

Interview Discussion Guide

Introductory Remarks:

Hello, and thank you for joining us in this discussion on CDC's Notices of Funding Opportunities, also known as NOFOs. My name is [facilitator name] and I am an analyst at CDC, in the Program Performance and Evaluation Office, also known as PPEO. Thank you for completing the online assessment portion of this effort.

This interview should take approximately one hour. Your participation is voluntary, so if there's something that's raising concerns for you please let us know. We will be taking notes during the interview, and all information you provide will be kept secure. Your responses in this interview will not be linked to your survey responses and a summary report of our findings will be prepared using aggregate data.

The purpose of our online assessment and these interviews is to gather feedback from applicants of a FY 2017 or FY 2018 CDC, non-research, domestic NOFO on the clarity and consistency of the application and project language, and the overall structure of the NOFO. The data gathered from the online assessment and interviews will be used to identify common barriers applicants face responding to NOFOs and areas of opportunities for improving the NOFO development process here at CDC. Your feedback will provide valuable input into the development of a redesigned template and revised guidance language, resources, and training materials for CDC programs. For today's discussion with you, we'll be referring to [NOFO number and title]. It will be helpful to have a copy of the NOFO with you as we proceed.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

CDC estimates the average public reporting burden for this collection of information as **60 minutes** per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data/information sources, gathering and maintaining the data/information needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing burden to CDC/ATSDR Information Collection Review Office, 1600 Clifton Road NE, MS D-74, Atlanta, Georgia 30333; ATTN: PRA (0920-0879).

Attachment D: Telephone Interview Guide

First, I'd like to find out more about your experience applying to NOFOs.

1. Approximately how many CDC NOFO applications have you worked on in the past five years?
2. What is your role at your health department in developing applications?
3. We're interested in learning about how applicants approach reading a NOFO, understanding its requirements, and developing their applications. What are your first steps to understanding a NOFO?
 - a. How do you keep track of all the application requirements?

These next questions are about your experiences with developing an application for [NOFO title]. When I refer to "project information" I'm referring to descriptions of the funded project and any requirements CDC lays out for the project in the NOFO. When I refer to "application instructions", I'm referring to both the application guidance a CDC program specifies in the project description as well as the general instructions of how to develop and format your application.

4. Looking to the NOFO, I would like to walk through "Section A. Funding Opportunity Description" and talk with you about aspects of this section that might have made reading and understanding the NOFO challenging.

Let's start with the "Approach", which includes the strategies and activities, outcomes, collaborations, target populations, and health disparities.

- a. What problems or challenges did you have understanding the **CDC program's expectations of funded recipients** in the "Approach"?
- b. What problems or challenges did you have while developing the "Approach" section of your application **that were specifically related to the application instructions** in the NOFO?

Next is the "Evaluation and Performance Measurement" section.

- c. What problems or challenges did you have understanding the **CDC program's expectations of funded recipients** in the "CDC Evaluation and Performance Measurement Plan"?
- d. What problems or challenges did you have while developing the "Evaluation and Performance Measurement" section of your application **that were specifically related to the application instructions** in the NOFO?

Next is the "Organizational Capacity" section.

- e. What problems or challenges did you have understanding the **CDC program's expectations of funded recipients** in the "Organizational Capacity"?
- f. What problems or challenges did you have while developing the "Organizational Capacity" section of your application **that were specifically related to the application instructions** in the NOFO?

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The next section is the “Work Plan”.

- g. What problems or challenges did you have while developing the “Work Plan” section of your application **that were specifically related to the application instructions** in the NOFO?

The final section is on other parts of your application besides the narrative and Work Plan.

- h. What problems or challenges did you have while developing your *budget narrative* **that were specifically related to the application instructions** in the NOFO?
 - i. What problems or challenges did you have understanding what, if any, additional documentation you were expected to include in your application package?
5. Overall, what are some aspects of the NOFO that helped make reading and understanding the NOFO easier?
- (Additional probing questions)*
- a. Was there anything that helped specifically related to understanding the application requirements?
 - b. Was there anything that helped specifically related to understanding the CDC program’s expectations for funded recipients?
6. If you could restructure the NOFO, what would you change?
7. Is there any other feedback on this particular NOFO that you would like to share with us?

Closing remarks

Thank you for speaking with us and providing your feedback on our NOFOs. Please feel free to email us if you have additional comments or questions, and we thank you for your time.