACF we encourage you to follow this guidance. In doing so, we recommend that you use quarterly and not monthly projections.

2. Approach

Question: **Regarding the description of "coordinated activities within the DD Network," some State DD Networks may be planning to develop 5 year plans after the application deadline. How can an applicant UCEDD be specific in their application while awaiting the Network goals? Is it appropriate to discuss this in the application, possibly indicating some past activities or ongoing types of Network activities and stating that an upcoming Network plan will be further detailed in the annual report to ADD?**

Answer: It is appropriate to describe current planning activities of the DD Network partners. What is important is to convey the collaborative planning activities of the DD Network, including those that have taken place and those that will occur in the future.

Question: **Is there a specific definition of universal design that should be used? For example, under product development, universal design could imply that products may be provided in alternative formats when requested, not that the products are developed in every possible format. Does this fit with the definition?**

Answer: To ADD, the concept of universal design cuts across many ideas about accessibility, including the physical accessibility of buildings, the cognitive accessibility of materials, the language accessibility of trainings, etc. It suggests that the UCEDD activities are provided using multiple modalities to ensure and enhance participation. ADD encourages the UCEDDs to use universal design principles as the overall framework for the organization, including its projects and activities. This includes any materials that the UCEDD develops.

Question: **Regarding the Areas of Emphasis in the DD Act, can "Other" be selected as an area of emphasis around which we implement the four core functions? It appears that "Other" follows "Recreation" in the announcement and covers formal and informal community supports that affect quality of life for individuals with disabilities. If so, it seems that this would be very broad and provide us with the opportunity to address a range of issues identified in our needs studies and by our CAC that do not fall within the parameters of the preceding Areas of Emphasis.**

Answer: The last area of emphasis listed in the DD Act is “other services available or offered to individuals in a community, including formal and informal community supports, that affect their quality of life”. Thus, UCEDDs may use “other services” as an area of emphasis as long as the issue addressed does not fall under another area of emphasis AND the UCEDD has ample justification to use “other services” as its primary area of emphasis.

3. Evaluation

Question: **Under *Evaluation*, there is a requirement for a logic model. These can provide a broad overview or they can be used to look at accomplishments on a program or project level. Should programs submit multiple logic models focusing on different levels of program achievement or focusing on goals in a manner consistent with the DD Act?**

Answer: The logic model should outline what the UCEDD will accomplish and how impact (outcomes) will be measured. While the UCEDD may have logic models for individual projects and/or activities, it is not necessary to provide information about these project-based logic models. Instead, ADD wants to know how the UCEDD will be evaluated as an organization and determine the outcomes of the collective groups of projects and activities.

Question: **For interdisciplinary pre-service preparation and continuing education and satisfaction measures, is the enrolled student considered the consumer?**

Answer: Yes, the enrolled student is the consumer of the interdisciplinary pre-service preparation and continuing education activities.

4. Writing Your Budget

Question: **Are there any financial requirements other than a *Budget* for next year (Year One) and the notice of tax exemption?**

Answer: The application must include the indirect cost rate agreement with the government, the SF 424, SF 424A, the budget narrative, and a line item budget. The budget narrative must provided detailed explanation of the justification for the cost and calculations for the cost estimates. The budget must clearly support the proposed 5-year plan.

Question: **The ADD Power Point presentation states that the *Budget Justification* is not part of the Program Description. In the past we've provided a one-page justification in the text and a longer one with the *Budget.* Is it no longer necessary to put *Budget Justification* in the program description?**

Answer: You do not have to provide any information about the proposed budget in the project description. The budget information can go in the budget narrative.

Question: **Please clarify how we capture costs of providing refreshments at meetings. What do we call it in the *Budget*? Meeting expenses? Refreshments? I am confused because last year I was told that if we called it refreshments we could pay for food. I know it was in one of our project budgets, not the core, that it got approved.**

Answer: ACF allows for grantees to use federal funds to pay for modest food costs per the cost principles as long as it is reasonable and necessary to conduct business, such as for a working lunch or meeting with the Consumer Advisory Committee. They should be categorized as meeting expenses.

Question: **In calculating indirect costs, should all subcontracts be excluded from the base for calculating indirect costs or only those in excess of $25,000? There seems to be a contradiction between the core grant guidelines and the information found in the HHS Grants Policy which states, "When requesting indirect costs, these applicants should budget indirect costs at a rate of 8% of the modified total direct costs, exclusive of tuition and fees, expenditures for equipment, and sub-awards and contracts in excess of $25,000."**

Answer: You should only exclude those subcontracts that exceed $25,000.

Question: **Our university's HHS-approved indirect cost rate for this type of project is 28.5% of modified total direct costs. Since training grants limit the IDC to 8% of modified total direct costs, we plan to report the difference as match per the HHS Grants Policy Statement (Section II-47) which states: "When satisfying a matching or cost-sharing requirement by not claiming the full indirect cost**

reimbursement to which the recipient is otherwise entitled, the recipient should reduce its charge to the grant to reflect the amount claimed. The amount of the reduction qualifies as matching or cost sharing." Is it acceptable to claim as match the difference between our allowable/approved indirect cost rate and the 8% listed?

Answer: Yes, it is allowable to use the difference as part of your match. For training grants, ACF allows the 8% to be calculated only on the first $25,000 of the cost of a major contract and/or sub-award. Charges exceeding the $25,000 limitation must be excluded from the calculation.

5. Formatting and Supplemental Documentation

Question: **In the *Project Description*, what is the correct order for the presentation of the information in this section?**

Answer: The checklist that starts on p. 28 of the Guidance shows you the order for the entire application package. There is no required order for the project description; however ADD recommends that you organize the application by the following sections:

1. Objectives and Need for Assistance
2. Approach
3. Evaluation
4. Staff and Position Data
5. Organizational Profiles

Question: **Should we follow the Table of Contents or the Evaluation Criteria as a guide for structuring the application?**

Answer: The entire application package should follow the format that is outlined in Section IV.2, which outlines the content and form of the applications. (This starts on p. 12 of the PDF version of the PA.) The entire application package will include the standard forms and certifications (e.g. SF 424, SF424A, lobbying certifications, assurances, etc.), the *Budget* and *Budget Narrative, Program Description,* and *Appendices*. The checklist that starts on p. 28 also shows you the order for the entire application package.

Question: **After the *Evaluation* section I am confused on whether *Budget* is supposed to come next as well as organizational profiles and staff position information. Please clarify which of this information can go in the *Appendix* as opposed to the *Project Description*.**

Answer: The *Budget* should be submitted as a separate document. It should ***not*** be included in the *Appendix* or the *Project Description*.

Question: **Are the *Budget*, *Budget Justification* and *Required Forms* regarded as separate components of the application, components of the narrative and counted in those 50 pages, or components of the *Appendix* and counted in those 40 pages?**

Answer: The *Budget and Budget Justification* should be submitted as a separate document and are not counted as part of the 50 pages in the application. The *Required Forms* are also separate documents and are not counted against the 50 pages. These documents should ***not*** be included in the *Appendix* or the *Project Description*.

Question: **Do Letters of Support, Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, and 501(c)3 Nonprofit Status letters count against the *Appendix* 40 page limit?**

Answer: Only the Letters of Support should appear in the *Appendix*. They count against the 40 page limit in the *Appendix*. Indirect Cost Rate Agreement and 501(c)3 Nonprofit Status letters should be included with the budget pages and standard forms.

Questions: **Do the *Abstract* or *Table of Contents* count in the page count?**

Answer: No but the *Abstract* is one page only.

Question: **Can the project *Abstract* be single-spaced?**

Answer: Single space for the *Abstract* is fine.

Question: **If tables, graphs or charts are used in the *Project Description*, must these all be double spaced?**

Answer: The tables, graphs, and charts may be single spaced; however they must also be used with discretion. You cannot take advantage of the single spacing in tables by putting the majority of the project description in table format. Applications that make excessive use of tables are considered non-responsive and will have to be re-written.

Question: **The guidance language under Organizational Structure and Experience states: "For UCEDDs in institutions of higher education, documentation that establishes the UCEDD as an independent entity within the institution of higher education with the authority to carry out the four core functions." What form does this documentation take? From which level of the University should the documentation come?**

Answer: At best, the UCEDD should submit a formal document that describes the UCEDD organizational structure in relation to the University, the functions of the UCEDDs, the independence of the UCEDD to carry out the DD Act mandates, and the University support provided to the UCEDD. This document should be signed by the UCEDD director and University leadership. It should also be written on University leader head.

Question: **The application requests both a bio-sketch and job description for key personnel. How extensive a job description is expected in the appendices? Actual position descriptions may be several pages long. Will it suffice to include a one to three-sentence job description in our budget justification?**

Answer: It is not necessary to include the actual full job description if it is several pages long. However, you should provide a summary paragraph that delineates major responsibilities and is descriptive enough to know what the staff person is responsible for in relation to the UCEDD grant. One to three sentences may not be enough. Try creating a summary paragraph.

Question: **Does the appendix material have a font size requirement?**

Answer: There is not a font size requirement; however ADD recommends using a font size of at least 10. Anything smaller can be difficult to read for some reviewers.

Question: **There are 2 different versions of the SF 424 (the one-page SF 424 and the SF 424v2). Which one should we use?**

Answer: You want to use the SF424 (the one-pager) and not the SF424v2.

Question: **We will be submitting hard copies of our core grant application. The guidance says all copies should be unbound. We were planning on sending the original unbound, but would like to bind the reviewer copies for ease of use. Is that ok?**

Answer: Keep them unbound.

Question: **We have dividers in the narrative of the *Project Description* and in the *Appendices* to help separate sections. These won't count in our total page limit, will they?**

Answer: No.

6. Understanding the Application Process

Question: **The guidance indicates that the grant can be submitted through grants.gov, but your email indicates that we should submit an original and 3 copies. Are we not supposed to use electronic submission for this application?**

Answer: You may use electronic **OR** hard copy submissions. **Do not** submit both electronic and hard copies. If you submit hard copies, we ask that you provide the original and three copies.

Question: **Are the review forms or reviewer instructions available to us prior to submitting the application?**

Answer: Grant review forms cannot be shared prior to the review. However, what appears in the program announcement is exactly what the reviewers will use to evaluate your application. The only content in the review forms are the evaluation criteria that appear in the program announcement. The reviewers will not have access to information that has not been made public.