

## **Women for Women Advocacy Application Questions**

### **Guidance for Advocacy Applicants**

The *Women for Women* (WFW) Grant Program wants to be an “investor” in your project rather than a “donor.” We want to know:

- what your project will achieve,
- the likelihood of success, and
- why your project is the best use of our funds.

You should provide a clear description of how an investment in your project will result in demonstrable achievements producing real social change. Each question is followed by some guidance for completing the question.

### **Organizational Profile**

1. What is your mission and vision?

#### Guidance:

We see mission as what you do and vision as the end state you wish to achieve. The best mission and vision statements are short and clear. We are especially interested in how your mission gives you concentration and focus—discouraging you from simply taking on more projects because money is available. Finally, if you have points of approach (values, principles, whatever you might call them) that guide where you go or how you work, name them and be specific about how they shape your actions.

2. For the specific program area for which you seek our support what strengths and expertise do you have?

#### Guidance:

We have found that a group’s ability to understand what it does especially well is a good predictor of its success over time. Core know-how is often a matter of three elements that make you effective: 1) knowledge—your information and insight capital; 2) skills—what you know how to do based on what you know; and 3) persuasiveness—how to communicate what you know and do to others who need to change to reach success.

Be as specific as you can. General statements such as “We are really good at working with people” add little value to our understanding of how and why you think you are successful.

3. What have you achieved in the past three years for persons in your programs that are most like the project for which you seek our support?

Guidance:

Please know we are much more impressed with how many people have tangibly improved their lives than how much money you have attracted or what awards you may have received—unless the recognition is clearly based on participant outcomes. Also, we do not equate growth with achievement. Just focus on the tangible human gains you have created for those you serve.

4. What predicts your sustainability as an organization? Please speak to financial and program factors.

Guidance:

We want to make sure that an investment in an organization or its programs will not be lost due to the organization either failing or having to spend so much time staying afloat that it cannot focus sufficiently on programs. As you think about what evidence to give us, consider:

Finances—trends, events, other factors that influence your financial viability, including enough cash to operate. Contribution base and cost control are both important here.

Leadership—including past or anticipated losses of key people at board and staff levels and any current gaps in capacity.

Program achievement—the extent to which your achievements for participants will make you competitive for investment in an increasingly outcome-driven world.

Comparative positioning—recognition of you and your “brand” within the area where you seek funds and have known impacts. Growing recognition is often a key factor.

## **Your Project**

5. How does your project meet one or more of the *WFW* grant objectives?

Guidance:

Read the grant guidelines and highlight the key objectives that are addressed by your project.

6. What is the population or community you want to help through your study or project?

Guidance:

We want to begin with clarity on the persons or groups that have a problem that you think is not effectively addressed within existing systems or conditions. This may be a general group, or a “niche” of persons whose specific risks or issues are not covered or well served by existing systems.

7. What, specifically, is the system or condition/issue that you want to influence through your policy or advocacy efforts?

Guidance:

By condition, we mean important problems or constraints that people face, such as not having health insurance. By systems we mean funding streams (e.g., Medicare), delivery mechanisms (such as clinics and hospitals), or other large factors or forces that operate independently of individuals or household behavior. We are interested in addressing systems, whether local, state or national, that have significant impact on the local population or community you want to help. For example, in the area of healthcare, that may mean financial or regulatory systems, eligibility requirements, or resource allocation policies.

8. What improvement or change in the system or condition do you want to help bring about? Please be specific about what the improved system would look like and what specific changes are needed.

Guidance:

What needs to change to address the problem or condition you address in question 2? If your policy or advocacy efforts work, how will the system be different? What regulatory, legislative or policy changes would occur? For example, ‘through our efforts, there will be a significant reduction in complicated enrollment procedures as a barrier to insurance access for middle- to low-income families.

9. What is your approach to achieving this result? What overall strategy or method are you using?

Guidance:

Most projects are not a random set of activities. They are a coherent strategy to achieve a result. Please do not offer us a detailed work plan. Rather, tell us a few core elements of your particular way of solving a problem and why you think it is the best way to engage constituents and help them get to the success you have stated. If you could place this in the context of other approaches you might have used but didn’t, that would add to our understanding.

## **Key People and Partners**

10. Please specify the names and qualifications of the key people who will be responsible for achieving the anticipated results. What special skills and/or experience does each of them bring to the project?

### Guidance:

This is a critical element in predicting project success. People are more powerful than great plans, a big committee or even a lot of money in achieving results. While you may first consider resume details - e.g., degrees and years of experience—do recognize that in many areas, there is no strong correlation between these factors and ability create research that is effectively used by others. Help us understand why these are the right people to achieve the results you propose.

11. Please list any partners, intermediaries or advisors important to your success and describe the role they will play and the evidence you have of their commitment. Please tell us if you have successfully collaborated with any of the listed people or groups in the past or if you are presently working with them on other projects.

### Guidance:

An intermediary is a group or person (often a gatekeeper) whose behavior you do not control and who must do something (or allow you to do something) in order for you to succeed. Examples include but are not limited to: school districts, regulatory bodies, health care agencies, etc.

A partner is a group whose skills or talents augment or counterbalance your own as a part of program delivery.

An advisory board is a formal entity with expertise in your focal area of research or systems reform that provides guidance to help ensure the success of the project.

## **Results and Verification**

12. What specific results do you anticipate achieving if your projected improvement or change is fully made? Please include all major points of success and indicate when you think they will be achieved with reference to the start of the grant.

### Guidance

While you may not know the precise consequences of a systems change, we ask that you project the consequences—whether its x more persons having a primary physician or y more students performing at grade level.

Start with the most direct result your change focuses upon achieving. For example, “If we are successful at reducing complicated enrollment procedures as a barrier to insurance access, we anticipate that an additional 200,000 local families will gain coverage over a three-year period.” Then consider other results or impacts that will also be achieved. For example, “As a result of this coverage, we project a minimum reduction of 5,000 unnecessary visits to hospital emergency departments.”

13. If the result(s) cannot reasonably be achieved in the grant period, please define the impact you anticipate by the end of the grant that predicts accomplishing the stated result(s) over a longer period.

Guidance

In some cases you may see a partial result during the grant period (e.g., enrolling half the target number of families in health insurance), but in many others you will focus on interim results or milestones that predict later success. For example, “In the grant term, we anticipate new policies within the Department of Health and other state agencies to simplify enrollment procedures along with expanded outreach efforts in major markets including the launch of a national media campaign in multiple languages and mobile units that can expedite enrollment.”

14. What do you most want to learn from this project?

Guidance:

High performing organizations make learning intentional in everything they do. Many do this by focusing on their assumptions. In most projects, you are making one or more key assumptions in the general form of if-then. If we offer this kind of program, then that kind of person will attend. It is your expectation that an activity prompts a certain consequence but it may well be far from a certainty. In that case your learning might be to test an assumption.

Learnings are important as one guide to designing a project. If, for example, you want to grow, you might well build in a test of whatever achievement you need to make growth possible—whether it’s hiring great people for the money you can pay them, attracting new kinds of participants or something else.

**Tracking to Success: Critical Steps and Milestones, Data to Keep Track and Correct Course**

15. Name the three to four critical steps in your systems change initiative(s), tell us what has to be achieved at each step for you to be on the path to success, and provide a rough timeline.

Guidance:

While certainly different from the work plan of a direct service project, you presumably have a sequence of steps to get to your result. What will success look like at each stage of your project? The completion and start of various steps are likely to overlap in practice. Our intent is to get a rough estimate of the project's timing. If, for example, the focus is on getting persons or groups to change their behavior, the steps and related achievements might be as follows:

- Informing 100 administrators about the scale of a problem or opportunity and the consequences of a particular behavior through a citywide conference. (Months 1-3)  
Achievement: 90 percent of conference attendees report increased knowledge of issue.
- Convincing 80 administrators of the feasibility, effectiveness or cost savings associated with new practices that address the issue through one-on-one briefings and group conference calls. (Months 2-5)  
Achievement: 60 administrators agree to pilot new practices within their agencies.
- Supporting 60 of that group to gain the requisite skills, knowledge, resources or support of key stakeholders to implement the behavior change through customized, on-site technical assistance and monitoring their progress through monthly site visits and surveys. (Months 5-18)  
Achievement: 60 administrators have trained their staff in new practices by Month 8, 55 have fully implemented new practices at month 12, and 52 retain the practices at month 18.

16. What are some potential factors (both external and internal) that might accelerate or inhibit your project?

Guidance:

Please note factors that will help your project meet its goals and those that might slow it down.

**For Two-Year Grant Requests**

17. Break down the total amount requested on your cover sheet into your requested amount for Year One and your requested amount for Year Two.
18. Explain why two year funding is necessary and important to the success of this project.

19. Submit a separate budget for Year One and Year Two.