



Planning for Successful Grant Writing

Workshop #1: Grant Writing Series 2025

In partnership with the Rhode Island Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals (BHDDH) & Rhode Island Prevention Resource Center (RIPRC)

Drew Reynolds, PhD, MSW, MEd

Principal Consultant, Common Good Data



DOWNLOAD TOOLKIT:

www.commongooddata.com/grantwriting

Introductions



To the chat, please add your:

1. Name
2. Title
3. Organization
4. State



DOWNLOAD TOOLKIT:
www.commongooddata.com/grantwriting

Meet Drew: Experienced leader in data and program evaluation

- Social Worker
- 12+ years of experience, since 2018 as a consultant
- Substance use prevention, mental health promotion, case management, community practice, education and youth services
- Part-time instructor, Georgia State School of Social Work



The Common Good Data Podcast

The podcast for nonprofit and public sector leaders looking to use data and evaluation strategies to build effective and sustainable programs in the areas of prevention, mental health, human services, and education

www.commongooddata.com/podcast



Two Workshops



Planning for Successful Grant Writing

Tuesday, October 7, 10:30-12:00



Writing a Winning Proposal Narrative

Thursday, October 9, 10:30-12:00

Agenda

1. Identify and select grant opportunities
2. Develop a grants timeline
3. Prepare standard components of a grant proposal
4. Build a team
5. Review the Strategic Prevention Framework
6. Develop a plan for writing
7. Engage community members
8. Establish partnerships and written agreements

Emphasis and Example: NE Vermont Prevention: FY25 Region 3 Substance Misuse Prevention Application



Step #1: Identify and Select Grant Opportunities

Federal Grant Funding Lines

Federal:

- [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov)

Funding lines (SAMHSA, CDC):

- Drug-Free Communities (DFC)
- Sober-Truth on Preventing Underage Drinking (STOP)
- Partnerships for Success (PFS)
- State Opioid Response (SOR)

State Resources

- State Department of Health and Human Services
 - Grants page
 - Block Grant
- State-level Initiatives (NC example)
 - North Carolina Preventing Underage Drinking Initiatives (PUDi)
 - ABC (Alcohol and Beverage Commission) Board
- Opioid Settlement Funds

Local and Foundations

- United Way
- Community Foundations
- Family Foundations
- How to find:
 - Candid.org -> Foundation Directory

Use the Toolkit

Identify and Select Grant Opportunities

A good first step in grant writing is to plan out which grants you currently have, which ones you think might be a new opportunity, and which ones you are not eligible for. Use the table below to identify where you stand with prevention grant opportunities to identify potential new opportunities.

	Currently Have	New Opportunity	Not Eligible
Federal Grant Funding Lines (search grants.gov)			
- Drug-Free Communities			
- Sober-Truth on Preventing Underage Drinking (STOP)			
- Partnerships for Success (PFS)			

Discussion



Where are some examples of funding sources that have not been shared?

(Raise hand or add to the chat)

Step #2:

Develop a Grants Timeline

Federal Grants Timeline

Recommendation: Meet 1/week with grant team.

8 Weeks +

Review requirements and eligibility. Draft timeline/checklist. Establish partnerships. Build core team. Attend pre-app workshop.

6-8 Weeks

Brainstorming. Draft goals. Gather feedback from partners. Discuss assumptions and “hard stuff” (e.g. budget/staff allocations).

4-6 Weeks +

Draft Project Narrative, including problem statement, measurable objectives, key grant activities, and budget. Check for alignment. Discuss evaluation approach and consent documentation.

2-4 Weeks +

Finalize project narrative sections. Finalize letters of commitment and attachment documents. Include biosketches/resumes and job descriptions of key staff.

0-2 Weeks +

Finalize documents. Complete full review by team, resolve outstanding issues. Submit proposal.

Key Points



- Start early



- Prioritize: What comes first?
 - Partnerships and Letters of Commitment



- Identify goals and objectives early



- Talk budget and “hard stuff”

Use the Toolkit

Develop a Grants Timeline (and Checklist!)

Use this checklist to track progress on your next grant proposal.

Grant Opportunity Name	
Due Date	

Week	Activity	Person Responsible	Complete?
8+	Review NOFA requirements/eligibility		
8+	Draft timeline, checklist. Create collaboration doc		
8+	Identify potential partnerships, send invite		
8+	Build core team to complete grant		
6-8	Brainstorm ideas and draft goals		
6-8	Gather feedback, discuss assumptions		
4-6	Draft Project Narrative		
4-6	- Problem statement		

Step #3:

Prepare Components of a Grant Proposal

Primary Components:

Project Narrative

- Problem description
- Goals and objectives
- Strategies and activities
- Staff and collaborations
- Evaluation and measuring outcomes

Budget

- Budget template typically provided
- Budget narrative
- (sometimes) financials from your organization

Attachments

- Biosketches, staff resumes
- Letters of support or commitment
- 501c3 designation
- Protection of participants/ subjects
- Consent docs
- Data collection tools



Build a grants toolkit.

- Most grants have a few standard questions and requirements. With a toolkit, you can pre-write all of these so you're ready to go.
- See packet for a list.
 - Mission and vision
 - About your organization
 - High-level financials
 - Descriptions of programs



Use the Toolkit

Step #3: Prepare Components of Grant Proposal

Don't re-invent the wheel. Use this template to draft language for the things that go in almost every grant proposal to save you time and ensure consistency when communicating with grantors.

What is your organization's mission and vision?
About: What is the history of your organization? What are examples of successes you've had?
Financials: What is the size and scope of your organization? What is your annual budget, and key sources of funding?

Step #4: Build a Team

Internal Staff



Program Staff

Managers
Front-line staff



Administrators

Executive Director, CFO
Fundraising/grant writing



Volunteers & board members



Consultants

Grant writing, fundraising, evaluation

External Orgs

- Substance use and mental health organizations
- Community organizations
- Faith-based
- Law enforcement, courts
- School districts
- Youth/family orgs
- Business community
- Cultural groups



Discussion



What are some examples of innovative partnerships with external stakeholders from your own practice?

(Raise hand or add to the chat)

Brainstorming

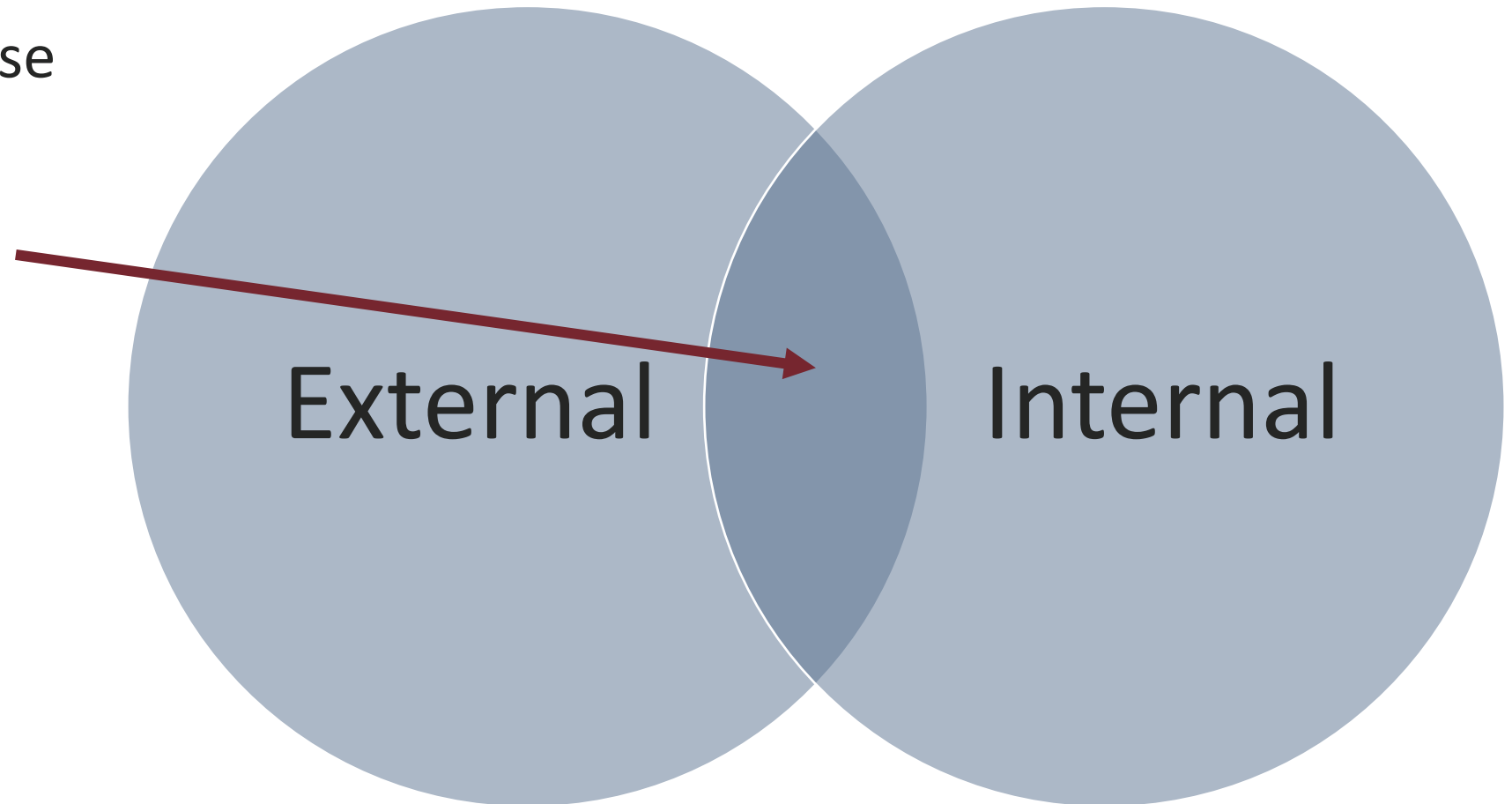
- What does the community need?
- What does the funder require?
- What are you already doing?
- What could you do if you had:
 - Resources
 - Partnerships
- Don't be afraid to innovate



So who actually writes it?

People with these skills:

- Writing
- Strategic
- Analytic
- Leadership
- Organization



Use the Toolkit

Step #4: Build a Team

Every grant needs a team. Think about the diverse skillset and voices you need on your team. What is going to be needed to bring this grant proposal “across the finish line”? Who can help with expertise related to programs, strategy, writing, and budgeting?

Remember to include external members of your organizations here, and potential partners. Your team should also reflect the cultural, racial, and linguistic diversity of the community you intend to serve through the grant.

Grant Opportunity Name	
Due Date	

Organization	Name and Title	Responsibilities
ABC Prevention Organization	Jane Doe, Prevention Coordinator	Manage and lead meetings. Oversee entire grant writing process.
ABC Prevention Organization	John Ray, Chief Financial Officer	Develop budget and budget narrative.



Step #5:

Review the Strategic Prevention Framework

Strategic Prevention Framework



- Reference it!
- Each of the five steps should be referenced somewhere in your grant narrative.
- Don't over obsess over assessment. Use what you already know.
- You can ask for capacity funds!
- Build in planning activities – logic model review.
- Create innovative implementations
- Evaluation separates good from great.

Source: SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Framework



TOBACCO

The following section shows YDS results for youth use of tobacco.

30-DAY TOBACCO USE

Table 1 presents the overall results for past 30-day use for five separate tobacco products. Following recent national trends and similar to the 2020 survey, e-cigarettes emerged as the preferred method for tobacco consumption among youth in the sample.

Table 2. Tobacco 30-day use, 6th, 9th, 10th, and 12th grade youth.

Questions: How often in the past 30 days have you used the following?

Tobacco Product	Used at least once in the past 30 days	Used at least once in the past 30 days	Used at least once in the past 30 days	Used at least once in the past 30 days
Cigarettes	42.4%	3.7%	2.0%	2.4%
E-cigarettes	42.4%	4.8%	30.1%	1.1%
Chewing tobacco	32.1%	2.3%	1.3%	1.0%
Cigars/Cigarillos	34.4%	3.1%	2.7%	2.8%
Hookah	37.0%	2.0%	1.1%	1.7%

Strategic Prevention Framework Checklist

SPF Checklist: Assessment

- Assess the **problem**:
 - What, how often, where, and who
- **Prioritizing** problems:
 - Magnitude, severity, trend, changeability
- **Risk and Protective Factors**

Risk Factors	Protective Factors
Low impulse control	Academic achievement
Peer use	Parental bonding
Lack of parental monitoring	Family cohesion
Easy access	Social capital
Mental health challenges, stress	Community engagement

Use the Toolkit

Assessment: Problems

When assessing the problem, it's good to ask questions about what is happening, how often it's happening, where it's happening, and who it is affecting. Below is a table examples that you can use to complete an assessment of your community. The words in italics are examples, feel free to erase them and replace them with your own responses.

What?	How often?	Where?	Who?
<i>[Opioid Overdoses]</i>	<i>[opioid dashboard data?]</i>	<i>[at home alone]</i>	<i>[In x zip code]</i>
<i>[Drunk driving accidents]</i>	<i>[county data on driving accidents?]</i>	<i>[after prom and homecoming]</i>	<i>[males vs. females?]</i>
<i>[School discipline – vaping]</i>	<i>[school disciplinary data?]</i>	<i>[at school]</i>	<i>[middle vs high school youth?]</i>
<i>[Marijuana use]</i>	<i>[30-day use indicator from school survey]</i>	<i>[with friends in public spaces]</i>	<i>[cultural group differences?]</i>

Use the Toolkit

Assessment: Prioritization

After you've identified the problem, it can be helpful to think about:

- **Magnitude** – prevalence. What's most widespread in the community?
- **Severity** – how harmful is it?
- **Trend** – getting worse or better?
- **Changeability?** – can you make a difference?

Use the table below to guide you, using the problems you identified in the previous section.

Problem	Magnitude	Severity	Trend	Changeability
<i>[Opioid Overdoses]</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Very harmful</i>	<i>Decreasing</i>	<i>Some impact</i>
<i>[Drunk driving accidents]</i>	<i>Low – not many accidents</i>	<i>Very harmful</i>	<i>Increasing</i>	<i>Hard to impact</i>
<i>[School discipline – vaping]</i>	<i>High – many students suspended.</i>	<i>Somewhat harmful</i>	<i>Increasing</i>	<i>Very changeable</i>
<i>[Marijuana use]</i>	<i>Moderate use</i>	<i>Somewhat harmful</i>	<i>About the same</i>	<i>Some impact</i>

Use the Toolkit

Assessment: Risk and Protection

What are common risk and protective factors associated with the problem? SAMHSA defines them as:

- *Risk factors* are associated with a higher likelihood of developing a problem (e.g., low impulse control, peer substance use).
- *Protective factors* are associated with a lower likelihood of developing a problem (e.g., academic achievement, parental bonding, and family cohesion).

Use the chart below to guide your thinking about risk / protection for problem areas in your community.

Substance:		
Level	Risk Factors	Protective Factors
<i>Individual</i>		
<i>Family</i>		
<i>School & Community</i>		

Discussion



Where are some examples of risk and protective factors that you focus on in your work?

(Raise hand or add to the chat)

SPF Checklist: Assessment

- Assess your organization's capacity
 - People
 - Knowledge
 - Resources
 - Existing organizations and efforts
 - ***Strengths-focus: the source of the solution comes from the strengths of your community***
- Readiness
 - Support of local leaders, community groups
 - Cultural responsiveness, working together



SPF Checklist: Capacity

“Substance misuse is a complex behavioral health problem, and to address it requires the energy, expertise, and experience of multiple players, working together across disciplines. Prevention planners need diverse partners—from neighborhood residents to service providers to community leaders—to share information and resources, raise awareness about critical substance misuse problems, build support for prevention, and ensure that prevention activities reach multiple populations with multiple strategies in multiple settings.” – SAMHSA SPF

TL/DR: Prevention can’t be done well by one organization.

SPF Checklist: Capacity

Build your network

Treatment providers

Law enforcement

Local government

Local businesses

Neighborhood and cultural
associations

School districts

Harm reduction providers

Health care providers

Youth-serving organizations

University and research institutions

Faith communities

Health providers

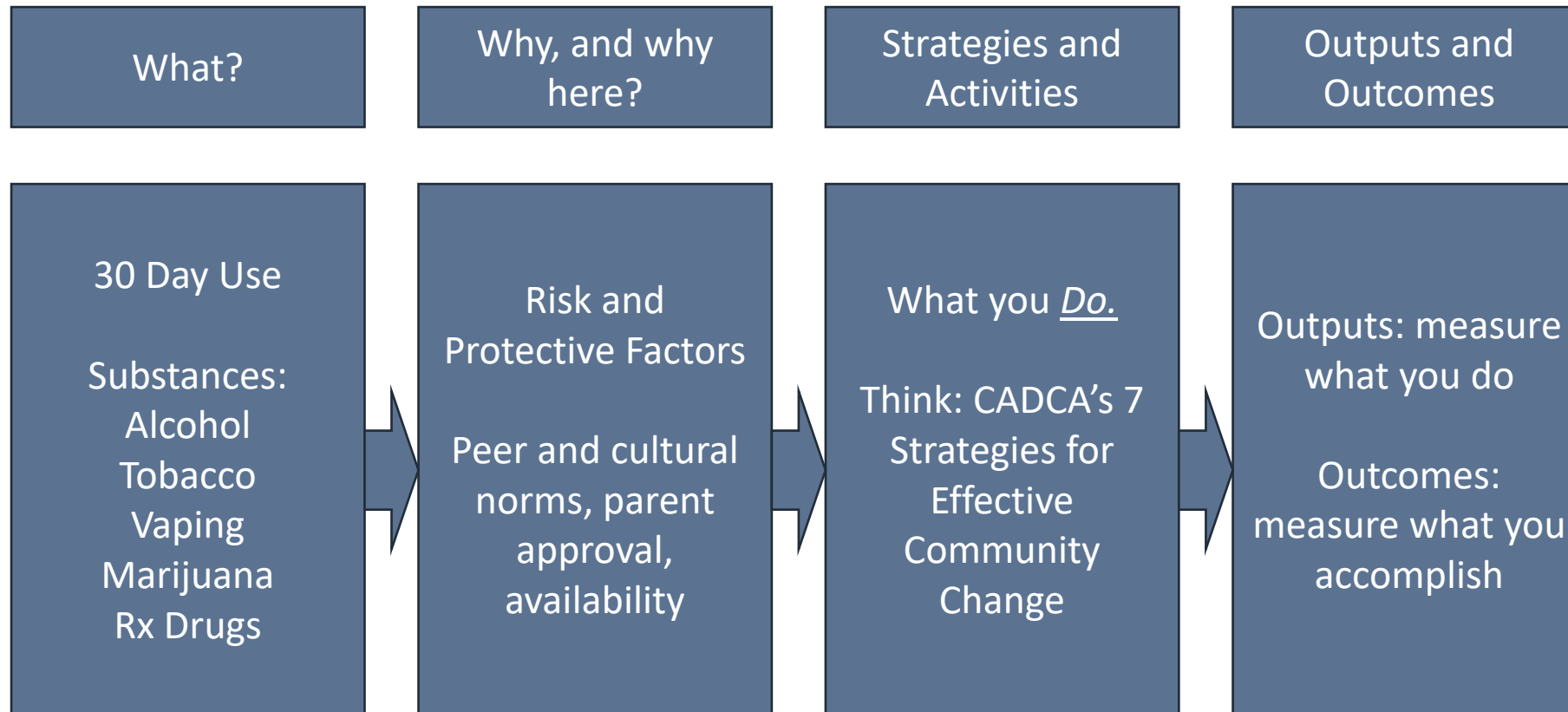
Use the Toolkit

Capacity

No organization can do it alone. Take a moment to brainstorm – what are some organizations that you could partner with to engage in prevention work? Use the guide below to think creatively about different sectors who could be at the table.

Build your network	
Treatment providers	Harm reduction providers
Law enforcement	Health care providers
Local government	Youth-serving organizations

SPF Checklist: Planning, Logic Model



Alignment is critical!

SPF Checklist: Planning

- How do you *intend to plan as a community?*
 - Holding workshops and town halls
 - Identifying leaders in planning process
 - Who needs to be at the table?
 - How much time do you need?
- *Balance: fund what you know you're going to do in the grant, while leaving space for planning to take you a different direction.*

Use the Toolkit

Planning

Existing Documents: *What current documents do you use to guide your planning efforts? (For example: Logic model, theory of change, strategic plan?) What needs to be developed or improved?*

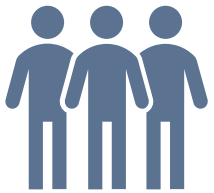
Planning to Plan: *What are different activities that you can take that focus on planning? [Examples: workshops, town halls]/ Who needs to be at the table? How much time do you need? Remember, you can ask for funding to support your planning process.*

SPF Checklist: Implementation



Individual

- Providing information
- Enhancing skills
- Providing support



Environmental

- Enhancing access/reducing barriers
- Changing consequences
- Physical design
- Modifying/changing policies

Challenge yourself!

Learn More: [CADCA's seven strategies for community change](#)

Discussion



Where are some examples of environmental strategies that you focus on in your work?

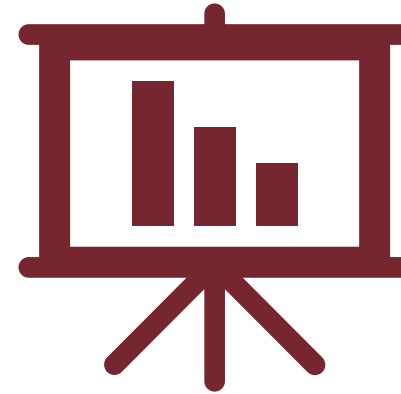
(Raise hand or add to the chat)

SPF Checklist: Evaluation



Process:

*Did you do what you said
you would do?*



Outcome:

*What was the result of
what you did?*

SPF Checklist: Evaluation

- What are your key outputs and outcomes?
- How will you measure them?
 - Surveys, secondary data, focus groups, etc.
- Who will oversee measuring and tracking data?
 - Staff? Consultant?
- How will you protect the data and participants?
 - Data security plan?
 - Informed consent procedures
 - Institutional Review Board?

Use the Toolkit

Evaluation

Use the following tables to take notes on your current evaluation capacity, and what might need to change for you to successfully evaluate your next grant-sponsored activity.

Current Capacity: Who on your team is able to lead your evaluation efforts? What strengths or limitations does your organization have for evaluation work?

Evaluation Approaches: Use this section to take notes on the two main types of evaluation you'd likely complete for the grant. What needs do you have in these areas?	
Process Evaluation: Did you do what you said you would do?	Outcome Evaluation: What was the result of what you did?

Results-based accountability (RBA)

	Quantity	Quality
Effort	How much did we do? (#) Number of people served	How well did we do it? (%) Percent increase in perceived risk of harm
Effect	Is anyone better off? (#) Decrease in the number of drunk-driving accidents in your county (%) Percent of youth getting suspended due to possession of alcohol or vapes at school.	

Step #6: Develop a Plan for Writing

Recommendations



- Start outlining and writing right away
 - Create a collaboration document (e.g. Google Doc)



- Set up a weekly recurring meeting with stakeholders



- Prioritize grant writing (briefly) over your other regular tasks



- Ask for help when you need it.

Step #7:

Engage Community Members

Discussion

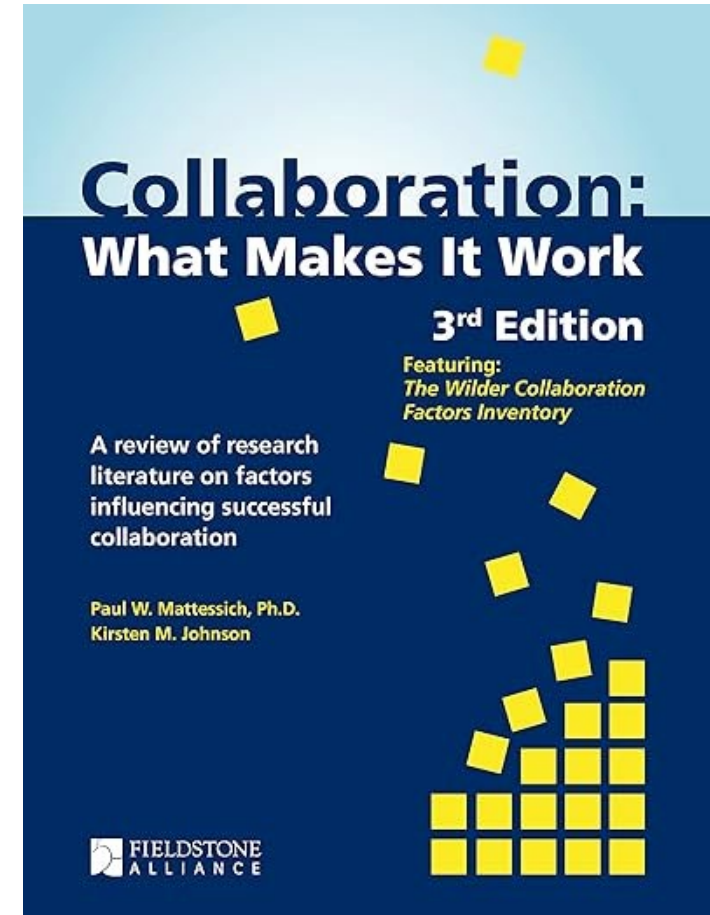


What challenges have you experienced when engaging in collaborations?

(Raise hand or add to the chat)

Good Collaborations...

- Full commitment of leadership
- Shared mission and goals
- Comprehensive planning
- Multiple communication channels
- Leadership dispersed
- Equal risk = “skin in the game”
- Resources jointly secured
- Whole > sum of the parts



Step #8:

Establish Partnerships and Written Agreements

Partnership ideas:

Partners	
Treatment providers	Harm reduction providers
Law enforcement	Health care providers
Local government	Youth-serving organizations
Local businesses	University and research institutions
Neighborhood and cultural associations	Faith communities
School districts	Health providers

What goes in a letter of commitment?

- Draft it for your partners. Make it easy to sign and return.
- Include:
 - Name of organization with their logo, should be letterhead
 - Goals of project
 - What (specifically) the partner will commit to doing.
 - How you will share funds/budget.
 - Where they can sign
- Send as editable word doc & through an e-signature tool.



Use the Toolkit

[Date]

Dear [Your name],

We are pleased to support [your organization] in its efforts to prevent substance use in our community through the [name of grant opportunity].

We believe that our mission of [their organization's mission] aligns with the work of this grant opportunity and are looking forward to serving as a collaborating partner in this grant opportunity. To support the efforts of this grant, our organization commits to:

- Commitment #1
- Commitment #2
- ...

To ensure that our organization can successfully deliver on these commitments, we have designated [staff member] to oversee our commitments. As a part of the grant application, we are requesting funding related to [initiative] so that we can have the resources needed to effectively deliver on these commitments. These details are outlined in the enclosed grant application budget narrative.

Sincerely

→ add e-signature box [here](#)

[Name and title]

[Organization]

Questions?



www.commongooddata.com/grantwriting

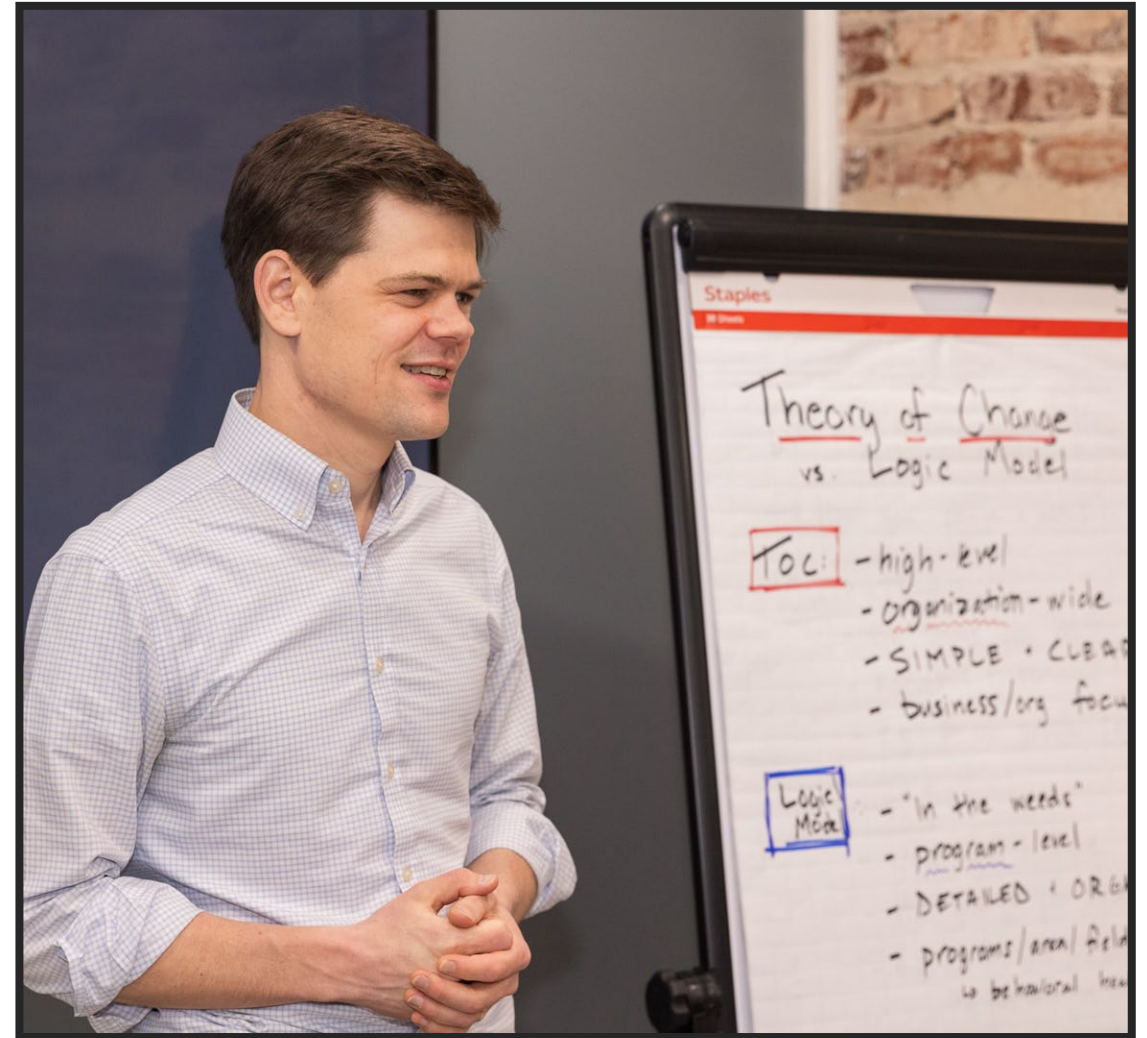


drew@commongooddata.com



Podcast:

“The Common Good Data Podcast”





Thank You

drew@commongooddata.com