Equity in State Grantmaking: Accessing State Dollars for your Nonprofit Grantmaking

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MINNESOTA COUNCIL OF NONPROFITS

State Grants are almost always highly restricted $$

They’re good for program/project support.
They’re not good for General Operating needs

State Grant Proposal Development and Submission = average 150 hours

These proposals take more time than foundation proposals do.

- Must follow RFP formats
- Lots of picky Attachments
- Submission may require making lots of copies with picky tabs

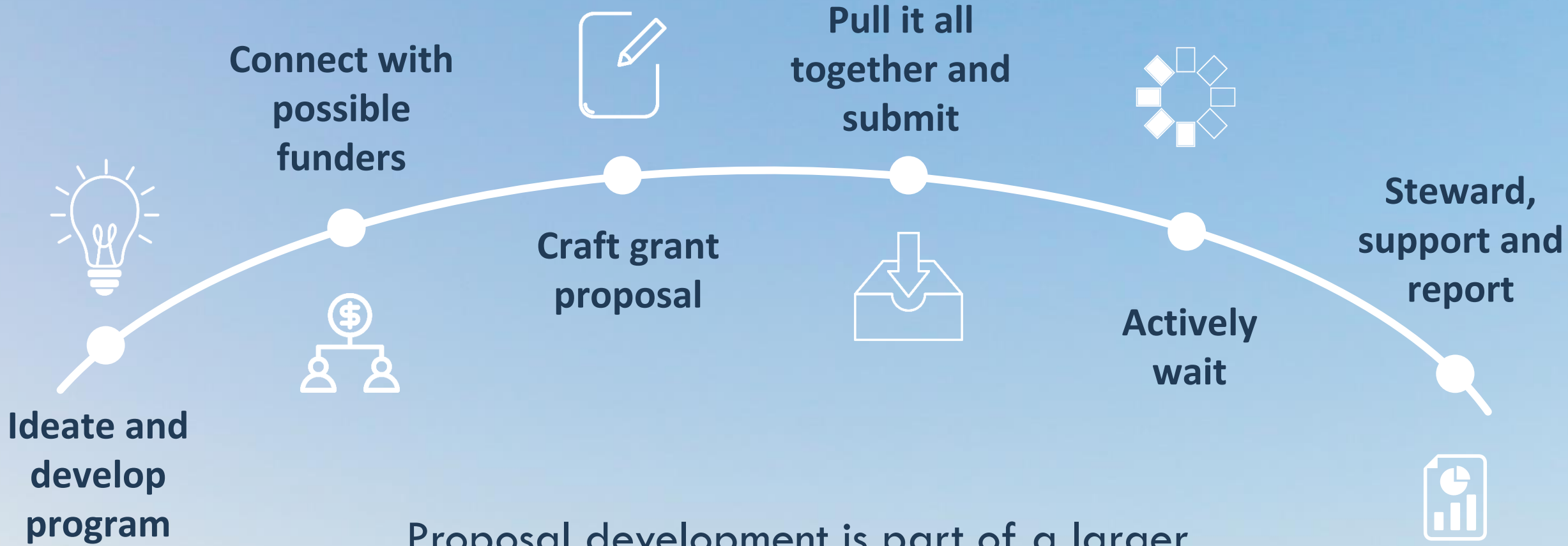
Turnaround Time Considerations

- Multiple RFPs may be released at same time
- Deadlines may be 3 or 4 weeks max
- All the funding opportunities may be due on/around the same date
- **Choose best option/s for your programs and capacity.**

WHERE TO START?

What's Our Focus?
What's the Opportunity?
What's Our Need?
What Are Our Resources?
What's Our Capacity?

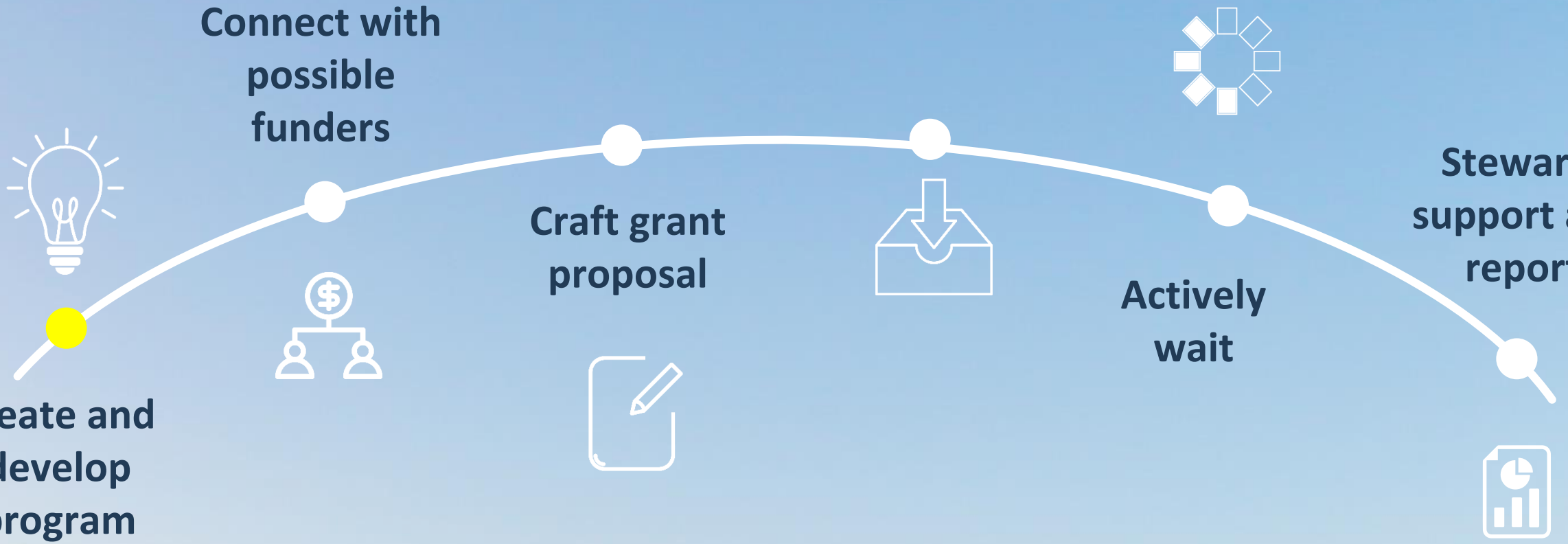
Stages of proposal development



Proposal development is part of a larger organizational or program development process in which the grantwriter has a key role.

START HERE!

Not with the Funding Opportunity



ASSESSING READINESS STARTS WITH IDEATION

Don't waste your time chasing money or crap-fitting programs into funding requirements

Is this funding opportunity a good fit for our needs?

Do we have staff capacity to prepare and submit this proposal correctly?

Does everyone understand and agree with the funding requirements? Have Program and Finance staff been consulted on this funding opportunity as well as leadership and development staff?

Is the deadline doable at this time and with the staff capacity we have?

If awarded, do we have capacity to manage required tracking, reporting, reimbursement payments, etc?

At the project level, we could start the conversation in several places…

People
- Who are the beneficiaries?

Vision
- What's the goal?

Need
- What do they need?
- Is anyone else doing this work?
- How do we know this is true?

Data
- What do we know?

Challenge
- What's the problem they face?

Barriers
- What's getting in the way?

Solution
- What will we do about it?

Plan
- What steps will we take to implement the solution?
- What resources will we need?

Who will develop the proposal?
Who will submit the proposal?
Who will assist and how?

What's the deadline? Is it doable?

Reflections? Insights? Questions?

Craft grant proposal

Ideate and develop program

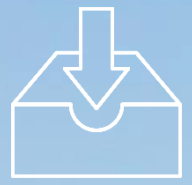
Connect with possible funders

Craft grant proposal

Pull it all together and submit

Actively wait

Steward, support and report



Most grant proposals have these six sections

From application to application, funders may call them by different names but the information they are looking for is generally the same.

Each section has a unique role to play in helping the funder understand your proposal.

Executive summary	Organizational description	Situation description	Project description	Evaluation plan	Budget

Just because there is a specific order to the grant proposal sections doesn't mean that's the best order in which to write them. Instead, try this!

Project description

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Describes the goals of the project and the strategies your organization will use to achieve them.

Also called project objective, program design, project narrative

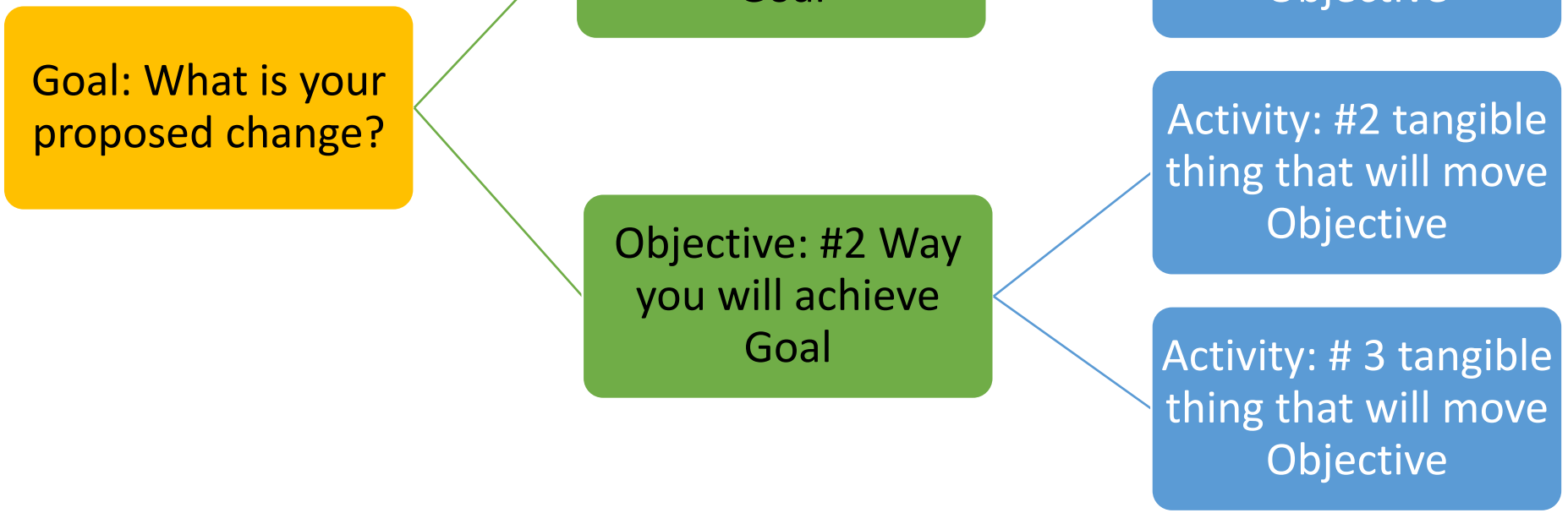
The first part of the project description answers these key questions:

1. What is your goal?
2. What are your objectives (strategies) for achieving that goal?
3. What activities will you undertake related to your strategies?

Project description

Goals, Objectives, Activities
What's the difference?

Project description



Budget Prep: Identifying Resources & Costs

- **Proposed Activities are the key to identifying costs**
- What resources are needed to provide the Activities?
- What are the costs attached to those resources?
- How are those costs determined?
- **Which costs will the grant award pay for?**

Project description

Goal

Objective

Objective

Activity

Activity

Activity

What resources* do you need to carry out these activities?

Resources include:
Money
People
Space
Supplies
Equipment

Project description

WHO?

Who will carry out these activities?

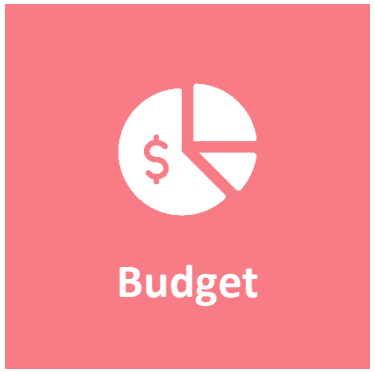
WHEN?

What's the time frame in which this will take place?

IMPACT?

How will the activities benefit (that is, impact) the community?

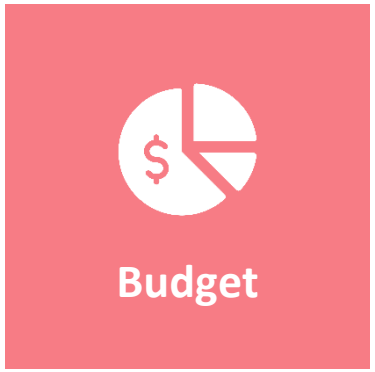
Reflections? Insights? Questions?



The BUDGET helps the funder understand the resources that are needed to carry out the work and how their funds will be used to support it.

What are the real costs of the proposed program?

Can the agency front costs if award is reimbursement or billing?



Tips for crafting the budget

Your budget should tell a story. Make sure it's the same story you're telling in the rest of your proposal.

Show full costs (including overhead, if allowed).

Identify your timeframe – how many months/years? Starts and ends when?

Show a balanced mix of funding sources.

Document your assumptions and your calculations.

Add a budget narrative, if possible, to clarify discrepancies and bring expenses to life.

New slide

New slide

Reflections? Insights? Questions?

Organizational description

These are the questions funders will be asking when reading this section. Be sure you answer them well.

Why should this organization do this work?

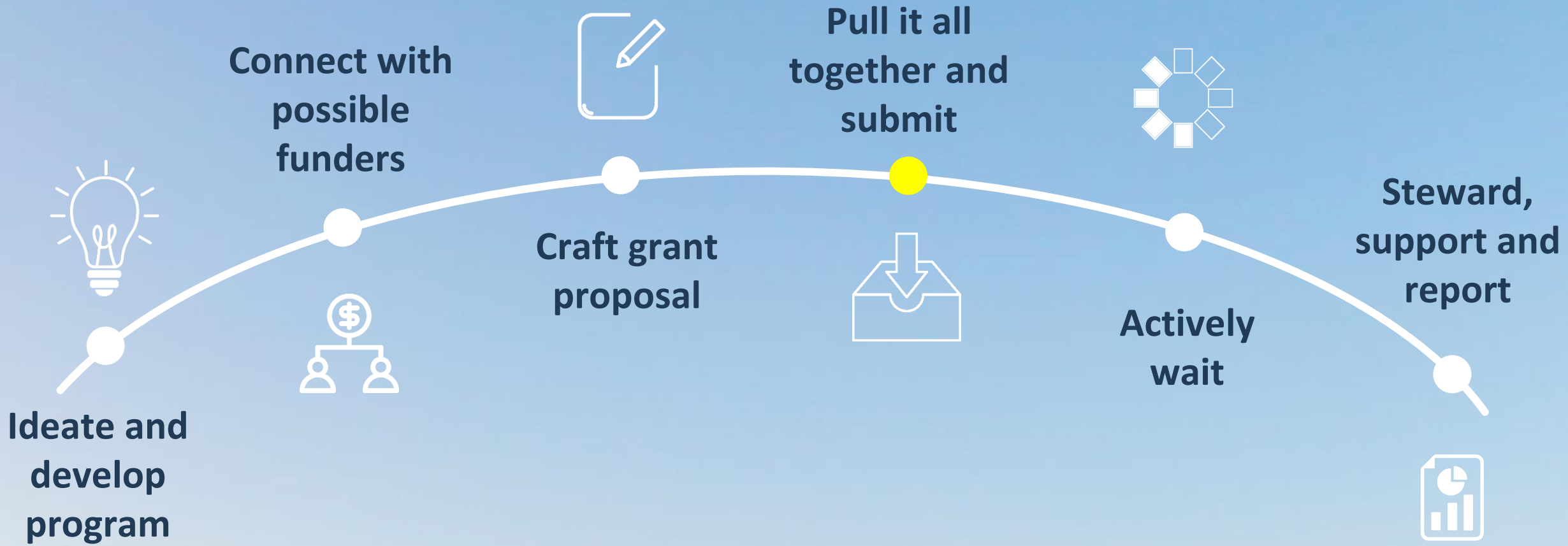
Can we trust them to use our resources wisely?

Do they have the right experience to do this work?

Is their leadership stable and competent?

Does the organization know others that do similar work and how their work differs from them?

Pull it all together and submit



Always write OUTSIDE of the funder's application portal. Then copy/paste as needed.

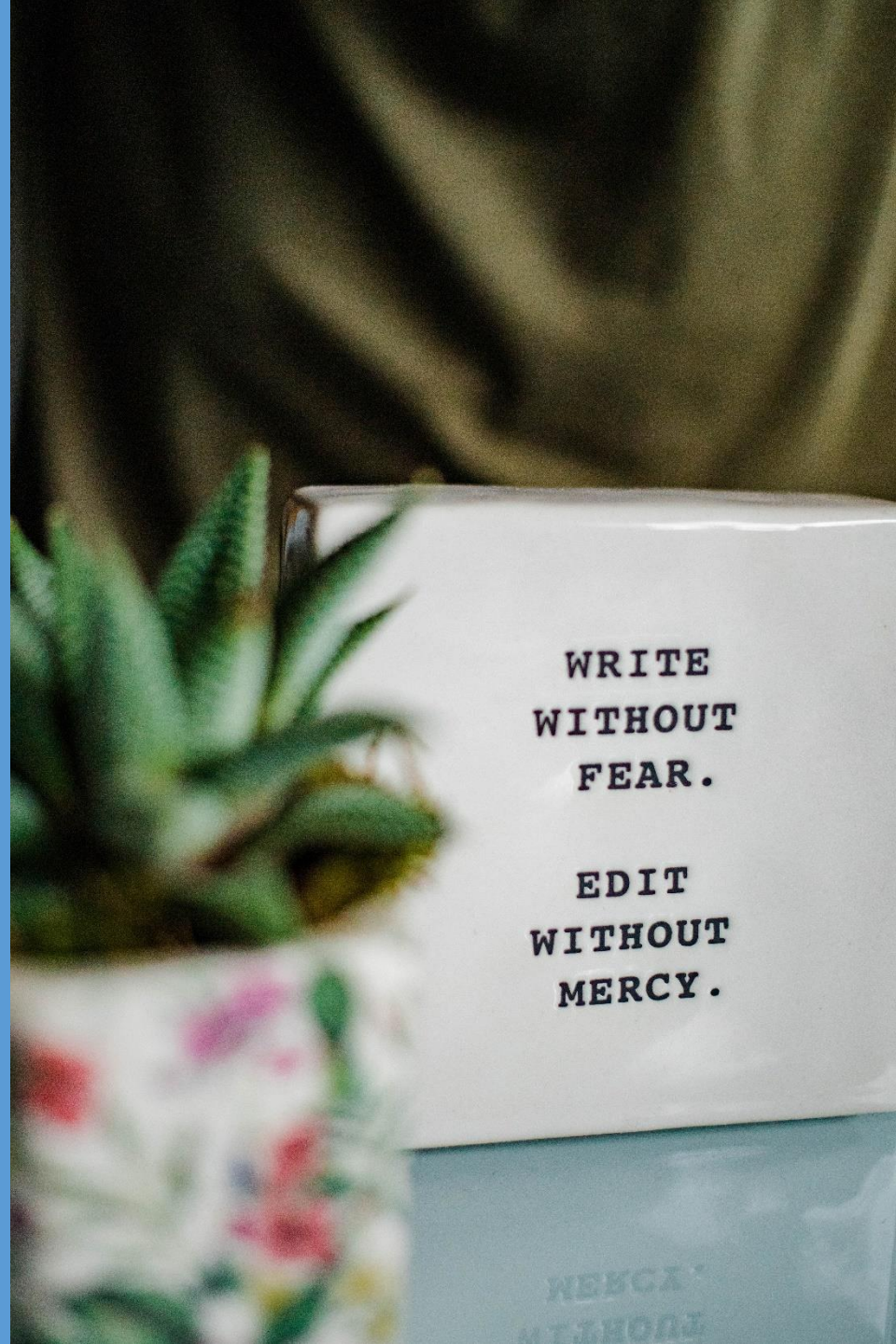
Mirror the funder’s language

- Format it the way they want – margins and fonts
- Keep to word/page limits
- Don’t give them anything they don’t ask for
- Don’t leave out anything they request

Print out the RFP.
Write all over it.
Highlight everything important.
Believe what it says.

Good grantwriting is good writing.

Good proposal submission is pulling together narrative, budget, attachments, formatting, and getting it to the funder on time and in the manner requested.



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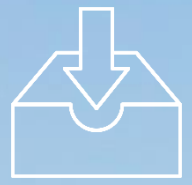
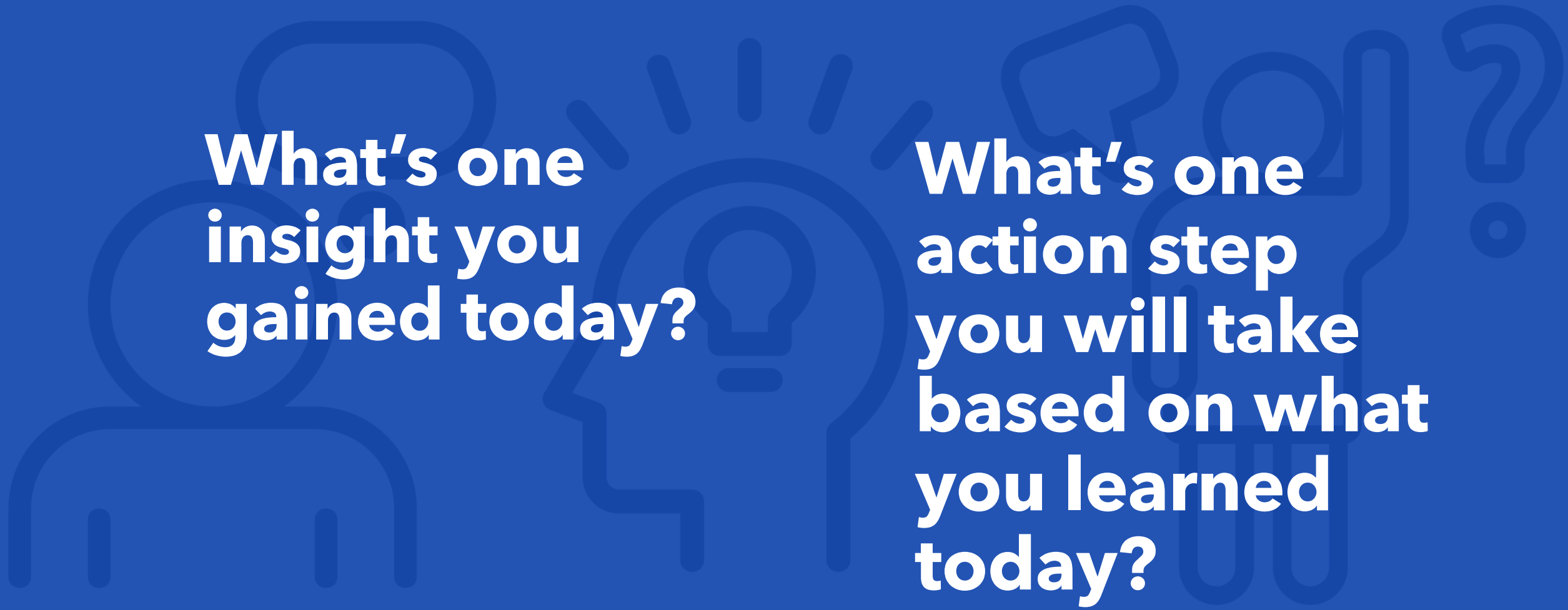


While you wait: REVISE!

Award $$ may be less than requested

ID where to cut $$ and activities

Insights and Actions



What's one insight you gained today?

What's one action step you will take based on what you learned today?

Thank you for your active participation!

Check MCN's Events page for upcoming State Grants trainings

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