

Program Logistics and Norms

- The program will begin shortly
- Please turn on your video
- Your microphone will be muted when you join
- **Please format your name to “First Name Last Name - City, State”**
- Please use the chat box to say hello to us and your peers! Please also use this space to ask any questions outside of small groups or dedicated Q&A time



Local Infrastructure Hub: Module 6: Writing a Strong Narrative

April 14, 2023

Expected learning outcomes for Module 6

Upon successful completion of this module, city teams will be able to:

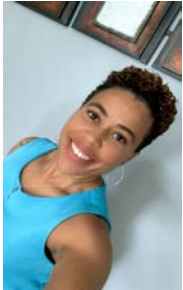
- ✓ *Understand the **best practices** for narratives and will be able to produce a compelling grant narrative consistent with the funding opportunity requirements.*
- ✓ *Compile information gathered from the **previous modules** and implement them into the grant narrative.*

Your hosts today



Corinne Oliver, J.D.
Manager, Witt O'Briens

- Legal background and 10 years of experience in administering/managing grant programs and grants compliance.
- Since joining Witt O'Brien's in 2020, Corrine has been supporting policy and compliance initiatives centered around: Uniform Guidance, CRF, ARPA/SLFRF, BIL, and more.
- Prior experience includes responsibility for managing Housing & Urban Development (HUD)-funded programs, including CDBG on behalf of state-level agencies.



Andrea Harris
Course Deliverer and Facilitator, NLC

- Social Sciences Professor at Jackson State University and Alcorn State University
- College Readiness & Career Coach
- Leadership & Executive Coach
- Diversity and Inclusion Facilitator

Bootcamp Structure

Modules	Descriptions	Outputs
0 Predevelopment	Smaller towns and cities with less federal grants experience will develop a basic understanding of the federal grants process and are prepared to attend Modules 1-8.	N/A
1 Setting the Table	Cities will be oriented to the funding program and understand how to navigate the Learning Management System.	N/A
2 Engaging the Community	Cities will be able to draft Community Engagement and Advocacy Strategies and understand the audience for advocacy and project strategies.	Community Engagement Strategy aligned to grant context
3 Federal Administration Priorities	Cities will also be able to incorporate climate, equity, and training and workforce development into their grant applications and demonstrate that they are willing to raise their ambitions in these priority areas.	Plan for incorporating administration priorities into the grant application
4 Data-Driven Decision Making	Cities will understand application data requirements ; general data principles and uses; how to apply data tools to assess local framework and to support a transformational agenda.	Data Strategy aligned to grant context and Federal Administration Priorities
5 Demystifying Capital Stacks and Budgeting	Cities will understand the basics of capital stacks and funding structures for projects; possible matching grant requirements and allowable uses; and applying this understanding towards developing a draft project budget with matching sources and potential new sources of funding	Draft budget for grant application
6 Writing a Strong Narrative	Cities will understand the best practices for narratives and will be able to produce a compelling grant narrative consistent with the funding opportunity requirements.	Draft a grant narrative based on experience of previous modules
7 Package, Submit, and Tell Your Story	Cities will be able to package a full grant application package and develop a plan to advance the request with key officials	Draft a full grant application package validated by a city's chief executive
8 <i>Post Submission:</i> Long Term Capacity Building	Once the applications have been submitted, cities develop plans to successfully administer the grant including how best to (re)-organize local institutional processes	Draft plan for grant administration



Writing a Strong Narrative

Writing a Strong Narrative: Housekeeping

LENGTH	DOCUMENTS	WEBSITE LINKS	ADDITIONAL MATERIALS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• May not exceed 12 pages <p><i>Cover page, Table of Contents, Self-Certification Eligibility Worksheet, and Budget sections <u>excluded</u></i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appendices may include supporting documents <p><i>This material is <u>excluded</u> from the 12-page limit</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide web links to supporting documents when possible <p><i>The relevance of each supporting document must be clearly identified in the 12-page narrative</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consolidate letters of support into <u>one</u> attachment <p><i>Letters will not be considered otherwise (NOFO, p.20)</i></p>

Housekeeping: Team, Organization, Review

- **Organize/Mobilize Your Writing Team**
 - Who is going to be the main writer?
 - Why? Skills/experience/reason
 - Who are the backup writers?
- **Prepare an Outline**
 - First, outline all the amazing aspects of your project and why you're applying
 - Then outline in accordance with the NOFO requirements
- **Review, Review, Review! (Then Review Again!)**
 - Give the document time to rest in between reviews/reviewers (i.e. allow yourself at least a few hours between draft editing to have a fresh perspective on reviews/errors/edits etc.)
 - Avoid complex jargon, write simply, write in present tense, mirror the NOFO language

Writing a Strong Narrative: Logistics

The Department recommends the outline below to address the program requirements and assist evaluators in locating relevant information (*NOFO, p.20*)

Recommended outline	Selection criteria “buckets” include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overview (See D.2.ii.a.I)• Location (See D.2.ii.a.II)• Response to Selection Criteria (See D.2.ii.a.III and Section E.1.ii)• Project Readiness (See D.2.ii.a.IV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safety Impact• Equity, Engagement, and Collaboration• Effective Practices and Strategies• Other DOT Strategic Goals• NEW! Additional Safety Context <i>(only if applying for supplemental planning and/or demonstration activities)</i>

Writing a Strong Narrative: What Drives You?

- The NOFO requirements are paramount **BUT**, beyond going through the motions of meeting the NOFO application requirements and submission, ***why are you doing this?***
- What has caused this project to come into existence that you are now seeking funding for?
 - Think deeper! (*Passion, community benefit, human elements, efforts*)
- When you write grant application summaries, how you feel about the topic will come through the narrative.
- How do you want your narrative to read?
 - ***Cold OR Warm and Invested?***



Writing for Success: The Safety Impact Criterion

- Describing the Safety Impact of your project is the first and most important criterion DOT will review in your application narrative. **Make it count!**
 - **Safety problem**, DOT will evaluate relative to Safety Impact, your description of the:
 1. Description of the Safety Problem
 2. Safety impact assessment
 3. Costs



Writing for Success: The Safety Impact Criterion

Connect the dots between the problem and solution! 

Narrating the safety problem - *How well do you:*

- **Describe fatal and serious injury crash locations**, contributing factors, and crash types by category of road user
- **Display crash risk/crashes** in a High-Injury Network, hot spot analysis, or similar geospatial risk visualization
- **Describe project and strategy locations** in relation to the High-Injury Network and geospatial information
- **Summarize safety risk** (*NOFO, p.25*)

Narrating the safety impact assessment - *How well do you:*

- Address the identified **safety problems**
- Reduce or eliminate **roadway fatalities and serious injuries**
- Use **low-cost, high-impact strategies** and projects over a wide geographical area
- Use **evidence-based, Proven Safety Countermeasures** to improve existing roadways
- **Measure safety** impact through models, studies, reports, proven noteworthy practices, Crash Modification Factors (CMFs)

Writing for Success: The Safety Impact Criterion

Narrating the Implementation Costs - *How well do you show that costs are:*

- **Itemized and summarized** in a logical manner, including capital costs for infrastructure, behavioral, and operational safety improvements
- **Funding locations with past traffic fatalities and serious injuries**, and expected to prevent fatalities and serious injuries per funds requested. Injuries will be weighted and combined with fatalities to assess this figure in relation to the Federal funding request (*NOFO, pp.25-26*)

Writing for Success: Equity, Engagement, and Collaboration

Equity, Engagement, and Collaboration - *How well do you:*

- **Ensure equitable investment in underserved communities** in preventing roadway fatalities and serious injuries
- **Consider key population groups** (e.g., people in underserved communities, elderly, minorities, persons with disabilities, and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality) to ensure the impact to these groups is understood and addressed
- **Include equity analysis**, both quantitative and qualitative, and stakeholder engagement in underserved communities
- **Include meaningful engagement with the public**, including public involvement for underserved communities, community benefit agreements, and relevant stakeholders as part of implementation
- **Leverage partnerships** within the jurisdiction, other government entities, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, academic institutions, and/or other relevant stakeholders to achieve safety benefits
- **Inform representatives** from areas impacted on implementation progress and meaningfully engage over time to evaluate the impact of projects and strategies on persons living in the jurisdiction
- **Align with the equity analysis performed** as part of the development of an existing Action Plan (*NOFO, p.26*)

Writing for Success: Equity, Engagement, and Collaboration

Great Resource: The NLC Equity Dashboard: ([NLC Federal Grant Navigation Equity Dashboard | Tableau Public](#))

- Can be used during program/project design to assess equity focus areas
- Promote general understanding of local equity issues, concerns, distribution
- Provide talking points and additional support for this criterion in your narrative

Writing for Success: Effective Practices and Strategies Criterion

How well do you:

- Demonstrate how **updated policies, guidelines, and standards** improve safety decision making
- Incorporate practices that promote **efficiency** within the planning and road management lifecycle
- Consider the impacts of **land use and the built environment** to promote transportation efficient design
- Encompass at least **three of the five Safe System Approach elements** in the National Roadway Safety Strategy
- Include a mix of infrastructure, behavioral, operational, and/or post-crash safety activities
- Involve **widely implemented improvements** based on high-risk roadway features correlated with particularly severe crash types
- Improve safety for all road users by providing **accessible facilities and correcting barriers** to individuals with disabilities
- Improve multimodal networks for people **outside of a motor vehicle**, including people who are walking, biking, rolling, and using public transit (*NOFO, p.27*)

Writing for Success: Other DOT Strategic Goals

To what extent does your project support the goals of the Department relative to climate change, sustainability, workforce, and economic competitiveness?

- **Reduce motor vehicle-related pollution**
- **Increase safety of lower-carbon travel modes**, such as public transit, micromobility, and active transportation
- **Improve multimodal transportation systems** that incorporate affordable transportation options, such as public transit, micromobility, and active transportation
- **Reduce the lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions** from the project materials, such as the use of lower-carbon pavement and construction materials
- **Support fiscally responsible land use and transportation-efficient design** that reduces greenhouse gas emissions through land use and zoning reform, rural main street revitalization, growth management, and equitable transit-oriented development
- **Include evidence-based climate resilience measures**, such as enhanced stormwater management practices, upgraded infrastructure, and nature-based solutions (*NOFO, p.27*)

Writing for Success: Other DOT Strategic Goals

Economic Competitiveness

- **Lead to increased business activity** due to enhanced safety features for all road users
- **Increase mobility and expand connectivity** for all road users
- Address the **unique challenges rural and Tribal communities face** related to mobility and economic development, including isolation and transportation cost burden (*NOFO, p.27*)

Workforce

- For skilled construction labor needed on the project, **incorporate strong labor standards** (e.g., wages and benefits at or above prevailing; use of project labor agreements, registered apprenticeship programs)
- For non-construction work on the project, **commit to supporting training opportunities** as part of the project, including pre-apprenticeship or apprenticeship readiness programs and youth service
- **Track and publish aggregate workforce data**, including information on demonstrating that employment opportunities are available to historically underserved workers in the community.
- **Include Local inclusive economic development and entrepreneurship** such as utilization of Disadvantaged Business Enterprises, Minority-owned Businesses, Women-owned businesses, or 8(a) firms (*NOFO, p.28*)

Writing for Success: The Supplemental and Demonstration Activities Criterion (NEW)

**Only respond to this selection criterion if supplemental planning and/or demonstration activities are included in the application.*

- Lead to a significant **reduction or elimination of roadway fatalities and serious injuries**
- Employ low-cost, high-impact strategies that can **improve safety** over a wider geographical area
- Involve engaging with a variety of **public and private stakeholders**
- Adopt **innovative technologies** to promote safety and equity
- Be **evidence-based** or build evidence around what works (*NOFO, p.28*)

*Applicants applying to carry out demonstration activities will also be assessed as to whether their approach to measuring the potential benefits through data collection and evaluation are described, and the extent to which the demonstration activities will be set up (e.g., quick builds on the roadway, pilot project established) within 18 months of executing a grant agreement (*NOFO, p.28*)*

Writing for Success: Other Considerations

****Extra “Winning” Credit!****

DOT will evaluate whether the following are addressed in your application narrative:



Project Readiness

- **Documents** all applicable local, state, and federal requirements
- Includes information on **activity schedule**; Required permits and approvals; National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) class of action and status; State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) status; public involvement; right-of-way acquisition plans, procurement schedules; multi-party agreements; utility relocation plans and risk and mitigation strategies
- Begins any construction-related projects in a **timely manner** (*NOFO, p.29*)

Additional Considerations:

- The percentage of Implementation Grant funds that will be spent in, and provide safety benefits to, locations in Census tracts designated as underserved communities
- Whether the applicant is identified as a priority community within the federal Thriving Communities Network
- Whether the applicant would enhance the geographic diversity of Implementation Grant award recipients
- Federal funding requests under \$10 million (*Id.*)



Q&A

End of Module Survey

Answer the following questions on the Zoom poll to assess your understanding of the content.

- How prepared do you currently feel to submit your application (*Scale of 1-5*)
 - 5 - Very Prepared
 - 4 - Somewhat Prepared
 - 3 - Neither Prepared nor Unprepared
 - 2 - Somewhat Unprepared
 - 1 - Very Unprepared
- How helpful did you find today's session in preparing your grant application? (*Scale of 1-5*)
 - 5 - Very Helpful
 - 4 - Somewhat Helpful
 - 3 - Neither Helpful nor Unhelpful
 - 2 - Somewhat Unhelpful
 - 1 - Very Unhelpful
- Which of the following support resources do you plan to use? (*Multiple Select*)
 - Coaching sessions or office hours
 - Navigators / Support Team
 - Canvas

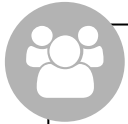
What's Next?

Sample Narrative Language at the Coaching Session



Coaching and Office Hours

To deepen learning on this subject, Coaching, Office Hours, and Toolkits for this grant are available to all cities in the program



Peer Learning

*Interactive sessions featuring **subject matter experts** on the policy and grant approach; followed by smaller **cohort sessions*** for peer discussions*



Coaching

Smaller, cohort-based sessions to continue to build on **specific application questions** identified in the peer learning session



Office Hours

Support in the form of **designated time slots** with content experts to address specific questions



Tools and Templates

The following resources can help **strengthen core components** of your grant application

Support During this Bootcamp

You have multiple resources you can reach out to for support during this Program.

Navigator



Questions for Navigators can be raised in **onboarding sessions or bi-monthly check-ins** and/or **via email or phone**. The following are types of questions that can be raised with Navigators:

- A city has an **administrative question** about the bootcamp including questions regarding:
 - Timelines
 - Attendance
 - Participation expectations, and/or
 - Future program offerings
 - Certificates

You should have received initial registration emails from your assigned Navigator (either bootcampnavigator1@nlc.org or bootcampnavigator2@nlc.org)

Bootcamp Facilitator

Questions for bootcamp facilitators should be raised during **office hours**. The following are types of questions that could be raised in this setting:

- A city has a question about **content covered** in that week's peer learning or coaching sessions
- A city has a **technical question** about their grant application
- A city has a question about the **Canvas course**

We recommend that cities **hold questions** until the subject is covered in a relevant module. Many questions may be addressed in the learning sessions. Additionally, by holding the question, this ensures that cities will have **access to the appropriate subject matter expert** in office hours. Should a question fall **outside the scope of the curriculum**, cities may raise the question with bootcamp facilitators via email at ssr4aimplementbootcamp@nlc.org.



Coaching and Office Hours help build forward from the peer learning session



Coaching

Smaller sessions to work on **specific application questions** as peers

Who will you engage with?

Corrine Oliver, Witt O'Brien's
Jenny O'Connell, NACTO

How will you engage?

Coaching session will be held on
Tuesday, April 18, 10AM - 11AM EST
You will receive a separate calendar invite for the coaching session.



Office Hours

Support in the form of **designated time slots** with content experts to address specific questions

Who will you engage with?

Corrine Oliver, Witt O'Brien's
Jenny O'Connell, NACTO

How will you engage?

Participants will be able to **register for office hours** through Canvas. Reserved time slots will be **15-minutes in length**, but may be extended pending availability and demand. Office hours will be offered on **Wednesday, April 19, 1-3 EST and Thursday, April 20, 3-4 EST.**

Coming up for SS4A Implementation

Module 6 Coaching Session

Hosted by our Experts, Corrine Oliver, from Witt O'Briens and Jenny O'Connell, NACTO

When: **Tuesday, April 18, 10AM - 11AM EST**

Registration Link:

<https://nlc-org.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEIcEuvqzkvHN232hKSnIj4WFeXdp8zaw>

Module 6 Office Hours

When: **Wednesday, April 19, 1 - 3 PM EST** and **Thursday, April 20, 3 - 4 PM EST**

Registration Link:

<https://calendly.com/ssr4aimplementbootcamp/ssr4a-implementation-bootcamp-office-hours-mod-6>

Sign up through the calendar link in Canvas

Module 7 Peer Learning Session

Topic: Cities will be able to **package a full grant application package** and develop a plan to advance the request with key officials

When: **April 28, 1 PM EST**

Registration Link:

<https://nlc-org.zoom.us/j/82985929512?pwd=Y2RGK1lIRmUyRmlUUlZjMTkzVzVLdz09>



Tools and Templates



Tools and Templates for Module 6: Writing a Strong Narrative

The following resources can help **strengthen core components** of your grant application

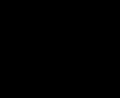
- [NLC Federal Grant Navigation Equity Dashboard | Tableau Public](#)
- [U.S. Department of Transportation Fiscal Year 2023 Safe Streets and Roads for All Notice of Funding Opportunity \(NOFO-p. 23-29 \(for Section E Application Review Information\)\)](#)
- [What are common pitfalls in grant writing and planning? How can a municipality avoid those pitfalls and make grant applications more competitive? | Bloomberg Cities \(jhu.edu\)](#)
- [FY 2022 Thriving Communities Program Selected Community Profiles \(transportation.gov\)](#)
- [National Roadway Safety Strategy | US Department of Transportation](#)

Thank you!

For questions, please contact your navigator, the office hours and/or coaching lead, or email ssr4aimplementbootcamp@nlc.org.

For general information, please visit www.localinfrastructurehub.org





WITH SUPPORT FROM:



THE UNITED STATES
CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

