

★ Examples (continued)

Media Support: High level of publicity for compliance-check program, including publication of sales rates and names of stores that sell to minors; publicity campaign focused on efforts to pass keg registration ordinance and in-depth press coverage of first violations; joint news conference with college officials and parents group explaining and supporting parental notification policy.

2 - Outback County, USA

Program Objective: To reduce alcohol-related traffic crashes among youth.

Problem: Outback County has experienced a higher-than-average number of traffic crashes involving underage drinkers. It is a rural community with winding roads that are particularly dangerous for impaired teen drivers.

Perceived Causes: A “zero tolerance” law was recently passed but is not well known or well enforced. Youth have little trouble purchasing alcohol at local stores because they know the proprietors.

Current Strategies: Periodic compliance checks of alcohol outlets; intensive impaired driving patrols.

Proposed Strategies: High-profile sobriety checkpoints targeting minors; personal visits from youth groups to merchants to discuss the importance of not selling to minors; increased compliance checks.

Media Support: Publicity campaign to raise awareness of the “zero tolerance” law; media coverage of sobriety checkpoints; media coverage of youth visits to merchants; media event to announce the results of compliance-check campaign.

Conclusion

The lead agency in the State can help communities to develop cohesive, well-articulated, and most importantly, *effective* RFPs to reduce underage alcohol use. State leadership and oversight can provide a clear and logical framework for funding applications. This framework, along with appropriate feedback on the plans submitted, can offer applicants an optimal chance of effecting positive change.

SAMPLE Request for Proposal for Underage Drinking Prevention Mini-Grants

The Department of Health Services for [STATE NAME] has funding available to support community-based efforts to prevent and reduce underage drinking. Jurisdictions within the state are invited to submit proposals for grant awards of up to [AMOUNT]. It is anticipated that a total of [NUMBER] grants will be awarded by [DATE].

Instructions: Applicants should provide responses to each of the seven questions below, observing a limit of no more than 10 pages. Applicants should also include a detailed budget and budget justification for the proposed work as well as a management/staffing approach. Letters of support are encouraged but limited to no more than five letters. Letters of support will not be counted toward the total page limit.

1. What are the objectives of proposed project?
2. What is the nature of underage drinking problems in your jurisdiction? In responding to this question, applicants are encouraged to cite existing data/ information demonstrating the existence of problems and not to conduct additional data collection.
3. What are the perceived causes of the alcohol-related problems?
4. How is the community currently addressing the problem of underage drinking? Be sure to address the extent to which current approaches address the perceived causes of underage drinking problems and the limitations of current approaches.
5. What strategies will the community implement as a result of grant funding?
6. How do proposed strategies relate to the perceived causes of existing alcohol-related problems?
7. Will media be used to enhance proposed strategies? If so, please describe how media will be used.

Proposal submissions should be received by the Department of Health Services no later than 5:00 p.m. on [DATE]. Submissions by postal mail should be postmarked no later than [DATE]. Proposal submissions should be sent to:

[OFFICE ADDRESS]

Questions about this solicitation should be directed to [EMAIL ADDRESS]. Please include the solicitation number in the subject line.

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the views of the Office of Juvenile Justice for Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) or the Underage Drinking Enforcement Training Center (UDETC) and are solely of the author/source.

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 **Underage Drinking Enforcement Training Center**

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Writing Effective Requests for Proposals Sub-Granting Process

 **Underage Drinking Enforcement Training Center**

We all share concern about underage drinking and its related health and social problems.



OJJDP recognizes the significant role of enforcement in an effort to prevent underage drinking and create safer communities. Many important enforcement activities occur at the local level, and community grants supporting enforcement can be a critical part of a State's overall underage drinking prevention strategy. But how do we guarantee that funds provided to local communities have the greatest possible impact in terms of lives saved and safer environments? Developing requests for proposals (RFPs) that will elicit well-crafted plans can help to ensure efficient use of limited resources. This pamphlet provides guidance on how to develop RFP, assess the adequacy of proposals received, and provide useful feedback to applicants.

Many different questions can be asked about a proposed RFP: Can the applicant actually accomplish it? Will the grant money be spent appropriately and administered with accountability? The fundamental question about any proposal is: *Will the proposal work?* If the grant is to bring about the desired results, the RFP must elicit cohesive proposals that include effective strategies and potential outcomes. We suggest that the RFP pose a series of key questions and that proposals be evaluated based on the quality of the answers.

Question 1: What is the nature of underage drinking problems in the community?

A mini-grant proposal should articulate the nature of underage drinking problems in the local community. These may include problems related to actual consumption, such as binge drinking. Other problems may result from behaviors associated with underage drinking such as impaired driving, violent crime, unsafe sexual practices, delinquency, and poor academic performance. A community may intend to address one or more of these issues with the grant funding.

Some data to support the problem definition should be expected within a proposal, although an overemphasis on data is not necessary or even advisable. The use of data already available is often sufficient for this purpose and even preferable in that it does not require the conduct of additional data collection, which is often complex and costly. Existing data, such as school surveys or enforcement records—particularly those based on compliance-check data and DUI/DWI arrest information—can adequately support the definition of the community's underage drinking problems.

Question 2: What causes the identified alcohol-related problems?

Equally important in any grant solicitation is the call to identify the perceived causes or risk factors for the existing alcohol-related problems. Linking problems with perceived causes requires applicants to identify specific factors in the community that require attention in order to adequately address problems. This problem definition often requires an assessment of current community data on a range of possible assessment measures. Applicants may conduct this assessment themselves or partner with coalitions or organizations that are doing this work. This active assessment prevents applicants from applying the wrong strategies due to false assumptions or an imprecise definition of the problem and its complexities.

Commonly perceived causes for underage alcohol problems include easy access to alcohol, lack of enforcement of alcohol-related laws, and availability of alcohol through social sources that may be difficult to control. Other contributing factors might include poor parental supervision and/or social norms among youth and adults such as a perception that underage alcohol use is an inevitable or harmless rite of passage. It is important to recognize that some of these causes are more easily addressed than others. For example, increased enforcement of laws against sales to minors is a single strategy that can result in reduced access in a matter of months—but changing attitudes regarding underage alcohol use often is a more complex and long-term process.

Question 3: How is the community currently addressing the problem of underage drinking?

Applicants will want to detail existing efforts in order to demonstrate community commitment to addressing the problems. Proposal reviewers, however, should also use this information to determine how proposed strategies will enhance, complement, or fill the gaps in the current effort. Consequently, when instructing applicants to describe existing efforts, the RFP should require them to describe the limitations of these efforts. Applicants should also be asked to discuss to what extent existing efforts address the perceived causes of alcohol-related problems.

Question 4: What are the project objectives?

Applicants should be able to provide a straightforward and succinct statement concerning the overall objectives of the project. A proposal's program plan should begin with a clear statement about how the applicant believes the community *will be changed* as a result of receiving mini-grant funding. Project objectives can serve as a standard against which outcomes can be measured. The goals of the program also should be the common thread that links the variety of strategies proposed.

Question 5: What strategies will the community implement as a result of grant funding?

Discussion of proposed strategies is the “heart and soul” of any grant application. Scientifically proven, effective strategies can be linked to the reduction of the occurrence of observable problem behaviors. For this initiative, of course, the emphasis is on strategies to increase enforcement and reduce youth access to alcohol. While several types of strategies may be effective, some will be more appropriate than others, depending on the context, and applicants should be encouraged to propose only the most effective and appropriate strategies. OJJDP's publication, *Strategies To Reduce Underage Alcohol Use: Typology and Overview*, provides a menu of effective strategies and should be consulted when reviewing proposals in response to the RFP.

Question 6: How do proposed strategies relate to the perceived causes of existing underage drinking problems?

The answer to this question will have a bearing on the overall merit of the plan. Often applicants assume that the utility of proposed strategies is self-evident, but at times their utility can be very difficult for reviewers considering several proposals to determine without additional information. Asking bidders to connect proposed strategies to the perceived causes of underage drinking problems will require that they articulate an action plan that is both logical and cohesive. It will also increase the likelihood that applicants will attempt to select strategies that are most appropriate

and effective for the specific problems they seek to address.

For example, a community might identify adults buying kegs for underage parties as a major cause of binge drinking. A strategy emphasizing enforcement of laws related to checking the identification (ID) of alcohol purchasers would not likely have an impact on this issue, since it is people over 21 who are actually purchasing the alcohol. Rather, a more appropriate strategy for this particular problem would be implementation and enforcement of a keg registration ordinance.

Question 7: Will the media be used to enhance proposed strategies? If so, how?

The media can be a very powerful tool for influencing beliefs and attitudes about underage drinking. In fact, it is often a community's first impulse to implement a media campaign to raise awareness or change attitudes. As an isolated strategy for reducing alcohol-related problems, media campaigns have limited effectiveness. Media can and should be used to amplify and complement effective strategies such as enforcement efforts, and applicants should be encouraged *not* to make media campaigns the *primary* strategy of their proposed plans.

★ Examples

Below are two examples that demonstrate how an RFP following the recommended format can produce cohesive proposals that include potentially effective strategies.

1 - College Town, USA

Program Objective: To reduce binge drinking among high school and underage college students in a small college town.

Problem: Many youth drink heavily at local bars and at parties in houses near campus.

Perceived Causes: High density of bars near campus; inadequate ID checking at bars; older students buying kegs of beer for off-campus parties attended by underage college students and local high school students.

Current Strategies: Bumper stickers and key chains distributed with “responsible drinking” messages; signs posted in bars and liquor stores saying that alcohol will not be sold to minors.

Proposed Strategies: Conduct vigorous compliance-check programs at all retail outlets (bars, liquor stores, grocery and convenience stores); implement keg registration ordinance; implement campus policy of parental notification for alcohol-related offenses.

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