

State Affiliate Grant Program: Writing Your Project Description

The project description is a key element of the State Affiliate Grant Program (SAGP) application that makes a clear, concise statement of the problem to be addressed and demonstrates a need for the proposed project or activity.

The project description provides the opportunity to describe, in the most effective terms possible, the importance and relevance of your project.

Tips for writing an effective project description:

- Before writing a project description, applicants should conduct a needs assessment to gain a solid idea of the prevalent priorities, needs or deficiencies that need to be addressed in the SAGP application. Consider using surveys, interviews or even existing data to gather information for your needs assessment.
- Remember that the purpose of the needs assessment is to answer the question: What are the problems or issues we need to address to improve our society and, in doing so, will provide an overall benefit to our members, ASCO members, other state societies, and the oncology community at large?
- After you have conducted your needs assessment, review your findings and use the information to build a thoughtful and relevant grant project and project description.
- When writing your project description, remember to keep it clear and concise: your project description should be no longer than five paragraphs.
- Develop a statement of need that addresses the problem you hope to solve with the SAGP funds and justifies the necessity of the project.
- Your project description should include what you propose to do with the SAGP funds as well as why your project should be done.
- Include the beneficiaries of your project: Who are they and how will they benefit from your project.
- It is often helpful to prepare your project description after your grant proposal has been developed. This makes it easier to include all key points necessary to effectively and concisely communicate the purpose and demonstrated need of the project.

Writing Your Project Objectives

Objectives outline the steps your organization will take to meet the stated project goals and make sure they are measurable.

An objective is a measurable, time-specific result that the organization expects to accomplish as part of the grant. Objectives are specific approaches to achieve a goal.

Tips for writing strong objectives: Use the S.M.A.R.T. method to ensure that your objectives are:

- **Specific: Objectives should specify what you want to achieve.** Your objectives for the State Affiliate Grant application should be concrete, detailed, focused and well-defined. The objective should be straightforward, emphasizes action and the expected outcome. Objectives need to communicate what you would like to see happen.
- **Measurable: You should be able to measure whether or not you are meeting your objectives.** Your objective should include an identified measurement source that will allow the applicant to track the results. Remember, if you can't measure an objective, you cannot manage it.
- **Attainable: Ensure that your objectives are attainable.** Objectives must be achievable. It is important to ensure that the goals you have set for your project is feasible and can be completed within the one-year grant period.
- **Realistic: Make sure that you can realistically achieve the objectives with the resources you have.** When writing your objectives please ensure that you consider such factors as staffing needs, financial needs, and time to ensure that your objectives and project is realistic.
- **Time-bound: Identify a deadline for each objective.** Creating deadlines is helpful tool that will allow you to monitor your progress. It is also an important factor in ensuring that your objective is real and tangible.

Objective Samples:

- **Weak objective:** Our society will increase membership.
- **Strong objective:** Our society will increase membership by 15% over the one year grant period.

Criteria for Measuring Success: Your Project Evaluation Plan

Each State Affiliate Grant Program applicant is required to include an evaluation plan in the grant application.

The purpose of the evaluation plan is to establish performance indicators to measure the relevant outputs and outcomes of your grant project. The evaluation plan also serves as criteria for measuring success in that it provides a basis for comparing actual project results with the established objectives, outputs, and outcomes.

A detailed evaluation plan identifies indicators to be tracked, method of collection, and collection schedule for each output or outcome. An evaluation plan should not be considered only after the project is over; it should be built into the project.

Tips to consider when developing your project evaluation plan:

- Review the project description, objectives, and deliverable/expected outcomes sections of your SAGP application to ensure that your application is coherent and that your evaluation plan will be reasonable and appropriate.
- For each outcome and/or output, decide what information you will need to collect that will suggest that you are achieving that measure. Also, determine what questions your evaluations will seek to answer.
- Choose a method for gathering the information. When you know the information to be provided, you can select the best methods for gathering information. Choose the method that provides the most useful information.
- Your evaluation method will depend on your project outcomes and outputs.

Project Evaluation Plan Samples:

- **Weak evaluation plan:** Meeting evaluation feedback.
- **Strong evaluation plan:** The Society will solicit feedback from the 2010 conference attendees by disseminating a post-meeting survey via email in order to evaluate the quality of the speakers, content relevancy, and overall conference satisfaction.

Project Deliverables and Expected Outcomes

The development of outputs—also called deliverables—and outcomes are key components of the State Affiliate Grant Program. Applicants should articulate appropriate and reasonable outputs and outcomes in the grant application.

Outputs are measures of the volume of the project activity: products created or delivered, people served, and activities or services carried out. Examples of outputs include: number of workshops taught, number of people trained, number of members served, etc. Outputs are tangible and quantifiable items.

Outcomes describe the expected benefits or changes as a result of the proposed project. They answer the question: What do you want to happen or change as a result of this project? Outcome statements often use words such as: increase, decrease, improve, reduce, expand, update, upgrade, maintain, start or complete. Examples of outcomes include: increase staff skills, improve membership retention, etc. Outcomes should be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time based.

Outputs express the effort expended to achieve a particular goal; **outcomes** measure the return on that effort.

Tips for identifying appropriate and reasonable project outputs and outcomes for your project:

- Carefully think out and describe the purpose of your grant project.
- Then ask:
 - Why is this project important?
 - What do we want to accomplish?
 - Who do we want to benefit from this project?
- Use the information that you gather to describe the changes and impact that you want to see as a result of the grant project. These desired changes become the expected project outputs and outcomes.
- Ensure that the outcomes and outputs are attainable within the grant period. Remember: product/project results are due within 30 days of the end of the grant period.