Improve your CNCS Proposal

Content Tips

- Personalize need to connect to the reader. Be sensitive to the language you use when describing the community need.
- What role will the program play in meeting the need? The reader knows the program can't get rid of the need, but what difference can your program make?
- Describe all member interventions will the same level of intension. One is not more important than another. If it is, then you may not want to write about it in your application.
- Focus on your primary member activities/interventions.
- If percentages or numbers sound low, explain the rational behind them.
- Personalize the statistics you use to connect them to your program theory.
- Talk positively about your board of directors and/or governing body.
- Explain any negatives – don't let negatives stand alone.
- Explain any differences between budget narrative and program narrative or make sure they connect.
- Talk about sustainability.
- Are members trained to train and supervise volunteers?
- How are the site supervisors trained and supervised?
- If you mention any "plan", be sure to explain the plan.
- Talk about program as whole, not partners separately.
- If you mention that your program aligns with one of CNCS's strategic initiatives, make sure you can connect your program model or theory to that initiative versus a superficial connection.
- Don't need "fluff" information; give the reader what they need.

Formatting Tips

- Put most compelling numbers first!
- Always start with a positive statement.
- Establish a foundation for your program at the beginning. It doesn't need to be long; it should give context to the rest of the proposal.
- Need transition statements to connect paragraphs.
- Use consistent names/titles throughout the proposal.
- Don't use lingo, jargon, or location specific language.
- Use AmeriCorps regulation language if appropriate.
- Be sure to print your application to ensure you are not over the page limit on both the narratives and the logic model.

Overall Tips

- Address ALL questions.
- Always ask "so what"!
- Clear connection from Need to Activities to Outcome. Use your program theory and logic model!!
- Be sure that your narratives, logic model and performance measures all reflect the same information.
- The reader should be able to conceptualize the program throughout the application and logic model.
- Find three people (besides the writer) to:
  - Read the entire proposal
  - Check grammar
  - Read Program Design section and describe your program back to you
- Sources should be current, not older studies.
- Performance measures should show growing impact of program over the years.

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