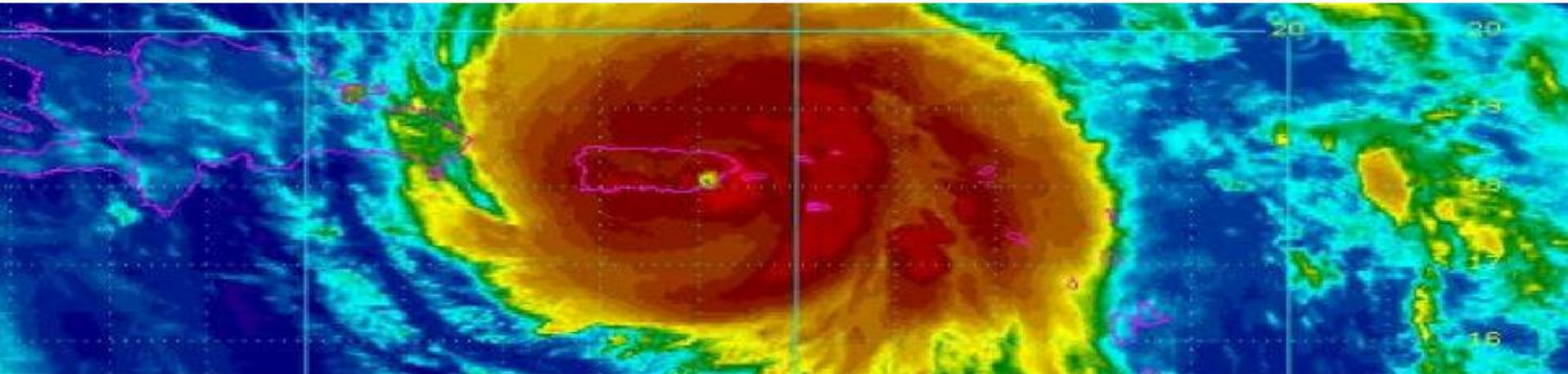


HURRICANE MARIA CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAM

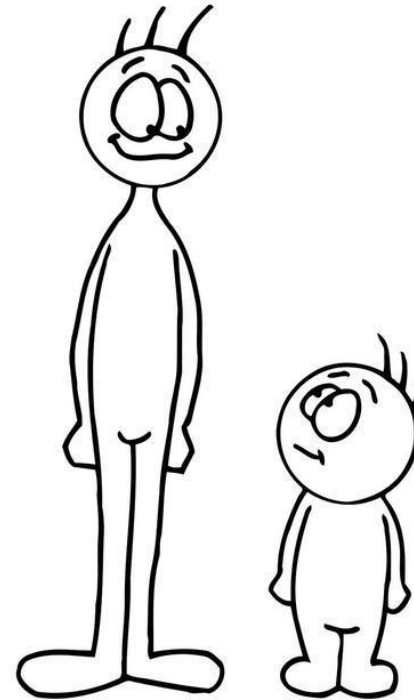


FEMA



There are a variety of names for Abstracts

- Project Summary
- Executive Summary
- Summary
- Project Synopsis
- Related, but not the same:
 - Concept Paper
 - White Paper



What is an Abstract?

- An Abstract is a concise summary of a larger project, that identifies the project's goals, specific objectives, methodology, expected results, significance, and impact
- It is a summary of the *project* from beginning to end—not of the topic (don't get caught up in the detail of describing the background of the problem you are addressing—keep it brief and high impact)
- It should encapsulate what you will be doing in short form—think of it like a tiny blueprint for what you want to do

Why is it important?

- It is intended to grab the reader's attention and make them want to read more
- It is also used by the Federal agency to publish funding outcomes to the public
- Some reviewers will only have time to read the abstract—if it interests them, they might make time to read further
- Make sure any salient and important aspects of your project are there in your abstract

Why is it important, continued...

- It can also be used to communicate your project idea with program officers from Federal or Private funding sources (we will discuss that further ahead)
- It can be used to pitch your project concept to potential sponsors
- It helps you organize the structure of your project

What goes into a Project Abstract

- Some Agencies may have specific instructions for the format and content of the Abstract, while others may simply give a word (250-500 words) or page limit (1 page)
- If there are no specific instructions, you should include:

- 
- ✓ **Statement of Need**
 - ✓ **Organizational description**
 - ✓ **Target Population**
 - ✓ **Significance and Impact**
 - ✓ **Project Overview: Objectives, Methodology**
 - ✓ **Feasibility**
 - ✓ **Amount of Funds Requested**
 - ✓ **Expected Outcomes**

✓ Statement of Need

- What problem or need will your project address?
- What community barrier(s) will it address?
- Why is this an important issue?
- What do you intend to do about it? How are you going to address the problem?
- Rationale for conducting the project: Why this project right now?

✓ Organizational Description

- What is the name & location of your organization?
- What does your organization do? What is its mission?
- What are the services that you provide?
- What is the general population that you serve?
- What makes your organization unique? (ex: the only organization serving low-income women in Western Puerto Rico)

✓ Target Population

- Describe the specific population, or sub-group of the population that you serve, that will be the target of the project
- Provide *targeted* demographic information that is *relevant* to your proposed approach, such as:
 - Income levels
 - Unemployment
 - Literacy

✓ Significance and Impact: Who Cares?

- Why is your project significant?
 - How does your project align with the agency's *mission and funding objectives*?
 - Reiterate the importance of addressing this problem—what are the implications if it isn't addressed
- Impact:
 - What are the potential short-term and long-range impacts of the project on the problem you described? On the target population? On society? On the mission of the agency?

✓ Project Overview: The plan for your project

- What is the main **goal(s)** of your project?
- What are the specific **objectives** related to achieving this goal (aka action steps)
- What is the **methodology** that you will use? (How will you carry out each objective)

Side-Note: What are Goals vs. Objectives???

GOALS

- Overarching, Long-Range direction
- Broad statement of targeted outcome
- Ex: To improve High School Graduation rates in low-income communities in PR

OBJECTIVES

- Breaks goal down into smaller, definable units
- Provide **specific, measurable** actions to achieve the goal
- Ex: Evaluate causes of high school drop-out
- Provide a mentoring & tutoring program for 30 High School students that are assessed to be a high risk for school drop-out

Writing effective objectives

Make sure that they are **SMART!** (www.cdc.gov)

- **S**—Specific
- **M**—Measurable
- **A**—Achievable
- **R**—Realistic
- **T**—Time Bound

Writing effective objectives

Program Objectives should identify:

Who, What, When, and How

Example of a vague, poorly written objective:

- To educate 30 patients about diabetes self-care

Problems with the example Objective:

- Does not address:
 - ❖ Who is involved?
 - ❖ What are the desired outcomes?
 - ❖ How will success be measured?
 - ❖ When will the outcome occur?

Example of a well-written objective:

By the end of the first year of the project, 30 low-income diabetic patients aged 65 or older will attend a series of 3, hour-long, diabetic self-care trainings and will show improvement in knowledge regarding self blood glucose monitoring, insulin administration, and diabetic nutrition as measured by pre- and post-test survey.

✓ Feasibility

- It is important to demonstrate that you are capable of implementing a project of this type and handling the funds
- Highlight any competencies and previous experience relevant to the proposed project, such as:
 - experience in conducting projects, leadership experience, experience handling external funds
- Why should your organization do this project vs. any other group?
- What aspects of your project will assure success?

✓ Amount of Funds Requested

- How much will the proposed project cost?
- How long will it take?
- How will it be funded in the future?
- Do you have partners or grants from other sources?



✓ Expected Outcomes: What do you hope to achieve?

- What are the tangible or intangible deliverables by the end of your project period?
- Ex: 50% decrease in high school drop-outs
- Ex: a manual for community centers to use in implementing a program to address low-income, high school students at high risk for high school drop-out.
- Ex: Educational materials that can be used by similar centers to address xyz
- Ex: An enhanced understanding of the factors associated with high school retention in low-income students in PR

Back to Significance and Impact for a moment...

Alignment with Disaster Resiliency & Mitigation Goals

- When you are applying to a Federal agency for funding that is related to a natural disaster, you must address the alignment of your project with the agency's unique goals for disaster resiliency and mitigation
- This is important to include in a brief form in your abstract (that you tailor to the specific agency you are applying to) and in your narrative for the full application

What is Disaster Resiliency?

“Disaster resilience is the ability of individuals, communities, organizations and states to adapt to and recover from hazards, shocks or stresses without compromising long-term prospects for development...determined by the degree to which individuals, communities and public and private organizations are capable of organizing themselves to learn from past disasters and reduce their risks to future ones, at international, regional, national and local levels.”

Governance and Social Development Resource Center

What is Disaster Mitigation?

- Disaster mitigation measures are those that eliminate or reduce the impacts and risks of hazards through proactive measures taken before an emergency or disaster occurs. These measures may be structural or non-structural
- According to FEMA:
 - “...the effort to reduce loss of life and property by lessening the impact of disasters. In order for mitigation to be effective we need to take action now—before the next disaster—to reduce human and financial consequences later...”

Agency specific Disaster Resiliency & Mitigation Goals

- Each agency has its base mission, and will have specific objectives related to Disaster Resiliency and Mitigation within that overall framework
- Ex: Economic Development Administration
 - The base mission here is economic development—creation of jobs and a robust economy
 - Specific Objectives related to Disaster Resilience & Mitigation will then pertain to how to respond to job loss and economic down-turn, and development of measures to prevent job loss and economic impact in the case of a natural disaster

Let's look at the EDA Disaster Supplemental NOFO

“All projects ***must be consistent with at least one*** of DOC's Disaster Recovery Investment Priorities, which can be found at www.eda.gov/about/investment-priorities/disaster-recovery”

EDA INVESTMENT PRIORITIES

https://www.eda.gov/about/investment-priorities/



Search

EDA Job Opportunities!
EDA's Privacy Program

USEFUL LINKS

Non-Profits Can Work with
EDA(10/13/15, PPT)
EDA Regulations
Department of Commerce
Commerce Strategic Plan and
Annual Performance Plans
Commerce Organizational
Chart and Statutory Authority
No FEAR Act
Economic and the Small Business

EDA's investment priorities are designed to provide an overarching framework to guide the agency's investment portfolio to ensure its investments contribute the strongest positive impact on sustainable regional economic growth and diversification. Competitive applications will be responsive to the evaluation criteria listed under each individual funding announcement, including at least one of the following investment priorities:

- 1. Recovery & Resilience:** Projects that assist with economic resilience (including business continuity and preparedness) and long-term recovery from natural disasters and economic shocks to ensure U.S. communities are globally competitive.
- 2. Critical Infrastructure:** Projects that establish the fundamental building blocks of a prosperous and innovation-centric economy and a secure platform for American business, including physical (e.g., broadband, energy, roads, water, sewer) and other economic infrastructure.
- 3. Workforce Development & Manufacturing:** Projects that support the planning and implementation of infrastructure for skills-training centers and related facilities that address the hiring needs of the business community -- particularly in the manufacturing sector -- with a specific emphasis on the expansion of apprenticeships and work-and-learn training models. Also includes projects that encourage job creation and business expansion in manufacturing, including infrastructure-related efforts that focus on advanced manufacturing of innovative, high-value products and enhancing manufacturing supply chains.
- 4. Exports & FDI:** Primarily infrastructure projects that enhance community assets (e.g., port facilities) to support growth in U.S. exports and increased foreign direct investment—and ultimately the return of jobs to the United States.

Exercise: Your municipality wants to construct a central community hub, with kiosks for rent, an indoor playground, and a hurricane proof shelter.

- How would this impact the economy?
- Which of the listed investment priorities would this be in alignment with?
- How could I briefly describe this in an abstract?

Community hub example:

- How would this impact the economy?
 - Job creation
 - Tourism
 - Stimulation of local economy
- Which investment priority?
 - #1 & maybe #3 (workforce development, but not manufacturing...)

How could I put this into a brief abstract?

- Ex:
- “Our proposed project is in alignment with the DOC investment priority #1, in that it will create jobs, attract tourism, and stimulate the local economy of the municipality of Cityville, helping it to recover from economic losses suffered after Hurricane Maria. In addition, we will work with Engineers from the UPR system to ensure that the Hurricane shelter will provide a safe space for community members in the event of a future hurricane, mitigating loss of life in a flood-prone region with 60% of residents falling below the national poverty line.”

General Tips to Keep in Mind for Proposal Writing

- Proposals are persuasive arguments for an agency to give you money for what you want to do
 - Remember your audience, and what they are trying to achieve
 - Write to those needs
 - Sell your idea; make it compelling
- Be Clear and Concise
- Be Well Organized
- Read the instructions thoroughly and follow them exactly
- Up-to-date citations from the literature and relevant statistics help build a solid case for your efforts, convey confidence and knowledgeability—Do your research before you start writing

Tips, continued

- Have someone in your field and outside of it read over your narrative to check for errors, readability, flow
 - Remember that errors do matter—if there are two very high quality proposals, but one has typos, then the agency is more likely to fund the error-free one
- Use assertive language—avoid terms such as could, might, should; use instead: will, are expected to..., we are confident that this will result in....
- Start thinking about project evaluation as you plan your project
 - How will you know that you are successful?
 - How will you measure success? (ex: a % change in the targeted issue)

This sentence has five words. Here are five more words.
Five-word sentences are fine. But several together become
monotonous. Listen to what is happening. The writing is
getting boring. The sound of it drones. It's like a stuck record.
The ear demands some variety.

Now listen. I vary the sentence length, and I create music.
Music. The writing sings. It has a pleasant rhythm, a lilt, a
harmony. I use short sentences. And I use sentences of
medium length. And sometimes when I am certain the reader
is rested, I will engage him with a sentence of considerable
length, a sentence that burns with energy and builds with all
the impetus of a crescendo, the roll of the drums, the crash of
the cymbals—sounds that say listen to this, it is important.

So write with a combination of short, medium, and long
sentences. Create a sound that pleases the reader's ear. Don't
just write words. Write music.

-Gary Provost

Outlining Your Abstract (Main points)

- What is the situation (need or problem) that needs to be addressed?
- What is the mission of your org and population you serve?
- What do you propose to do about the situation?
- Who cares? If you are successful, what difference will it make?
- Why are you and your team qualified to do it?
- What will it cost and how long will it take?
- What do you hope to achieve by the end of the funding period?

Exercise: Abstract as a 1-2 minute elevator pitch

Resources

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ocs/ced_project_summary_abstract_tool.pdf

<http://grant-central-station.com/articles/the-elements-of-a-good-proposal-abstract/>

https://your.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/HowToWriteACompellingAbstractForGrantApplication_July2017.pdf

<https://www.thebalancesmb.com/how-to-write-the-executive-summary-of-your-grant-proposal-2501963>

<http://www.thegranthelpers.com/blog/bid/205157/The-Importance-of-an-Abstract-in-Grant-Applications>

<http://gsdrc.org/topic-guides/disaster-resilience/concepts/what-is-disaster-resilience/>

<https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/mrgnc-mngmnt/dsstr-prvntn-mtgtn/bt-dsstr-mtgtn-en.aspx>

<https://www.eda.gov/files/programs/disaster-recovery/2018-supplemental/EDA-Disaster-NOFO-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

***For further questions and
individual assistance:***

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Contacting Program Officers

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Proposal Development Unit
University of Puerto Rico Mayaguez



What is a Program Officer?

- Every program has an assigned contact person that is typically in charge of coordinating application reviews and delivering a portfolio of applications to be evaluated
- They act as the overall point of contact with applicants during the initial phase of the peer review process

Who Should Contact Program Officers

- Anyone applying for a grant, especially a federal grant, should identify a potential program, the pertinent Program Officer, and prepare an abstract to be ready for communication with the PO.
- It is the most valuable investment of time that a grant seeker can make—no grant proposal should be submitted without first ascertaining interest on the part of the agency

Why is it important to Contact Program Officers?

- Program officials and review panels can develop preferences and dislikes over time that rarely find their way into the program description
- Programmatic priorities shift over time, while the descriptions remain the same
- Communication gives you the opportunity to cultivate their interest and develop a relationship with the agency contact
- It is an efficient way to obtain rapid feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of your proposal, rather than waiting 6-9 months for reviewer comments from the evaluation committee

Why? Continued...

- They can recommend other programs that might be more suitable for your project
- They can recommend modifications to your project that would help it to be in better alignment with the funding needs of the agency
- Program Officers are rewarded for presenting a strong portfolio of applications for review—they want agency resources to be spent on the most appropriate and relevant applications for the program
- They can clarify contradictory or ambiguous elements of the funding announcement

Why? Continued...

- If you have already applied to the program previously and received reviewer feedback, they can help to clarify reviews for future submissions

How?

- POs are usually very busy, juggling meetings, travel to conferences, overseeing evaluation committees, etc.
 - Emailing them allows them to respond on their schedule, and they often respond very quickly
- In the email:
 - Introduce yourself, your organization, its mission, and a brief description of your project, and refer them to your attached project abstract for more detail
 - State clearly what you would like their feedback on
 - Make sure to thank them for their time

Tips

- Keep it brief
- Make sure that you tailor the abstract to the agency and program that you are applying—specifically mention alignment with agency and funding mechanism priorities
- If you feel that a telephone conversation would be more productive for your needs, then email first and ask for a time that would be convenient for them to talk—practice your elevator pitch!
- Don't pester—if after one week they haven't responded, try calling them or sending a follow-up email. If there is still no response then look for alternative agency contacts.

Tips, continued

- Make sure to do your research on the agency—investigate their website, know what their priorities are, etc.

REFERENCES

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<https://www.okhighered.org/grant-opps/docs/can-we-talk-contacting-program-officers.pdf>

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