

**Understanding Barriers  
and Successful Strategies  
for Faith-Based  
Organizations in  
Accessing Grants**

*Final Report*

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In the United States, faith-based organizations (FBOs) have long been providers of health and social services in their communities. Since the mid-1990s, several federal policies have been implemented to ensure that FBOs that provide such services can, like their secular counterparts, access federal grants to support their work. Since 2001, The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), which has the largest grant portfolio in the federal government, has taken internal steps to identify and address barriers to discretionary grants for FBOs and community organizations and to track the progress in this area.

To complement HHS's internal efforts, in 2006 The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) in conjunction with the Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (CFBCI) contracted with Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR) to conduct the "Understanding Barriers and Successful Strategies for Faith-Based Organizations in Accessing Grants" study. Its purpose was to identify potential underlying barriers perceived by faith-based applicants in accessing HHS grants, as well as the strategies grant recipients used to compete successfully for federal grant funds, by collecting information from faith-based applicants themselves. Grant programs included in the study were sponsored by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), and the Administration on Aging (AoA).

### **STUDY APPROACH**

The core research questions for the study were as follows:

- 1) What are the characteristics of FBOs that have applied to HHS for discretionary grants?
- 2) What are the differences between successful and unsuccessful FBO applicants?
- 3) What obstacles to assessing federal grants do FBOs that have applied for grants perceive?
- 4) What approaches, practices, and strategies have successful FBO applicants used to obtain federal grant awards?
- 5) What are the perceived differences in grant application success for FBOs versus other applicants?

Quantitative and qualitative methods were used to address the study's research questions.

This included:

- Reviewing administrative data to develop a description of grant application and award rates for faith-based and other organizations during fiscal year (FY) 2006.
- Fielding a telephone survey to collect information from 250 FBOs that applied to selected HHS grant programs during FY 2006.
- Administering follow-up telephone interviews with selected survey respondents to obtain more in-depth information on their grant application experiences.
- Conducting focus groups with grant program managers and grant reviewers to better understand the application review process and factors that contribute to award decisions.

## **FINDINGS**

Analysis of administrative data provided by CFBCI provided an overview of applications from and grants awarded to FBOs during FY 2006. Applications from FBOs represented 20 percent of all applications submitted to the selected grant programs examined by CFBCI in FY 2006. Among the grant programs studied, more than 90 percent of applications filed by FBOs were submitted to ACF with over half submitted for three ACF grant programs: Compassion Capital Fund Targeted Capacity Building, Promoting Responsible Fatherhood, and Healthy Marriage Demonstration. Overall, the number of grants awarded to FBOs (18 percent) was nearly proportional to the number of applications they submitted, and higher than their share in FY 2005 (9 percent). However, the average value of grant awards made to faith-based applicants in FY 2006 (\$266,987) was somewhat less than awards to other types of applicants (\$320,969).

The telephone survey provided more detailed descriptive information on faith-based applicants in FY 2006. The survey found that FBOs that applied for selected federal grant programs in FY 2006 were relatively small but well-established organizations that became active in seeking federal grants only recently. However, large organizations with more experience seeking grants constituted a substantial subgroup. Most FBOs that applied in FY 2006 were independent nonprofits that relied on many funding sources in addition to federal grants, and provided a wide array of services to multiple target populations.

All survey respondents cited numerous challenges they had experienced in applying for and accessing federal grants. These included difficulty meeting sustainability requirements, lack of knowledgeable staff to prepare grants, difficulty using the Grants.gov website, and difficulty reaching federal contacts to ask questions. These respondents also expected to encounter similar difficulties if they applied for a federal grant again in the future; however, 88 percent of survey respondents still expected to apply again. Some respondents cited issues relating to FBOs as barriers to accessing grants, but only a few organizations (less than 2 percent) said these were the major barriers they faced.

As another way to identify potential barriers to accessing grants, statistical comparisons were



made between FBOs that received the FY 2006 grant for which they applied (successful applicants), and those that did not (unsuccessful applicants). Comparisons were made across a variety of dimensions hypothesized to be related to whether an applicant had the capacity to compete successfully for federal grant funds. Results showed that older FBOs were more likely to have received a grant. Bigger FBOs—those with higher income and larger staffs—also were more likely to have received the grant for which they applied. Faith-based groups that had been applying for funds longer and had applied for grants more often—especially to federal programs—were also more likely to obtain grants. Successful and unsuccessful applicants did not differ in their urban-rural locations, technical capacities, or organizational practices.

Program managers and grant reviewers who participated in study focus groups described three factors that characterized highly competitive grant applications: (1) responsiveness to the grant announcement, including answering all questions, organizing information carefully, and being concrete and thorough; (2) providing evidence of prior experience with the proposed program or target population; and (3) including realistic budgets with adequate justification. Successful survey respondents cited similar factors as reasons they received grants for which they had applied. Unsuccessful applicants attributed their failure to the amount of competition, the inadequate strength of their applications, or a lack of organizational experience.

Both grant program managers and reviewers, along with survey respondents who participated in follow-up interviews, suggested ways FBOs could strengthen future applications. Suggestions included being responsive to application requirements, seeking experienced partners in advance of grant announcements, and reviewing feedback on unsuccessful federal grant applications provided by grant reviewers. Program managers and reviewers and follow-up interview participants also identified possible steps federal grant makers could consider to ease the grant application process for FBOs or other applicants, particularly those that are small or inexperienced. These steps included providing information about the application process and requirements, providing additional time to file applications, and smoothing application logistics.

## **STUDY LIMITATIONS**

Several limitations should be kept in mind when interpreting study findings:

- Data for the study were collected only for selected HHS discretionary grant programs. Therefore study findings cannot be generalized to all grant programs managed by the operating divisions included in the study, to any other HHS grant-making operating divisions, or to the federal government as a whole.
- The analysis of data from FY 2006 is not representative of other years. Federal grant programs are not static. The types and number of grants offered, award rates, and grant amounts awarded vary somewhat each year.
- The study has not examined FBOs that provide social services but did not apply for federal funding. Therefore the study cannot be generalized to all faith-based organizations.

## **NEXT STEPS IN ASSESSING GRANT ACCESS CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES**

Two issues that could not be addressed by the study may be of interest for further research and exploration.

First, FBOs from the survey that participated in follow-up interviews, along with grant managers and reviewers, felt that faith-based groups face challenges similar to those experienced by secular nonprofit organizations—particularly by relatively small and inexperienced groups. The most commonly cited challenges were lack of organizational resources, especially staff capacity to write applications, and short time lines for turnaround of applications. Examining barriers and strategies for accessing federal grants among secular applicants, and in comparison to faith-based applicants, could provide additional useful information on both groups.

Second, in-depth interview and focus group participants also speculated about factors that may be keeping some eligible FBOs from applying for federal grant funds. These factors included difficulty reconciling a faith-based group's religious missions with the broad human service goals of federally funded grant programs and concerns about whether faith-based groups must maintain separation of religious activities from grant-funded services, or how best to ensure such separation. Studying FBOs that have not applied for federal funding could produce additional insights into barriers to grant access. The challenges faced by these groups and their organizational capacity may differ from those of FBOs that have applied.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the United States, faith-based organizations (FBOs) have long been providers of health and social services in their communities. Beginning in the mid-1990s, a renewed recognition of the role these organizations play in providing social services and the desire to support that role led to changes in federal funding policy (McConnell, et al., 2005). Section 104 of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 contained Charitable Choice provisions stating that those administering Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds could not discriminate against FBOs when funding service providers. Provisions also described the responsibilities of FBOs receiving such funding. Similar provisions followed in the Department of Labor's Welfare-to-Work Grants program, as well as in the Department of Health and Human Service's (HHS) Community Service Block Grants and several Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) programs.

In a further step, on January 29, 2001, the White House issued the first two of five executive orders designed to reduce barriers to federal funding of social services through FBOs. These orders established the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives as well as centers for faith-based and community initiatives in five cabinet-level agencies, including HHS.<sup>1</sup> In response to one of these orders, HHS, along with four other cabinet-level departments, conducted an internal audit to identify existing barriers to participation by FBOs. The audit revealed the need to specifically consider the unique challenges FBOs may face when considering federal government partnerships. Specific barriers identified included (1) perceptions among federal officials that close

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<sup>1</sup> Subsequent executive orders established the Compassion Capital Fund within HHS; provided guidance to federal agencies to ensure equal protection of the laws and expand opportunities for, and strengthen the capacity of, faith-based and community organizations for meeting social needs; and established faith-based and community initiative centers in five additional federal agencies.

collaboration with religious organizations was legally suspect, (2) exclusion of FBOs from grant competitions without a legal basis, and (3) excessive restrictions on religious activities within federal grant programs (White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, 2001).

Since 2001, HHS, which has the largest grant portfolio in the federal government, has taken internal steps to address barriers to discretionary grants for FBOs and community organizations, and to track the progress in this area.<sup>2</sup> HHS has worked to reduce regulatory and administrative barriers for FBOs and community organizations seeking grant funds, and to educate them on the federal grant-making process. HHS has since documented increases in the number of grants to FBOs and the amount of funding such groups receive. The number of HHS grants to FBOs increased by 82 percent—from 483 to 881—between fiscal year (FY) 2002 and FY 2005. Discretionary grant funding awarded to faith-based applicants by HHS increased by 64 percent over the same period, from \$477 million in FY 2002 to \$780 million in 2005 (White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, 2006a). Yet differences remained in the rate at which FBOs received federal discretionary grant awards compared with secular organizations. Among 30 HHS grant programs reviewed by the department's Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (CFBCI) in FY 2005, 20 percent of the applicants were faith-based groups and 62 percent were secular nonprofits.<sup>3</sup> Of all awards, 14 percent were made to faith-based applicants, while 64 percent went to secular nonprofits. Twenty percent of faith-based applicants received an award, compared with 30 percent of secular nonprofits.

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<sup>2</sup> The HHS annual grant budget amounts to approximately 60 percent of the federal government's grant dollars. HHS administers over 300 grant programs and awards approximately 75,000 grants to more than 10,000 grantees annually. With discretionary grants, the federal government can exercise judgment in selecting the project or proposal to be supported and select the recipient organization through a competitive process. The award amount is determined either through a negotiated agreement between the recipient and the grants office or grant program office or on the basis of a formula. Funds for these grant programs are appropriated annually by Congress.

<sup>3</sup> The remainder were state and local governments, universities, Indian tribes, and similar institutions.

## **A. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

To further advance their understanding of these issues, officials at HHS decided that information from and about faith-based grant applicants themselves was needed. In 2006 The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) in conjunction with the Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (CFBCI) contracted with Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR) to conduct the “Understanding Barriers and Successful Strategies for Faith-Based Organizations in Accessing Grants” study to identify potential underlying barriers perceived by faith-based applicants to HHS grants, as well as the strategies those receiving grant awards used to compete successfully for grant funds. The study, which focused on the FY 2006 grant cycle, was designed to answer the following questions:

1. What are the characteristics of FBOs that have applied to HHS for discretionary grants?
2. How have these applicants learned about available grants?
3. What are the differences between successful and unsuccessful FBO applicants?
4. What obstacles to accessing federal grants do FBOs that have applied for the grants perceive?
5. What approaches, practices, and strategies have successful FBO applicants used to obtain federal grant awards?
6. How do federal grant managers and grant reviewers evaluate what makes a strong, competitive grant application?
7. How do federal grant managers and grant reviewers think the grant review process affects FBOs?
8. What do federal grant managers and grant reviewers think are possible reasons for differences in grant application success for FBOs as compared with other applicants?
9. What strengths or advantages in applying for federal grants do federal grant managers and grant reviewers perceive that FBOs possess?

This report describes the methodology of the study, and addresses the research questions based on data collected. Section B of this chapter describes the study methods and data sources used to address the research questions. Section C identifies the limitations of the study. Section D provides an overview of the remainder of the report.

## **B. STUDY APPROACH**

Quantitative and qualitative data sources and methods were used to address the study's research questions. A description of grant application and award rates for faith-based and other organizations during FY 2006 was developed using administrative data. A telephone survey collected data from FBOs that applied to selected HHS grant programs during FY 2006. Follow-up telephone interviews were conducted with selected survey respondents. Focus groups with grant program managers and with individuals who had served on HHS grant review panels were also held.

### **1. Analysis of Administrative Data**

The study used a database constructed by the CFBCI to track FBO access to HHS grant funds for FY 2006 to draw a sample for the telephone survey, and to calculate grant application and award rates for faith-based and other organizations.<sup>4</sup> The database was developed by requesting information from HHS operating divisions on their discretionary grant applications and awards. The request included grants for which FBOs were eligible, and to which CFBCI believed FBOs were most likely to apply, mainly grants supporting health and social services rather than research projects. It excluded grants where the capacity necessary to manage funding would exceed the capacity of smaller faith-based and community organizations. From this information, CFBCI staff members compiled the database, and identified which applicants in the database appeared to be

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<sup>4</sup> CFBCI compiled such a database annually for several years, ending after FY 2006.

faith-based.<sup>5</sup>

The FY 2006 database contained information on grant applications and grant awards, in two separate files. In all, 39 grant programs sponsored by four HHS operating divisions were common to both files.<sup>6</sup> The grant programs were sponsored by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), and the Administration on Aging (AoA). The files contained the following information for all observations: organization name, city, state, organization type (faith-based or other), and grant program. The awards file also included the amount of the grant award. The FY 2005 CFBCI database was also examined for the study to make comparisons were appropriate.

## **2. Telephone Survey of Faith-Based Applicants**

A main goal of the study was to hear from faith-based grant applicants themselves. Thus a telephone survey was conducted of FBOs that applied for federal grants in FY 2006.

### **a. The Sampling Frame**

The sampling frame was developed from the CFBCI database. Of 6,673 grant applications in the database, 1,353 applications, or approximately 20 percent, were from organizations identified by CFBCI as faith-based. To develop the sampling frame, information on applications and awards was merged for all FBOs in the database. Approximately 90 percent of the FBOs in the resulting

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<sup>5</sup> Grant applicants are asked to self-identify their organization type in cover sheets filed with their applications. However most faith-based applicants identify themselves as nonprofits. Therefore CFBCI reviewed and reclassified applicants and awardees based on the organization name, additional information obtained from organization websites, and other information sources.

<sup>6</sup> The awards file had information on several grant programs not included in the application file. In order to make the application and award analyses comparable, only grant programs included in both files were analyzed. The awards file also included continuation awards. Because the continuation awards originated with applications filed before 2006, they were excluded from consideration.

sampling frame had applied to ACF, 7 percent to SAMSHA, and 3 percent to HRSA. Less than one percent had applied to AoA.

**b. The Sampling Strategy**

To ensure that the sample selected for the telephone survey was representative of the grant programs included in the CFBCI database, random sampling was used. In addition, FBOs that received grant awards were oversampled to obtain greater statistical power for comparing successful and unsuccessful applicants, with sampling weights used in the analysis to correct for the oversampling. Before sample selection, applicants were stratified by whether they received a grant and on other characteristics available in the database, including operating division, type of grant program, and geographic location of the applicant.<sup>7</sup> Some FBOs had submitted multiple applications. For those with multiple applications, one application was first randomly selected, and the organization was assigned to the strata (award status, operating division, and so forth) based on the characteristics of that application. If the organization was then chosen for the sample, the study collected data about the preselected application.

**c. The Survey Instrument**

The survey contained six main sections: (1) identification of the person at each FBO who was most familiar with the process of developing the 2006 grant application; (2) characteristics of the organization; (3) knowledge of federal grant opportunities; (4) experience applying for grants, including federal grants and those from other sources; (5) strengths and capacities of the organization; and (6) characteristics of the person taking the survey.

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<sup>7</sup> Stratification on award status was explicit because successful applicants were oversampled. Stratification on other variables was implicit; MPR sorted the sampling frame based on the selected characteristics before selecting the sample.



Questions were drawn from existing instruments and targeted to address questions relevant to the study. Many had been successfully administered in prior surveys such as Faith Communities Today 2000 (Dudley, et al., 2001), the 2002 Los Angeles Nonprofit Human Services Study (Mosley, et al., 2003), and the 2005 National Survey of Congregations (Roozen, 2007). Some questions were adapted from the 2005 Staff Survey on Barriers to American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native American Communities' Access to DHHS Programs (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006a).

**d. Pretesting and Fielding the Survey**

A sample of 349 FBOs was drawn from the survey sample. The instrument was pretested in March 2007 among five organizations drawn from the sampling frame but not included in the survey sample. Based on pretest results including discussions with the pretest respondents, several questions and interviewer instructions were revised in order to ensure that questions collected the desired data.

The survey was fielded during October, November, and December, 2007. Eleven organizations refused to participate in the survey. Nine of which did not identify themselves as faith-based organizations and were therefore ineligible, and two organizations were duplicates. Over the field period, 250 surveys were completed, meeting the study's goal. The final response rate was 72 percent.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> MPR planned to release 285 sample members and seek an 85 percent response rate (for 250 completions) per ASPE's goal for the study. However, delays in receiving Office of Management and Budget (OMB) clearance and administrative and contact data led to delays in fielding the survey. MPR implemented all planned activities to encourage survey completion by respondents in the first two waves of 285 sample members, such as follow-up letters and calls from refusal conversion specialists. MPR in consultation with ASPE decided after two months in the field to release the remaining sample members to ensure the completion of 250 surveys within the study's time period and budget. Hence the response rate was lower than the original goal, but the desired number of surveys were completed.

### **3. In-Depth Interviews with Selected Telephone Survey Respondents**

For a fuller understanding of applicants' experiences and opinions, follow-up telephone interviews were held with 12 organizations that had participated in the telephone survey. Participants were selected for diversity across a range of characteristics and included <sup>8</sup> that received grant awards and 4 that did not. Respondents were asked to describe their role within the organization and their past experience preparing grant applications. They discussed reasons why their organization decided to apply for the grant, how they went about planning and preparing the application, the positive and negative experiences the group had in the application process, and the helpfulness of any feedback received from HHS on the outcome of the application. Finally, respondents were asked to describe challenges the group faced when seeking federal grants, including possible concerns or prejudices about funding faith-based groups, and strategies used to develop successful applications.

### **4. Focus Groups with Grant Managers and Review Panel Members**

In order to examine factors that influence grant award decisions and how they compare with the barriers FBOs perceived and the application strategies they used, the study included two focus group discussions. One focus group consisted of grant program managers from ACF, HRSA, and SAMSHA. These three divisions were selected because the telephone survey sample members applied for discretionary grants from these divisions in FY 2006. The other consisted of people who had served on HHS grant review panels for these operating divisions in FY 2006.

Each group was asked to describe the process of reviewing federal grant proposals. Participants were asked about common strengths and weaknesses of grant proposals and the factors on which grant award decisions are made. Both groups discussed whether and how applications from FBOs differed from those submitted by other types of organizations and whether the review process or

evaluation factors differed for applications from these two groups. They were also asked how they thought future applicants could strengthen their grant proposals, and whether and how federal agencies could address potential barriers to faith-based or other applicants in accessing federal grant funds.

### **C. STUDY LIMITATIONS**

The FBO grant access study was designed to help identify whether potential underlying barriers prevent FBOs from accessing grant programs for which they are eligible, and to better understand the strategies used by successful faith-based applicants. By understanding barriers and successful strategies, HHS may be able to develop future options, if they are needed, for addressing potential barriers. As with all research, however, there are some limitations to the study:

- Data for the study were collected only for selected HHS discretionary grant programs. Therefore study findings cannot be generalized to all grant programs operated by the operating divisions included in the study, to any other HHS grant-making operating divisions, or to the federal government as a whole. However, the sample drawn for the telephone survey is representative of the FBOs that applied to the FY 2006 grant programs included in the study.
- Data used for this study are limited to organizations that applied for grants in FY 2006, with some comparisons to FY 2005 data. Federal grant programs are not static. The types and number of grants offered, award rates, and grant amounts awarded vary somewhat each year. This variation will lead to differences in the number of FBOs (and others) that choose to apply for federal grants and the rate at which they receive grant awards from year to year, independent of any barriers they may face. Comparisons across years should thus be interpreted with care.
- The study has not examined FBOs that provide social services but did not apply for federal funding. Therefore the study cannot be generalized to all faith-based organizations. The number of applications submitted by faith-based providers has increased since 2001. However some faith-based providers may still choose not to apply due to their own preferences or funding needs, or due to actual or perceived barriers. These barriers may be different from those experienced by FBOs that have applied for grants.

## **D. ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT**

The remainder of this report is organized as follows: Chapter II provides background information on the number of applications from and awards to FBOs and other applicants in FY 2006, which was the focal year for the study. Chapter III describes the characteristics of FBO applicants, and their experiences applying for an HHS grant in FY 2006 (research questions 1 and 2). Chapter IV examines the challenges FBO applicants reported (question 4) and the differences between successful and unsuccessful FBO applicants (question 3 and 4). Chapter V describes the characteristics of competitive grant proposals as viewed by federal grant managers and grant reviewers (questions 6, 7, 8, and 9), the strategies used by FBOs that received grant awards, and steps future grant applicants and the federal grant makers could consider to strengthen grant applications and ease grant access (question 5). Data collection instruments for the study are provided in technical appendices A, B, C, and D.

## **II. APPLICATIONS AND AWARDS TO SELECTED GRANT PROGRAMS IN FY 2006**

This study examines the experiences of FBOs that applied to HHS for grants, to learn about challenges they faced and their strategies for success. Before discussing survey and interview data collected from individual FBOs that applied in FY 2006, it is helpful to look at aggregate results for that year. How many FBOs applied for discretionary grants? To which grant programs did they apply? How often did their applications result in grant awards? What size awards did they receive? How did the number of applications submitted and grants awarded compare to those for other types of applicants? These questions will be addressed in the remainder of chapter II.

This chapter first provides some general information about HHS discretionary grants, including a description of grant information sources, some of which are targeted to faith-based and community groups. It then presents results from an analysis of the CFBCI database, which represents a portion of the HHS grants offered and awarded in FY 2006. Comparisons from a brief examination of the CFBCI FY 2005 database are also presented.

### **A. HHS DISCRETIONARY GRANTS AND GRANT INFORMATION SOURCES**

Discretionary grants are sometimes called “project grants.” They support demonstration, research, training, service, and construction projects. In FY 2006, HHS operating divisions awarded nearly \$40 billion in discretionary grants. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) makes over 75 percent of all HHS discretionary grant awards and awards over half of all HHS grant dollars, followed by ACF, HRSA, SAMHSA, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and other operating divisions (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006b).

Discretionary grant awards are numerous, accounting for 95 percent of all grants made, but

comprised only 17 percent of total grant funding awarded in FY 2006.<sup>1</sup> Awardees include state, local, and tribal governments, academic institutions, hospitals, nonprofit organizations including faith-based and community-based organizations, for-profit organizations, and foreign and international organizations.

Organizations interested in obtaining discretionary grant funding learn about available grants from a variety of sources. HHS solicits grant proposals through Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOAs) or Requests for Assistance (RFAs), which describe the programmatic and business management requirements of the grant program. HHS typically publishes these announcements in the *Federal Register*, although announcements for many research and research training programs are published instead in the *NIH Guide for Grants and Contracts*. HHS also publishes every FOA and RFA on Grants.gov, a HHS sponsored web portal designed to allow potential applicants to find and apply for federal grants, as well as supports some grant management functions online. In addition, the Office of Management and Budget and the General Services Administration publishes the *Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance*, which is available online, and includes information on federal discretionary grants.

In the past few years, HHS and other federal entities have provided some specialized sources of grant information targeted to faith-based and community-based groups. For example, in 2005 CFBCI published the *Grant Opportunities Notebook*. It provided information on HHS discretionary, block grant, and formula-funded programs and other funding opportunities of interest to faith-based and community organizations. In 2006, the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives published *Federal Funds for Organizations That Help Those in Need*. The booklet contained information, organized by grant program type, about the federal grants process, and listed

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<sup>1</sup> The bulk of federal grant funding is distributed through mandatory grants—those that a federal agency is required by statute to award if the recipient, usually a state, submits an acceptable plan or application and meets eligibility and

over 170 grant programs potentially of interest to faith-based and other charitable organizations. Programs included those predominantly focused on human services needs and funded by federal departments, including HHS. The White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives also published *Guidance to Faith-Based and Community Organizations on Partnering with the Federal Government*. This brochure was designed to address questions FBOs and others might have had regarding federal grants, including explanations of the grant application process and requirements for managing grants received.

## **B. ANALYSIS OF FY 2006 GRANT APPLICATIONS AND AWARDS**

Among the 39 HHS grant programs included in the FY 2006 CFBCI database, the number of grant applications received from faith-based applicants, and the number of grant awards made to them, varied by grant program and operating division (Table II.1).<sup>2</sup>

### **1. Grant Applications**

#### **More than 90 percent of applications filed by FBOs were submitted to ACF.**

A total of 6,673 applications were included in the FY 2006 application file contained in the CFBCI database.<sup>3</sup> Of that total, 1,353 applications, or approximately 20 percent, were from organizations identified by CFBCI as faith-based. ACF sponsored the largest number of grant programs in the database, and 70 percent of applications from all sources were submitted to ACF. For FBOs, however, the proportion of applications submitted to ACF was 92 percent.

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compliance requirements. In FY 2006 HHS awarded \$188 billion in mandatory grant funds.

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise noted, data and comparisons referred to in Section B are from Table II.1

<sup>3</sup> Information in the CFBCI database represents only a portion of discretionary grants offered by HHS in FY 2006, focusing on applications to four operating divisions (ACF, SAMHSA, HRSA, and AoA). In addition, the study focused on programs to which first-time applications were received in FY 2006, excluding grant awards made in FY 2006 based on applications filed in earlier years (called “continuation awards”).

**More than half of all the applications from FBOs were submitted to three ACF grant programs.**

In the database, only a few grant programs accounted for the majority of applications from FBOs. More than half of grant applications submitted by them (55 percent) were submitted for three ACF-sponsored grant programs: Compassion Capital Fund Targeted Capacity Building, Promoting Responsible Fatherhood, and Healthy Marriage Demonstration. Some grant programs received a substantial proportion of applications from FBOs. For instance, 40 percent (10 out of 25) of the applications to ACF's Refugee Family Enrichment program came from FBOs, as did 39 percent (493 out of 1,253) of applications to ACF's Compassion Capital Fund Targeted Capacity Building Program. For two grant programs in the database (ACF's Community Service Block Grant Rural Communities Development Activities, and HRSA's Ryan White Title IV: Women, Infants, Children, and Youth), there were no faith-based applicants.<sup>4</sup>

## **2. Grant Awards**

**Overall, the number of grants awarded to FBOs was nearly proportional to the number of applications they submitted.**

If grant applications from all sources were equally competitive, it might be expected that the proportion of grants received by any group of applicants would be roughly equal to the proportion of

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<sup>4</sup> These two programs were still included in this analysis since CFBCI had identified them as programs for which FBOs were eligible and to which they might apply.



TABLE II.1

FY 2006 APPLICATIONS AND AWARDS FOR SELECTED GRANT PROGRAMS, TOTAL AND FOR FAITH-BASED AND OTHER APPLICANTS,  
BY HHS OPERATING DIVISION

		Number and Percentage of Grant Applications					Number and Percentage of Grant Awards				
		Total	Submitted by Faith-Based Organizations		Submitted by Other Applicants		Total	Made to Faith-Based Organizations		Made to Other Applicants	
			No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage		No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage
ACF	Adoption Opportunities	20	2	10	18	90	10	0	0	10	100
	Assets for Independence Demonstration Program	83	5	6	78	94	68	2	3	66	97
	CSBG Rural Community Development Activities	1	0	0	1	100	1	0	0	1	100
	CSBG Training, Technical Assistance, and Capacity-Building Programs	94	9	10	85	90	20	2	10	18	90
	Community-Based Abstinence Education Program	216	83	38	133	62	48	17	35	31	65
	Compassion Capital Fund Communities Empowering Youth Program	393	84	21	309	79	100	15	15	85	85
	Compassion Capital Fund Demonstration Program	296	75	25	221	75	10	3	30	7	70
	Compassion Capital Fund Targeted Capacity Building	1,253	493	39	760	61	310	122	39	188	61
	Ethnic Community Self-Help Organizations	40	4	10	36	90	34	1	3	33	97
	Family Violence Prevention Program	173	26	15	147	85	20	1	5	19	95
	Head Start Discretionary	43	1	2	42	98	9	0	0	9	100
	Healthy Marriage Demonstration	473	140	30	333	70	125	32	26	93	74
	Infant Adoption-Awareness Training Program	8	1	13	7	88	6	1	17	5	83
	Job Opportunities for Low-Income Individuals	114	28	25	86	75	11	0	0	11	100
	Mentoring Children of Prisoners	159	38	24	121	76	77	13	17	64	83
	Programs for Victims of Trafficking	40	9	23	31	78	18	3	17	15	83
	Promoting Responsible Fatherhood	608	119	20	489	80	100	13	13	87	87
	Refugee Family Enrichment	25	10	40	15	60	12	6	50	6	50
	Runaway and Homeless Youth Basic Centers	202	34	17	168	83	96	14	15	82	85
	Runaway and Homeless Youth Street Outreach	104	27	26	77	74	51	11	22	40	78
	Services for Unanticipated Arrivals	32	6	19	26	81	32	7	22	25	78
	Special Improvements Projects	21	1	5	20	95	5	1	20	4	80
	Targeted Assistance to Refugee Service Providers	25	3	12	22	88	17	1	6	16	94
	Treatment for Torture Victims/Survivors Program	32	7	22	25	78	22	3	14	19	86

		Number and Percentage of Grant Applications					Number and Percentage of Grant Awards				
		Total	Submitted by Faith-Based Organizations		Submitted by Other Applicants		Total	Made to Faith-Based Organizations		Made to Other Applicants	
			No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage		No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage
SAMHSA	Unaccompanied Alien Children	32	10	31	22	69	23	6	26	17	74
	Urban and Rural Community Economic Development Program	149	21	14	128	86	41	2	5	39	95
	Wilson/Fish Alternative Program	15	3	20	12	80	1	1	100	0	0
	<b>Total/Overall Percentage</b>	<b>4,651</b>	<b>1,239</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>3,412</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>1,267</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>990</b>	<b>78</b>
	Assertive Adolescent and Family Treatment	264	10	4	254	96	15	0	0	15	100
	Drug-Free Communities Support Program	375	11	3	364	97	114	3	3	111	97
	Minority HIV/AIDS Mental Health Services	189	12	6	177	94	16	1	6	15	94
	Pregnant and Postpartum Women Expansion Program	60	2	3	58	97	8	0	0	8	100
	Recovery Community Services Program	147	15	10	132	90	7	1	14	6	86
	Targeted Capacity Expansion of Methamphetamine/Inhalant Prevention	178	5	3	173	97	10	0	0	10	100
Targeted Capacity Expansion-HIV	151	15	10	136	90	10	0	0	10	100	
Treatment for Homelessness	276	21	8	255	92	23	0	0	23	100	
<b>Total/Overall Percentage</b>	<b>1,640</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1,549</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>98</b>	
HRSA	HIV/AIDS Special Projects of National Significance	70	8	11	62	89	15	2	13	13	87
	Ryan White Title III: Capacity Grant-Building Program	231	13	6	218	94	21	3	14	18	86
	Ryan White Title IV: Women, Infants, Children & Youth	19	0	0	19	100	91	6	7	85	93
<b>Total/Overall Percentage</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>91</b>	
AoA	Senior Medicare Fraud Patrol Program	62	2	3	60	97	42	1	2	41	98
<b>Total/Overall Mean</b>	<b>6,673</b>	<b>1,353</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>5,320</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>1,639</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>1,345</b>	<b>82</b>	

Source: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. analysis of Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives FY 2006 database.  
HHS = U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; CSBG = Community Service Block Grant; No. = number.

TABLE II.1

FY 2006 APPLICATIONS AND AWARDS FOR SELECTED GRANT PROGRAMS, TOTAL AND FOR FAITH-BASED AND OTHER APPLICANTS,  
BY HHS OPERATING DIVISION

		Number and Percentage of Grant Applications					Number and Percentage of Grant Awards				
		Total	Submitted by Faith-Based Organizations		Submitted by Other Applicants		Total	Made to Faith-Based Organizations		Made to Other Applicants	
			No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage		No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage
ACF	Adoption Opportunities	20	2	10	18	90	10	0	0	10	100
	Assets for Independence Demonstration Program	83	5	6	78	94	68	2	3	66	97
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	CSBG Training, Technical Assistance, and Capacity-Building Programs	94	9	10	85	90	20	2	10	18	90
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	Compassion Capital Fund Demonstration Program	296	75	25	221	75	10	3	30	7	70
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	Head Start Discretionary	43	1	2	42	98	9	0	0	9	100
	Healthy Marriage Demonstration	473	140	30	333	70	125	32	26	93	74
	Infant Adoption-Awareness Training Program	8	1	13	7	88	6	1	17	5	83
	Job Opportunities for Low-Income Individuals	114	28	25	86	75	11	0	0	11	100
	Mentoring Children of Prisoners	159	38	24	121	76	77	13	17	64	83
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	Refugee Family Enrichment	25	10	40	15	60	12	6	50	6	50
	Runaway and Homeless Youth Basic Centers	202	34	17	168	83	96	14	15	82	85
	Runaway and Homeless Youth Street Outreach	104	27	26	77	74	51	11	22	40	78
	Services for Unanticipated Arrivals	32	6	19	26	81	32	7	22	25	78
	Special Improvements Projects	21	1	5	20	95	5	1	20	4	80
	Targeted Assistance to Refugee Service Providers	25	3	12	22	88	17	1	6	16	94
	Treatment for Torture Victims/Survivors Program	32	7	22	25	78	22	3	14	19	86

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			No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage		No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage
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	Urban and Rural Community Economic Development Program	149	21	14	128	86	41	2	5	39	95
	Wilson/Fish Alternative Program	15	3	20	12	80	1	1	100	0	0
	<b>Total/Overall Percentage</b>	<b>4,651</b>	<b>1,239</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>3,412</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>1,267</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>990</b>	<b>78</b>
SAMHSA	Assertive Adolescent and Family Treatment	264	10	4	254	96	15	0	0	15	100
	Drug-Free Communities Support Program	375	11	3	364	97	114	3	3	111	97
	Minority HIV/AIDS Mental Health Services	189	12	6	177	94	16	1	6	15	94
	Pregnant and Postpartum Women Expansion Program	60	2	3	58	97	8	0	0	8	100
	Recovery Community Services Program	147	15	10	132	90	7	1	14	6	86
	Targeted Capacity Expansion of Methamphetamine/Inhalant Prevention	178	5	3	173	97	10	0	0	10	100
	Targeted Capacity Expansion-HIV	151	15	10	136	90	10	0	0	10	100
	Treatment for Homelessness	276	21	8	255	92	23	0	0	23	100
	<b>Total/Overall Percentage</b>	<b>1,640</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1,549</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>98</b>
HRSA	HIV/AIDS Special Projects of National Significance	70	8	11	62	89	15	2	13	13	87
	Ryan White Title III: Capacity Grant-Building Program	231	13	6	218	94	21	3	14	18	86
	Ryan White Title IV: Women, Infants, Children & Youth	19	0	0	19	100	91	6	7	85	93
	<b>Total/Overall Percentage</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>91</b>
AoA	Senior Medicare Fraud Patrol Program	62	2	3	60	97	42	1	2	41	98
<b>Total/Overall Mean</b>		<b>6,673</b>	<b>1,353</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>5,320</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>1,639</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>1,345</b>	<b>82</b>

Source: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. analysis of Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives FY 2006 database.  
HHS = U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; CSBG = Community Service Block Grant; No. = number.

applications they submitted overall, with some variation due to chance.<sup>1</sup> Across the operating divisions and grant programs in the CFBCI database used for this study, 18 percent of grant awards were made to FBOs, compared to 20 percent of applications received from them (Table II.1). One operating division, HRSA, made a greater proportion of grant awards to FBOs (9 percent) than the proportion of applications received from them (7 percent). For other operating divisions, the proportion of awards to faith-based applicants was slightly less than the proportion of applications from these groups.

**The average value of grant awards made to faith-based applicants was somewhat less than awards to other types of applicants.**

Across the four operating divisions, faith-based grantees received \$54,000 less funding on average than secular grantees (Table II.2). Differences varied by operating division, however. Average grant awards to non-faith-based applicants exceeded those to FBOs for grant programs sponsored by ACF, HRSA, and AoA. In contrast, SAMHSA awarded approximately \$4,000 more, on average, to FBOs than to other applicants.<sup>2</sup>

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1 For individual grant programs, random variation in the quality of grant applications, the desire to have geographic representation among awardees, or other factors could still lead to disparate results for faith-based and non-faith-based applicants without indicating systematic barriers or bias.

2 The tests of statistical significance of differences between faith-based and other organizations in grant award rates or amounts were not conducted because the differences were calculated from the entire universe of applicants to the programs, not estimated from a sample. Therefore the difference is “real”—not caused by chance variation in a selected sample.

TABLE II.2

MEAN VALUE OF FY 2006 GRANT AWARDS TO FAITH-BASED AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS FOR  
SELECTED GRANT PROGRAMS, BY HHS OPERATING DIVISION

HHS Operating Division	Mean Value of Grant Awards	
	Faith-Based Organizations	Other Organizations
ACF	\$259,555	\$313,018
SAMHSA	\$235,000	\$231,173
HRSA	\$489,296	\$606,992
AoA	\$ 40,000	\$137,363
<b>Overall Average</b>	<b>\$266,987</b>	<b>\$320,969</b>

Source: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. analysis of Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives FY 2006 database.

For all the grant programs included in the CFBCI database, the mean grant amount ranged from \$10,593 to \$1.8 million, with an overall mean of \$321,505. The largest number of grant awards in the FY 2006 database were made by only a few number of grant programs—all but one sponsored by ACF—to which FBOs applied in large numbers. These included 310 grant awards for Compassion Capital Fund Targeted Capacity Building, followed by the Healthy Marriage Demonstration (125 awards), Drug Free Communities Support (114), and Promoting Responsible Fatherhood and Compassion Capital Fund Communities Empowering Youth Programs (100 each). Three of these five grant programs made awards that were smaller than the average of all 39 grant programs studied. Thus, differences in mean grant awards received by FBOs could have resulted, at least in part, from their having applied to grant programs that offered smaller awards.<sup>3</sup>

Additionally, if FBOs themselves are smaller (on average) than other types of applicants, they might propose grant programs on a smaller scale and thus request smaller grant amounts. This

<sup>3</sup> For the Compassion Capital Fund Targeted Capacity Building program, the mean award was \$48,762. The Healthy Marriage Demonstration grants were larger than the overall average award, at \$617,040. Grants for Drug Free Communities Support (a SAMHSA-sponsored program) averaged a below-average \$93,392. Promoting Responsible Fatherhood grantees received \$408,560 on average. All grant awards for the Compassion Capital Fund Communities Empowering Youth Programs were \$300,000.

question cannot be examined using these data, since information on the amount of funding requested by applicants was not included in the database.

### **C. CHANGES FROM 2005 TO 2006**

The number of grant programs, their purposes, and the total amount of funding available varies somewhat from year to year. Comparisons between the FY 2006 CFBCI database and the FY 2005 database show this variation. For example, two grant programs offered only in FY 2006, the Healthy Marriage Demonstration and Promoting Responsible Fatherhood, attracted a large number and proportion of applications from FBOs, and resulted in a large number of grant awards to them. The two databases differ somewhat in content and structure, so comparisons must be made with caution. For instance, no AoA grants appear in the FY 2005 database, while some grants from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are included. In addition, grant amounts are not provided in the FY 2005 database.

**Compared to FY 2006, a smaller proportion—though still a majority—of applications received in FY 2005 from FBOs were submitted to ACF.**

In FY 2005, 79 percent of applications from FBOs were submitted to ACF, compared to 92 percent in 2006. Twelve percent of FBO applications were submitted to HRSA, 7 percent to SAMHSA, and 1 percent to CDC. The five ACF grant programs to which FBOs most commonly applied in 2005 were Adoption Opportunities, Child Abuse and Neglect Discretionary Projects, Community-Based Abstinence Education, and the Compassion Capital Fund Demonstration Program and Targeted Capacity Building program.

**The share of all grant awards made that went to FBOs increased in FY 2006.**

In FY 2005, 9 percent of all grant awards made for the selected grant programs included in the CFBCI database were made to FBOs (Table II.3), increasing to 18 percent in FY 2006 (Table II.1).

This reflects increases in awards to faith-based groups by ACF, from 18 percent of all grant awards in FY 2005 (Table II.3) to 22 percent in FY 2006 (Table II.1). HRSA also gave a larger percentage of its total awards to FBOs (8 percent in 2005 growing to 9 percent in 2006). SAMHSA gave a smaller proportion of all grant awards to faith-based applicants, declining from 4 percent in 2005 to 2 percent in 2006.

TABLE II.3

SHARE OF ALL GRANT APPLICATIONS RECEIVED FROM, AND ALL GRANT AWARDS MADE TO, FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS, FOR SELECTED FY 2005 GRANT PROGRAMS, BY HHS OPERATING DIVISION

Operating Division	Total Number of Applications Received	Share of Applications Received that Came from Faith-Based Organizations (Percentage)	Share of Grant Awards Made that Went to Faith-Based Organizations (Percentage)
ACF	4,139	27	18
SAMHSA	1,731	6	4
HRSA	2,595	7	8
CDC	138	9	9
<b>Total or Overall Percentage</b>	<b>8,603</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>9</b>

Source: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. analysis of Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives FY 2005 database.

In FY 2006, the percentage of applications from FBOs that resulted in grant awards, 22 percent, was higher than in 2005, when it was 13 percent (Table II.4). It also was closer to the proportion for secular organizations receiving awards, which was 25 percent in 2006 and 26 percent in 2005 (Table II.4).

#### D. SUMMARY

Applications from FBOs represented 20 percent of all applications submitted to the selected grant programs examined by CFBCI in FY 2006. Some grant programs attracted a large number or proportion of applications from FBOs; others attracted few or none. ACF attracted 72 percent of all applications from all sources, and 90 percent of applications submitted by FBOs. Grant awards



made to FBOs were smaller, on average, than those made to other applicants, reflecting at least to some extent differences in the grant programs to which each group applied. Eighteen percent of all grant awards made went to FBOs.

TABLE II.4

PERCENTAGE OF GRANT APPLICATIONS THAT RESULTED IN GRANT AWARDS FOR SELECTED HHS GRANT PROGRAMS IN FY 2005 AND FY 2006

Operating Division	FY 2005		FY 2006	
	Percentage of Applications from Faith-Based Organizations that Resulted in Grant Awards	Percentage of Applications from Other Organizations That Resulted in Grant Awards	Percentage of Applications from Faith-Based Organizations That Resulted in Grant Awards	Percentage of Applications from Other Organizations That Resulted in Grant Awards
ACF	8	13	22	29
SAMHSA	33	4	5	13
HRSA	34	2	52	39
AoA	Not Included	Not Included	5	68
CDC	25	25	Not Included	Not Included
<b>Average Percent</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>25</b>

Source: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. analysis of Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives FY 2005 and FY 2006 databases.

In FY 2005, a smaller share of applications submitted by FBOs received awards than in FY 2006 (9 percent compared to 18 percent as shown in Table II.3 and Table II.4), similarly in FY 2005, a smaller percentage of all awards made went to FBOs than in FY 2006 (13 percent, compared to 22 percent as shown in Table II.4). These differences reflect to some extent differences in the mix of grant programs offered between the two years. For example, two grant programs offered only in FY 2006, the Healthy Marriage Demonstration and Promoting Responsible Fatherhood, attracted a large number and proportion of applications from FBOs, and resulted in a large number of grant awards to them.

As mentioned in Chapter I, these results are not representative of all HHS discretionary grant

programs. Furthermore, grants offered, award rates, and amounts awarded vary over time and across operating divisions.

### **III: CHARACTERISTICS OF FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS APPLYING FOR GRANTS IN FY 2006**

The first step in assessing the ability of FBOs to compete for discretionary grant funding and identifying barriers they face is to learn about the characteristics of those that have applied for grants. What types of organizations are they (i.e. congregations, independent nonprofits, coalitions)? Are they new or well-established organizations? How large are their budgets and staff? What resources do they have for identifying and applying for federal grants? How much experience do they have in seeking federal and other grant funds? Do they have funding sources other than federal grants? What types of services do they provide? A telephone survey of FBOs that applied for selected HHS grant programs in FY 2006 was used to determine these characteristics. Section A of this chapter provides information on the characteristics of organizations that participated in the survey. Section B describes their experiences applying for a grant. Section C summarizes the chapter.

#### **A. CHARACTERISTICS OF FAITH-BASED APPLICANTS**

To ensure that only FBOs were included in the survey, it was necessary to confirm whether organizations were, in fact, FBOs.<sup>1</sup> No official or unofficial criteria for such a designation has been established by HHS or the federal government in general. Therefore, an operational definition was developed for the survey. In addition, organizations were asked whether they considered themselves to be faith-based.

When first contacted, respondents were asked whether their organization met criteria developed for the survey. They were asked, (1) “Does your organization have ties to a church, denomination, faith

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<sup>1</sup> As explained in Chapter I, most faith-based grant applicants in the CFBCI database had identified themselves in their applications simply as nonprofit organizations. For the remainder, CFBCI staff used a variety of methods to decide whether to classify applicants as faith-based.

tradition, or interfaith group, or is it religiously affiliated?” (survey item B4; see Appendix A); and then (2) “Do you consider your organization to be a faith-based organization?” (item B5). If a respondent answered “yes” to either question, the organization was considered eligible for the survey, and the interview proceeded. If the respondent answered “no” to both questions, then survey interviewers asked an additional question (B6): “Is your organization a secular organization, in the sense that it has no ties, direct or indirect, with religious groups or ideas?” In most cases, the answer to this item was “yes,” and the interview was terminated. However, if the answer to item B6 was “no” or if the respondent did not know or declined to answer, a more senior interviewer contacted the organization in a follow-up call to clarify the classification of the organization, and administer the survey if it was faith-based.

**Most FBOs that applied in FY 2006 were independent nonprofits whose primary mission was to provide social services.**

Most survey respondents (64 percent) described their organizations as independent nonprofits (Table III.1), while 20 percent said the organization was a local affiliate of a national, state, or regional network.<sup>2</sup> Seven percent were congregations, and 6 percent said they were faith-based coalitions or councils.

Nearly all respondents (90 percent) cited providing social services as a primary mission of their organization. More than half (57 percent) listed education as a primary mission, and 20 percent listed health care. Thirty percent of respondents said that religious services were a

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<sup>2</sup> Catholic Charities, Lutheran Social Services, or the Salvation Army were some of the networks to which respondents who chose this category belonged.

TABLE III.1  
TYPE OF FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATION

Organization Type	Percentage	Number
Local affiliate of national, state, or regional network	20	50
Independent nonprofit organization	65	160
A congregation	7	17
A faith-based coalition or council	6	14
A hybrid organization	1	3
Other	2	4

Source: Faith-Based Grants Study survey of faith-based grant applicants, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., 2007.

Note: N = 249, missing = 1.

primary mission of their organization. Approximately two-thirds of those surveyed—68 percent—said their organization had more than one primary mission.

**FBO varied in size, tended to be long-established groups, and were located primarily in cities.**

Organization size was measured in the survey by number of full-time staff positions, and total income in the 12 months prior to the survey. Thirty-seven percent of FBOs had between 1 and 5 full-time staff positions. Six percent had no paid staff. Some were larger, however; 19 percent had more than 50 full-time staff positions.

Eighteen percent of the organizations surveyed reported income of less than \$100,000 over the prior 12 months. Twenty-six percent had income greater than \$100,000 but less than \$500,000, and 16 percent at least \$500,000 but less than \$1 million. Forty percent had an income of \$1,000,000 or more.

Most of the organizations were well established, with half having been founded prior to 1990. Ten percent were founded in 1900 or earlier. A substantial group of respondents (30 percent) were

newer, having been founded in 2000 or later. On average, the organizations in the survey had been in existence for 35 years.

Applicants were overwhelmingly urban. More than 80 percent of the FBOs surveyed were located in or near a city with a population of at least 50,000 residents. The remainder were located in a town or small city (15 percent) or a rural area (5 percent). Of those in or near cities, more than half were located in a downtown or central area of the city, and another 30 percent were located in an older residential area. Only 5 percent were located in newer suburbs surrounding the city.

**Applicants had basic organizational capacities.**

Regardless of their size, nearly all faith-based applicants had access to email. More than 90 percent had computers, more than 90 percent had cell phones, and more than 90 percent used electronic financial records. Forty-three percent had all technical capacities asked about in the survey. FBOs also followed standard organizational practices—more than 90 percent responded positively to several questions such as whether they had met with a board of directors in the past three years, held regular staff meetings, interacted with other social service organizations, identified program outcomes, and evaluated at least one of their programs. Sixty-two percent followed all practices asked about.

**FBOs reported that they did not rely solely on federal grants for their funds.**

Respondents cited multiple sources of funding for their organizations. More than 90 percent reported receiving individual or corporate donations, and nearly 90 percent reported receiving in-kind donations (Table III.2). More than 75 percent received financial support from congregations, denominations, or other FBOs. More than 70 percent reported receiving federal or foundation grants, and nearly 70 percent said they received state or local government funds.

TABLE III.2  
FUNDING SOURCES IN THE MOST RECENT FISCAL YEAR

Funding Source	Percentage	Number
Individual or corporate donations, including fund-raising events	91	227
IN-KIND DONATIONS OR SERVICES	90	223
FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM CONGREGATIONS, DENOMINATIONS, OR OTHER FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS	77	192
Federal grants	74	185
Foundation grants	72	179
State or local grants or funds	68	169
Fees charged for services	49	121
Endowment or investments	38	91
Medicare/Medicaid payments	17	41
Earned income	4	9
United Way	2	4
Other	6	16

Source: Faith-Based Grants Study survey of faith-based grant applicants, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., 2007.

Note: N = 249, missing = 0–6 (varied by response).

Nearly half receive income from fees charged for services (49 percent), and 38 percent had endowments or investments that provided income.

**FBOs provide a wide array of services to multiple target populations.**

Faith-based applicants were not single agenda organizations. The survey asked general questions about services the grant applicants provided, regardless of funding source. Almost 85 percent of respondents reported their organization provided life skills (Table III.3).<sup>3</sup> Other

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<sup>3</sup> Although the survey question did not elaborate on what “life skills” were, this term covers psycho-social and personal skills enabling people to cope with family obligations, self-care, employment, and other activities of daily living.

services provided by large proportions of applicants included counseling or hotline services (74 percent), clothing (67 percent), marriage or relationship education or support (66 percent), and employment services (59 percent). More than half of respondents (58 percent) provided 9 or more of 18 services asked about in the survey.<sup>4</sup>

TABLE III.3

SERVICES PROVIDED IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS BY FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS THAT APPLIED FOR FEDERAL GRANTS IN FY 2006

Service	Percentage	Number
Life skills	85	210
Counseling service or “hot line”	74	184
Clothing	67	166
Marriage or relationship education or support	66	163
Employment counseling, placement, or training	59	148
Health programs/clinics/health education	57	140
Tutoring or literacy programs	56	139
Community development	55	136
Emergency or affordable housing	53	131
Capacity-building assistance	51	127
Cash assistance to families or individuals	51	127
Food pantry or soup kitchen	47	117
Day care, preschool, before-/after-school programs	46	115
Substance abuse programs	45	111
Abstinence or family planning programs	42	103
Elementary or secondary education	21	51
Foster care and/or adoption services	19	46

Source: Faith-Based Grants Study survey of faith-based grant applicants, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., 2007.  
 Note: N = 249, missing = 0.

FBOs in the survey targeted their services to many different groups. The most common target population was low-income families (served by 88 percent of respondents), followed by children or

<sup>4</sup> One service included in the survey, “hospital or nursing home facilities,” is not reported in Table III.3 because no respondents provided these services.



youth (84 percent), neighborhood or community residents (74 percent), married or unmarried couples (66 percent), single adults (63 percent), and members of the faith community (61 percent). Sixty percent of FBOs served 500 or fewer people per month, with almost half of this group (nearly 30 percent of all survey respondents) serving from 1 to 99 people per month. Nearly a quarter of respondents served between 1,000 and 10,000 people per month, and 4 percent served 10,000 people or more.

## **B. EXPERIENCES SEEKING FEDERAL GRANTS**

Before asking about the types of challenges, if any, survey participants had faced in applying for a federal grant in FY 2006, the survey explored when the FBO had first begun applying for federal and other grants, and how many grant applications it had filed. It asked how the organization identified grant opportunities and prepared applications. It also collected information about the FY 2006 grant application. These questions were designed to identify factors that might affect the organization's capacity to compete for federal grants, or help identify or explain potential barriers.

### **1. Prior Grant Application Experience**

**Most organizations surveyed were new to the federal grant application process.**

About 70 percent of respondents reported applying for a federal grant for the first time in the year 2000 or after. Nearly 30 percent applied for the first time in 2006—the year examined in this study. More than 60 percent reported that they submitted their first application for any government funds—including federal, state, or local—in 2000 or later.

Over half of the organizations surveyed had filed just 1, 2, or 3 applications for federal grants in the past three years (Table III.4). Just 15 percent had submitted more than 10 applications to the federal government; 30 percent had submitted more than 10 applications for any government funds, including federal, state, or local.

TABLE III.4

NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT FUNDS SUBMITTED IN THE PAST THREE YEARS BY FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS THAT APPLIED FOR FEDERAL GRANTS IN FY 2006

Number of Applications	Any Government Funds		Federal Funds Only	
	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number
1 – 3	32	80	53	130
4 – 6	25	62	21	52
7 – 10	13	32	12	29
More than 10	30	73	15	36

Source: Faith-Based Grants Study survey of faith-based grant applicants, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., 2007.

Note: N = 249, missing = 2.

**Nearly three-quarters of FBOs reported having someone who regularly searched for federal grant opportunities; nearly the same number said they had an experienced grant writer to prepare grant applications.**

Without a systematic way to identify grant opportunities and experienced help to prepare applications, an organization may be limited in their ability to compete effectively for grant funds. Therefore, the survey asked whether a member of the organization had responsibility for these tasks.

About 74 percent of survey respondents reported having someone who regularly searched for federal grant opportunities. For nearly 60 percent of this group, the task was performed by a full-time staff member. Nineteen percent relied on a part-time staff member, 11 percent used a consultant, and 9 percent had the work done by a volunteer.

A similar percentage (73 percent) reported having an experienced grant writer to prepare applications. Close to 45 percent of organizations with a grant writer said that this person was a full-time staff member. About a third said the person was a consultant, 13 percent said a part-time staff member, and 8 percent said the person was a volunteer.

**More than 80 percent of FBO applicants used Grants.gov as a source of information about federal grant opportunities.**

Most respondents reported relying on several sources of information to learn about federal grant opportunities (Table III.5). Grants.gov was the most commonly reported source (85 percent), followed by a nongovernment source (74 percent), the Compassion Capital Fund (72 percent), and the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (58 percent).

TABLE III.5

SOURCES OF INFORMATION USED TO FIND FEDERAL GRANT OPPORTUNITIES BY FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS THAT APPLIED FOR FEDERAL GRANTS IN FY 2006

Source	Percentage	Number
Grant announcements on Grants.gov	85	210
Information from a nongovernment source	74	182
DHHS' Compassion Capital Fund	72	176
The White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives	58	143
Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA)	31	73
Information from ecumenical or interfaith groups	30	72
Information from a denomination	22	55
Web searcher and email lists	6	16
Networking or word of mouth	6	14
State or local government	6	14
Other	15	36

Source: Faith-Based Grants Study survey of faith-based grant applicants, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., 2007.

Note: N = 249, missing = 0–10 (varied by response).

DHHS = Department of Health and Human Services.

## **2. The FY 2006 Grant Application and Awards**

**A large proportion of organizations surveyed had applied for Compassion Capital Fund grants.**

Forty-one percent of the FBOs surveyed applied for a FY 2006 grant from the Targeted Capacity Building grant program. Four percent had applied for the Compassion Capital Fund

Empowering Youth Program, and 3 percent for the Compassion Capital Fund Demonstration Program. Another 9 percent applied for the Healthy Marriage Demonstration, while eight percent applied for a Promoting Responsible Fatherhood grant, and six percent applied for the Community-Based Abstinence Education Program. These grants were offered by ACF. In all, 93 percent of the sample applied to ACF, with 4 percent applying to SAMHSA, and 2 percent to HRSA. Two organizations in the sample had applied to CDC.<sup>5</sup>

Forty-five percent of applicants requested less than \$100,000 in their grant applications (Table III.6). These are relatively small amounts, considering that the average grant award in FY 2006 was over \$300,000, as described in Chapter II. However it is not surprising for this sample of applicants, because 41 percent of them applied for a Compassion Capital Fund Targeted Capacity Building grant, which was limited to a maximum of \$50,000 (actual awards ranged from \$10,593 to just under \$50,000). There were also some large requests; 7 percent requested grants of \$1 million or more. The size of the grant requested did not vary with organization size as measured by income or number of full-time staff, except that FBOs that reported having no staff did request smaller grant amounts.

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<sup>5</sup> In the CFBCI data, several FBOs that did not appear in the applicant file did have records in the awards file, including organizations that received grants from CDC. For the analysis discussed in Chapter II, MPR included only organizations and grant programs that appeared in both the applicant and award files, but that limitation was not imposed when using the database to develop the sampling frame for the survey. In addition to having applicants and awardees from ACF, AoA, HRSA, and SAMHSA, therefore, the sampling frame also included 10 organizations (out of 1,417) that applied to or received grants from CDC. Two were randomly selected for the survey sample. One had received a grant from the HIV/STD/TB Prevention program and the other for the Global AIDS program.

TABLE III.6

AMOUNT OF FUNDS REQUESTED IN APPLICATION AND AWARDED TO SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS  
AMONG FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS APPLYING FOR HHS GRANTS IN FY 2006

Amount	Amount of Funds Requested		Amount of Funds Awarded	
	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number
Less than \$100,000	45	104	49	67
\$100,000 – \$499,999	34	77	30	41
\$500,000 – \$999,999	14	32	13	18
\$1,000,000 – \$4,999,999	6	14	7	9
\$5,000,000 or more	1	3	1	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>230</b>		<b>136</b>

Source: Faith-Based Grants Study survey of faith-based grant applicants, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., 2007.

Note: N = 138–249, missing = 2–19 (varied by response).

About 55 percent of FBOs in the sample received grant awards.<sup>6</sup> The distribution of actual awards was in a range similar to amounts requested: about 49 percent received less than \$100,000; about 80 percent received \$500,000 or less. Eight percent received \$1 million or more (Table III.6).

Organizations in the survey whose applications were selected for funding were asked whether they had received the amount requested in their application; 76 percent said they had. Seven percent said they received more funding than requested, and 17 percent said they received less than requested.

<sup>6</sup> A much smaller percentage of applicants in FY 2006, including faith-based and other organizations, received awards, as described in Chapter II. However, to ensure that we obtained the perspectives of grant award recipients and could compare them with those that did not obtain grants, we oversampled applicants that received grants.

### **C. SUMMARY**

Overall, the survey shows that FBOs that applied for selected federal grant programs in FY 2006 were relatively small but well-established organizations that became active in seeking federal grants only recently. However, large organizations with more experience seeking grants constituted a substantial subgroup.

FBOs that apply for grants have been in existence for many years, have basic technological capabilities, use standard organizational practices, and have staff members, consultants, or volunteers assigned to seek grant opportunities and help prepare applications.

Only a small proportion of applicants were congregations (7 percent). The vast majority (84 percent) were nonprofit organizations, either independent or affiliated with a larger network.

Survey data (and the administrative data discussed in Chapter II) show that the Compassion Capital Fund grant programs drew applications from large numbers of faith-based applicants in FY 2006. Those grant programs were specifically designed to strengthen the work of faith-based and community organizations, or other groups that were inexperienced in seeking federal funds (or organizations that worked with these groups) as well as to build the future capacity of these groups to operate programs, and hence to compete for grant funding.

Fifty-five percent of survey respondents received grant awards. About half received less than \$100,000, and 8 percent received \$1 million or more. Chapter IV describes challenges FBOs encountered in applying for grants, and compares successful and unsuccessful grant applicants to see what kinds of organizational characteristics are associated with grant application outcomes.

## **IV. ACCESSING FEDERAL GRANTS**

Internal studies at HHS and other federal departments have assessed potential barriers in the grant-making process that may hinder faith-based and community organizations from accessing federal grant funds, as a result efforts have been made to reduce such barriers. A main goal of the present study was to complement these efforts by soliciting information from faith-based grant applicants themselves about the challenges and barriers they experienced or perceived.

This chapter identifies potential barriers affecting faith-based applicants, using data from the telephone survey. Section A presents data collected from the survey on the challenges participants faced in preparing and submitting their FY 2006 grant application, and barriers they anticipated facing if they submitted applications in the future. Section B discusses statistical comparisons between FBOs that received the grant for which they had applied and those that did not. Comparisons were also made of organizational factors hypothesized to be a barrier, such as having the organizational capacity to prepare federal grant applications. Section C summarizes the chapter.

### **A. CHALLENGES OF APPLYING FOR FEDERAL GRANTS**

The survey asked respondents whether their organization had faced any of a series of challenges in preparing and submitting their FY 2006 federal grant application—including some challenges that might pertain uniquely to faith-based groups. It asked respondents why they thought their applications had been either selected or not selected for funding, and, of all the reasons they identified, which was the single most important reason. Respondents were also asked about their future plans for federal grant applications.

**Sustaining programs once grants end appears to be an important challenge for FBOs.**

Grant applicants reported a range of challenges in preparing their 2006 applications (Table IV.1). The most commonly cited challenge was difficulty meeting sustainability requirements (40 percent). This was also most frequently cited as being the biggest challenge applicants faced (20 percent). Differences in income, number of full-time staff positions, size of

TABLE IV.1

CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS IN PREPARING THEIR FY 2006 FEDERAL GRANT APPLICATIONS

Challenge	Cited as a Challenge		Cited as the Biggest Challenge	
	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number
Difficulty meeting sustainability requirements	40	96	20	43
Lack of knowledgeable staff to prepare application	39	96	16	35
Difficulty completing federal forms and certifications	33	82	7	14
Difficulty preparing the budget	30	75	5	10
Difficulty using the Grants.gov website	29	71	9	18
Difficulty reaching federal contact person listed on the application to ask questions	28	69	8	17
Difficulty meeting requirements for matching funds	23	56	2	5
Difficulty obtaining information about a specific grant and how to apply for funds	23	56	4	9
Difficulty meeting the application deadline	21	51	2	5
Difficulty identifying staff with the required credentials	17	42	3	6
Difficulty meeting financial management requirements	16	40	1	3
Unsure about restrictions on religious activities as part of the grant program	13	32	1	3
Limited access to technology, such as a computer or the internet	7	17	1	2
Confusing wording or terminology in the grant instructions	7	17	4	11
Application too long given the amount of time to apply	6	15	3	8

Source: Faith-Based Grants Study survey of faith-based grant applicants, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., 2007.

Note: N = 249, missing = 0,1 (varied by item).



grant requested, and several other variables were explored to see whether those who cited sustainability as a barrier differed from the full sample in ways that might help explain this response, but results were inconclusive. FBOs that said sustainability was one of the barriers they faced had lower incomes than the survey sample overall, indicating that a lack of resources could lead to sustainability concerns. However those that had identified sustainability as their biggest barrier did not have lower incomes than other respondents.

Not all grant programs require applicants to submit plans for sustaining program services after the federal grant ends as part of their application. For example, Compassion Capital grant programs typically do not have sustainability requirements. However, among FBOs that applied to one of the three Compassion Capital grant programs represented in the survey, 31 percent cited difficulty meeting sustainability requirements as a challenge they had encountered.

A second important challenge, cited by 39 percent of applicants, was a lack of knowledgeable staff to prepare their application. This was also cited as the biggest challenge by 16 percent of applicants. Organizations that cited this as one challenge had a smaller number of full-time staff positions than other FBOs in the survey. In addition, these organizations were newer on average than the overall sample, so their staff may have been less experienced.

The process of developing the application was also noted as a challenge. One third of applicants mentioned difficulty completing forms and certifications (33 percent), and nearly as many (30 percent) cited difficulty preparing the budget.

In addition to these “internal” challenges, some applicants reported difficulties working with the federal grant system. Difficulty using Grants.gov and difficulty reaching a federal contact person were cited by 9 and 8 percent of respondents, respectively as the biggest barrier applicants faced.

**FBOs in the survey expected to encounter difficulties if they applied for a federal grant again in the future—but 88 percent of respondents still expected to apply again.**

FBOs identified numerous barriers they expected to face when applying for federal grants in the future (Table IV.2). The barrier most frequently cited as the biggest barrier was lack of staff to search for funding opportunities (17 percent of respondents). Those that cited this barrier had a smaller number of full-time staff positions than the overall sample. In addition, just 52 percent

TABLE IV.2  
BARRIERS TO APPLYING FOR FEDERAL GRANTS IN THE FUTURE

Barrier	Cited as a Barrier		Cited as the Biggest Barrier	
	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number
Time line between learning about grant opportunity and application deadline too limited	68	167	16	37
Rating procedures favor larger, more well-known or experienced organizations	64	156	16	39
Lack of staff to track or search for grant opportunities on a regular basis	57	142	17	40
Lack of staff to prepare grant applications	57	142	14	34
Difficulty meeting requirements for matching funds	44	108	7	17
Lack of full-time staff	39	97	8	18
Difficulty developing sustainability plans	36	89	6	14
Bias against faith-based organizations	27	65	2	5
Requirements for evaluation too stringent	23	56	1	3
Confusion about eligibility of faith-based organizations	19	47	1	2
Difficulty identifying staff with required credentials	15	37	<1	1
Difficulty meeting financial management and administrative reporting requirements	14	35	1	3
Organization not comfortable with restrictions on religious activities	12	30	1	2
Lack of experience delivering services	8	19	1	2
Difficulty implementing grant activities	7	17	<1	1
Limited computer availability or internet access	4	9	0	0

Source: Faith-Based Grants Study survey of faith-based grant applicants, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., 2007.

Note: N = 249, missing = 0,3 (varied by item).

of this group had someone to search for grant opportunities, compared to 74 percent of the overall survey sample. For those that had such a person, he or she was less likely to be a full-time employee (43 percent, compared to 60 percent for the whole sample); and twice as likely to be a volunteer (19 percent, compared to 9 percent for the sample as a whole).

Sixteen percent of respondents felt rating procedures that favored larger, more well-known, or more experienced organizations would pose the biggest barrier. Those who cited this barrier were less likely than the overall sample to be affiliated with a national or other network—13 percent compared to 20 percent for the full sample—so they may have felt that such large networks could have an advantage over FBOs with less familiar names. There were no statistically significant differences in grant experience, income, or number of full-time staff positions between network-affiliated FBOs and those that were independent nonprofits. Another commonly cited barrier (also at 16 percent) was limited time remaining for preparing applications once grant announcements came out.

Another most frequently cited barrier was the lack of staff to prepare grant applications (14 percent). Those that cited this barrier did not have smaller staffs than the overall survey sample, and were only a little less likely to have someone responsible for grant applications (67 percent versus 73 percent), and, if they had such a person, he or she would be a full-time staff member (39 percent versus 45 percent for the full sample). However, these respondents were more likely to use consultants and less likely to use volunteers than the sample as a whole, so they may simply have been unable to rely on staff, and more likely to employ outside grant writers as a result. Despite anticipated barriers, a large majority (88 percent) of those surveyed said they were likely to apply for a federal grant again the following year.

**Some respondents cited issues relating to FBOs as barriers to accessing grants.**

The survey asked about issues of possible concern to faith-based applicants, such as confusion about the eligibility of FBOs for grants, concerns about the effects of grant funding on FBO religious activities, and potential bias against faith-based groups. When asked about challenges encountered in preparing their 2006 application, 13 percent of respondents said they had been unsure about restrictions on religious activities under the grant, though only 1 percent cited this as the main challenge they faced (Table IV.1). Bias against FBOs and confusion about their eligibility for grants were perceived by 27 and 19 percent of respondents, respectively, as barriers to applying for federal grants in the future (Table IV.2). However, only 2 percent or less of respondents said these were the main challenges for future applications. Of those respondents who said their organization would probably not apply next year (less than 12 percent), a quarter or less cited perceived bias against FBOs or difficulty separating their religious from program activities as reasons. None gave either factor as the main reason for not applying again.

**B. COMPARING SUCCESSFUL AND UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS**

As another way of identifying potential barriers to accessing grants in addition to asking survey respondents directly about their perspectives, the survey was designed to enable a statistical comparison between FBOs that received the FY 2006 grant for which they applied, and those that did not. Information about the organization's structure, history, and grant experience, described in Chapter III, was collected for making the comparisons, and successful applicants were oversampled in order to provide the statistical power to identify statistically significant differences of the expected magnitudes in these characteristics.

Comparisons between successful and unsuccessful applicants were made across a variety of dimensions hypothesized to be related to whether an applicant could develop a strong application. These included grant application experience, organization size, staffing structure, technical capacity,

organizational practices, and FBO organization type. The analysis also tested whether faith-based organizations located in urban areas were more likely to obtain grant awards. Table IV.3 provides the results of these comparisons and is the focus of the discussion in the remainder of this section

**Successful applicants surveyed were older, more experienced with grant applications, and larger in income and full time staff than unsuccessful applicants surveyed.**

Older organizations may have more experienced staff or longer experience in providing services for which grant funds are sought. Over three-quarters of successful applicants surveyed were founded before 2000 and this difference was statistically significant in comparing unsuccessful and successful applicants surveyed (Table IV.3).

In addition to being older, successful applicants surveyed had begun seeking government funding earlier than unsuccessful applicants. Forty-two percent of successful applicants first sought funds from any level of government before 2000, compared 38 percent of unsuccessful applicants. Thirty-one percent first sought a grant from the federal government before 2000, compared to 27 percent of unsuccessful applicants. Successful applicants also submitted a larger number of applications for federal funds over the past three years than unsuccessful applicants—though when applications to all levels of government, including state and local agencies, are considered, there were no significant differences.

Though previous experience submitting federal grants is important, first-time applicants also succeeded. Applicants who said they first applied for a federal grant in 2006—the year covered by the study—were no less likely to receive a grant than other applicants.

TABLE IV.3

## DIFFERENCES BETWEEN UNSUCCESSFUL AND SUCCESSFUL FAITH-BASED APPLICANTS

Definition	Unsuccessful Applicants		Successful Applicants		Statistical Significance of Difference	All Applicants	
	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number		Percentage	Number
Organization was founded before 2000	65	72	77	105	***	71	177
Organization first sought federal, state, or other government funding before 2000	38	38	42	49	*	40	87
Organization first applied for a grant directly from the federal government before 2000	27	29	31	40	**	29	69
Organization first applied for a grant directly from the federal government before 2006	74	78	70	90		72	168
Number of applications organization submitted to federal, state, or other government for funding of social services in the past three years:							
1-3	35	39	30	41		32	80
4-6	22	25	27	37		25	62
7-10	15	17	12	16		13	33
More than 10	28	31	31	42		29	73
Number of applications submitted to the federal government for funding of social services in the past three years:					*		
1-3	59	66	47	64		52	130
4-6	20	22	23	31		21	53
7-10	11	12	13	17		12	29
More than 10	11	12	18	24		15	36

Definition	Unsuccessful Applicants		Successful Applicants		Statistical Significance of Difference	All Applicants	
	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number		Percentage	Number
Organization had income of \$500,000 or more last year	46	52	60	83	***	54	135
Number of paid full-time positions whether currently filled or not:					***		
0	10	11	3	4		6	15
1-5	42	46	33	46		37	92
6-10	10	11	9	12		9	23
11-20	6	7	19	26		13	33
21-50	15	17	14	20		15	37
51 or more	16	18	22	30		19	48
Someone regularly searches for federal grant opportunities	69	77	78	108		74	185
Organization has full-time staff to search for grants	51	39	65	70	***	59	109
Organization employs or works with a grant writer or someone with experience writing grant proposals	64	72	80	110	***	73	182
Organization has full-time staff to write grants	31	22	52	57	***	44	79
Organization is in or near a city with a population of 50,000 or more	77	86	83	114		80	200
The type of challenge cited as the biggest in preparing and submitting federal grant applications:					*		
Organizational limits	29	29	10	11		19	40
Requirements for matching funds or sustaining program after grant ends	18	18	26	30		22	48
Application process or content	16	16	17	19		16	35
Working with the government	18	18	24	27		21	45
Other	19	19	24	27		21	46

Definition	Unsuccessful Applicants		Successful Applicants		Statistical Significance of Difference	All Applicants	
	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number		Percentage	Number
Type of faith-based organization					***		
Local affiliate of a national, state, or regional network	17	19	23	31		21	50
Independent nonprofit organization	64	70	69	91		67	161
Congregation, such as a church, synagogue, or mosque	10	11	5	6		7	17
Faith-based coalition or council	9	10	3	4		6	14

Source: Faith-based Grants Study survey of faith-based applicants, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., 2007.

\*Significantly different from zero at the .10 level test.

\*\*Significantly different from zero at the .05 level test.

\*\*\*Significantly different from zero at the .01 level test.



Successful applicants surveyed reported having more income (total funding from all sources) and more full-time staff positions than those that were unsuccessful. Sixty percent of successful applicants reported more than \$500,000 in income the twelve months before the survey, compared to 46 percent of unsuccessful applicants. Successful applicants surveyed also had more full-time staff members. For instance, over half of unsuccessful applicants surveyed had five or fewer full-time staff positions (42 percent had 1–5 positions and 10 percent had no paid staff), compared to 34 percent of successful applicants. It is not clear whether having more financial and staff resources are also a result of submitting successful grant applications.

In addition, among respondents more successful applicant organizations had members dedicated to applying for federal grant opportunities than unsuccessful applicants. Successful faith-based organizations were more likely than unsuccessful ones to report employing or working with a grant writer or someone with experience writing grant proposals. Those that had full-time paid staff in these positions had a greater advantage than those that relied on part-time staff, volunteers, or consultants. Those reporting having a full-time staff member who searched for federal grant opportunities also were more likely to be successful. Again, these arrangements could be a result of having a successful grant application track record (thus being able to afford retaining these staff), as well as being a possible contributor to success.

**Successful and unsuccessful applicants surveyed did not differ in their urban-rural locations, technical capacities, or organizational practices.**

Studies of rural service providers show that on average they are smaller, have less specialized staff, and have less access to technology than those in urban areas—all factors that might affect their ability to access federal grants. However, rural faith-based applicants were no less likely than their

urban counterparts to receive grants.<sup>1</sup>

Unsuccessful and successful FBO applicants surveyed emphasized different types of challenges in applying for their FY 2006 grants. Unsuccessful applicants were more likely than successful ones to cite organizational limits as the biggest type of challenge in preparing and submitting their grant applications. Compared to 10 percent of successful applicants, 29 percent of unsuccessful applicants cited organizational limits such as a lack of knowledgeable staff to prepare the application or limited access to technology. In contrast, successful applicants were more likely than unsuccessful ones to cite financial types of limitations such as meeting requirements for matching funds or sustaining programs after grant funding ended (26 percent cited these types of challenges, compared to 18 percent of unsuccessful applicants). This was so even though successful applicants had higher income, on average, than unsuccessful ones.

#### **Success rates differed among FBO organization types.**

Comparing successful to unsuccessful applicants, there were differences in FBO organization type. Examining more closely, among these different types there were no statistically significant differences in organizational resources, capacities, and processes, or in the sorts of challenges they faced in applying for their federal grants. However, FBOs identifying themselves as local affiliates of a national, state, or regional network had been applying for government funds, including federal, state, and local sources, more frequently and for a longer period of time than other types of FBOs. They were more likely than other types of FBOs to have full time help searching for federal grant opportunities and writing grant proposals.

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<sup>1</sup> Further comparisons between rural and urban survey respondents found no systematic differences between their ages, number of full-time staff positions, their use of grant writers, federal grant or government funding application experience, or other indicators of organizational capacity.

## C. SUMMARY

All survey respondents cited numerous challenges in applying for and obtaining grants. Though some felt that factors relating to being faith-based had affected their grant outcomes, less than two percent (5 respondents or less) cited these as major challenges or barriers. These included difficulty meeting sustainability requirements, lack of knowledgeable staff to prepare grants, difficulty using the Grants.gov website, and difficulty reaching federal contacts to ask questions. Despite such challenges, most applicants surveyed expected to apply again in the future.

A comparison of faith-based organizations that received grant awards with those that did not shows that some organizational characteristics were associated with a greater chance of receiving grant awards. Older organizations were more likely to receive a grant. Bigger organizations—those with higher income and larger staffs—also were more likely to receive the grant for which they applied. Faith-based groups that have been applying for funds longer and have applied more often—especially to federal programs—were also more likely to receive grants.

## **V. STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL GRANT APPLICATIONS**

Along with identifying challenges and potential barriers FBOs face in accessing federal grant funds, this study had the goal of identifying strategies for grant application success. The study approached this issue by asking federal grant program managers and grant reviewers who participated in focus groups to identify the characteristics of strong, competitive applications. The survey of FY 2006 faith-based applicants included questions for successful applicants about factors to which they attributed their success in obtaining the grant, and for unsuccessful applicants about reasons to which they attributed their failure to receive an award. In follow-up, in-depth interviews, both successful and unsuccessful survey respondents were asked what strategies, based on their experience, they would suggest to enhance the future chances of success for faith-based applicants to federal grants.

This chapter begins with the views of grant program managers and reviewers on the characteristics of successful grant applications (Section A). Section B provides survey data on possible reasons for grant application outcomes. Suggestions for strengthening grant applications provided by survey participants in follow-up interviews are presented in Section C. Section D briefly identifies ways all study participants thought federal grant makers could reduce obstacles faith-based and other organizations—especially small or inexperienced ones—encounter in seeking discretionary grant funds. Section E summarizes the chapter and provides final comments on the study.

### **A. CHARACTERISTICS OF STRONG, COMPETITIVE APPLICATIONS: THE PERSPECTIVE OF GRANT PROGRAM MANAGERS AND REVIEWERS**

Grant program managers said that grant outcomes are determined by the size of the grant pool (and hence the number of awards that can be made), the number of applications submitted, and the

strength of those applications. They pointed out that the only factor that grant applicants can directly influence is the strength of their own applications. Program managers and grant reviewers described three factors that characterized highly competitive grant applications they had read or reviewed: responsiveness to the grant announcement, evidence of prior experience, and realistic budgets with adequate justification.

**Successful grant applications are responsive to grant announcements.**

Grant announcements are designed to define application requirements. They list the topics to be discussed, specify information applicants must submit, and identify the criteria that will be used for rating and scoring applications. Elements of the application are assigned a point value based on their relative importance. When grant reviewers score applications, they deduct points for elements that do not meet the specifications enumerated in the application.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, focus group participants said that being responsive to the announcement was a fundamental and primary requirement for success.

Answering all questions—or at least acknowledging them—was suggested as a critical element of responsiveness. For example, program managers said that if the Request for Assistance (RFA) asked applicants to justify the need for services using available data, but no data could be found, good applications addressed that issue rather than leaving it blank. Applications showed that the organization had looked for data (specifying where), and explained why it was not available. Some applications suggested how the proposed program would help fill the gap in data, such as by collecting it through their program evaluation. One grant reviewer pointed out that something as basic as leaving out an organization chart, if it was requested, sometimes cost applicants a point that

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<sup>1</sup> Before applications are reviewed, federal staff screen them to make sure that all required documents and information have been provided and that the applicant and proposed program meet eligibility requirements. Grant reviewers then assess the quality of the applications that remain. Applications rejected in this initial screening would not have appeared in the CFBCI database, and thus are not considered in this report, because they would not have been considered for awards.

might have been the difference between being rejected or recommended to receive a grant.

Providing information in a way that helped grant reviewers easily find it was cited by grant reviewers as another element of responsiveness. One approach grant reviewers had observed in successful applications was using the organization of the grant announcement as an outline for the proposal. Some applicants even used the headings in the grant announcement as headings within their applications. Grant reviewers said that organizing information in the same sequence as it was requested in the announcement had made it easier for them to follow the application's logic and find the information they needed.

According to grant reviewers, applications that had scored well were concrete and thorough. Applicants carefully justified the need for services, and explained program objectives clearly, as requested in the RFA. They demonstrated an understanding of the problem and what was needed to address it, as well as explained why the organization was capable of implementing the proposed solution. As described by grant reviewers, a good application avoids leaving gaps. For example, one grant reviewer said that a proposal to serve homeless families lost points because the application made no mention of a homeless shelter or other source of clients to be served by the program.

Finally, grant managers pointed out that when the RFA called for demonstration projects, program innovation was welcome. Grant applicants who suggested new approaches supported by a good program theory received favorable review scores. However, program managers stressed that outside of demonstration projects, suggesting programs that differed from the services being sought or that were altogether new often resulted in failure to obtain the desired grant.

### **Evidence of prior experience strengthens grant applications.**

Focus group participants said that successful applications had provided evidence of the organization's prior experience, either with the approach or program being proposed, the target population to be served, or both. Grant reviewers said they placed a high priority on a track record of performance as an important criteria for funding. They had observed that experienced service providers can not only demonstrate a track record, but often had access to data to show that they had achieved program outcomes, whereas providers seeking funds for new services lacked similar credibility and data.

Grant managers and reviewers also pointed out that successful applications often included partners, not all of whom had been equally experienced. Organizations new to the field or service supported by a grant program often partnered with an organization that did have an established service track record relevant to the program, or some aspect of it. Often, but not always, the more experienced organization was the applicant, and the newer organization was a proposed subcontractor. Experienced partners lent credibility to the application and a side benefit mentioned by program managers was that the more experienced partner may have helped write the application, as well.

Even if applicants lacked experience in the specific program area to be funded, it is still possible to obtain a grant award, though it may be more difficult to do so. Grant managers and reviewers said inexperienced applicants who received grants had shown that the organization had achievements directly related to the grant, proposed a strong, evidence-based program approach, and provided a thorough plan describing how they would meet challenges in entering the new program field or working with the new target population.

**Realistic budgets with adequate justification are needed to enhance the chances for success.**

Some agencies or programs do not ask grant reviewers to score proposed budgets, but when they do so, grant reviewers said they had considered the proposed budgets to be an important indicator of program planning and management capacity. Hence, they examine proposed budgets closely. Grant reviewers said proposed budgets for successful applications were complete, and properly justified. They accounted for the cost of staff benefits along with salaries, for example, and included both logical explanations of how costs were calculated and clear statements of the assumptions behind the budget amounts shown. Submitting inadequate budgets often caused otherwise strong proposals to lose valuable points from their review score.

**Focus group participants suggested additional strategies grant applicants could pursue to improve their chances for success.**

In addition to defining highly competitive grant applications, grant managers and program reviewers suggested a mix of strategies they believed could be helpful to grant applicants:

- If possible, start planning for a grant opportunity before the RFA is released.
- Find a mentor organization with experience in the program area or federal application process to give advice.
- Improve financial and program records well before applying for federal grants, to ensure that budget and program outcome data will be readily available when a grant opportunity arises.
- Carefully review and consider feedback received from grant reviewers on unsuccessful grant applications.<sup>2</sup>

Grant managers also suggested that applicants could request copies of successful applications through a Freedom of Information Act request. The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) allows

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<sup>2</sup> Nearly three-quarters of unsuccessful faith-based applicants reported receiving feedback on their federal grant application. Half said they had specifically asked for feedback, the rest had received it automatically. More than half of those who received feedback found the information useful or very useful; only 11 percent said it was not useful.



individuals to request access to many federal records.<sup>3</sup> Though FOIA requests can take up to six months to be received, grant managers thought they would be worthwhile in some cases. Though the application materials obtained would not include reviewer comments and scores, they could still be reviewed to examine how successful applicants organized and wrote their proposals, and provide good examples of evaluation and sustainability plans, the types of qualifications presented by the grant awardee and the way qualifications were presented, and how they had addressed potential weaknesses.

## **B. REASONS FOR SUCCESSFUL AND UNSUCCESSFUL GRANT OUTCOMES: INPUT FROM SURVEY PARTICIPANTS**

To identify successful grant application strategies faith-based applicants had used, the study's survey asked respondents that received grants why they thought their applications had been successful. Their answers further emphasized the factors that grant program managers and reviewers had cited as important.

**Successful applicants attributed receiving an award to submitting a proposal that was responsive to application requirements and formats, and to their organization having prior program experience.**

Applicants that received grant awards believed that their applications had several key strengths. Those most commonly cited were responsiveness to application requirements (99 percent), evidence the program proposed could be effectively implemented (99 percent), and adherence to grant

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<sup>3</sup> More information about FOIA and instructions on how to make requests of specific Department of Health and Human Services operating divisions are available at [<http://www.hhs.gov/foia/>].

TABLE V.1

PERCEPTIONS OF SUCCESSFUL GRANT APPLICANTS AS TO WHY THEIR  
APPLICATIONS WERE SELECTED FOR FUNDING

Reason Application Selected	Reason Was a Factor in Selection		Reason Was the Most Important Factor in Selection	
	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number
Responsiveness to all application requirements	99	136	9	13
Evidence program could be effectively implemented	99	135	12	16
Adherence to grant application format requirements	96	130	9	13
Prior experience with the population to be served	90	123	25	34
Evidence of financial controls and accountability	89	123	1	1
Prior experience providing the proposed services	83	114	17	24
Technical or scientific merit of the application	75	97	11	15
Qualifications of the proposed program director or principal investigator	74	98	2	2
Evidence of other resources, such as volunteers or supplemental funds	72	97	2	2
Size of the budget relative to the population to be served	66	83	4	5
Overall size of the budget	60	75	0	0
Faith-based nature of the organization or faith-based content of the program	34	46	0	0

Source: Faith-Based Grants Study survey of faith-based grant applicants, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., 2007.

Note: N = 138, missing = 0, 3 (varies by item).

application formats (96 percent; Table V.1). Prior experience with the population served was given as a reason to grant by 90 percent of successful respondents. Among these and other possible reasons, successful applicants cited prior experience with the target population (25 percent) and providing the proposed services (17 percent) as the most important reasons they received an award, followed by evidence the grant could be effectively implemented (12 percent), and the technical or scientific merit of the application (11 percent).

About one-third of successful applicants (34 percent) said they thought the faith-based nature of the organization or faith-based content of the program was a factor in their selection for funding, though no respondents cited it as the most important factor. In addition, size of the organization’s budget and other resources, such as volunteers or supplemental funds, were not perceived as significant in explaining grant award outcomes.

As another way to shed light on successful strategies and potential mistakes to avoid, unsuccessful applicants in the survey were asked about the reasons their applications were not funded.

**Unsuccessful applicants attributed their failure to the amount of competition, the inadequate strength of their applications, or a lack of organizational experience.**

The survey asked unsuccessful applicants why they thought their application was not funded. Too much competition for grant funds was the top reason given for not receiving an award, cited by more than 70 percent of unsuccessful applicants (Table V.2). More than half said their grant application was not strong enough, and more than 40 percent cited a lack of experience.

TABLE V.2

PERCEPTIONS OF UNSUCCESSFUL GRANT APPLICANTS AS TO WHY THEIR APPLICATIONS WERE NOT FUNDED

Reason Why Application Not Funded	Percentage	Number
There was too much competition	71	74
Application organization submitted was not strong enough	54	53
Organization lacked experience	43	47
Did not submit materials correctly or made other application errors	26	28
More well-known and larger organizations are preferred	6	6
Problem or error with the federal process	6	6
Proposed project was not appropriate for the federal program or agency	5	5

Source: Faith-Based Grants Study survey of faith-based grant applicants, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., 2007.

Note: N = 111, missing = 3-12 (varies by response).

Nearly three-quarters of those who said their application was not strong enough (Table V.2) ascribed that weakness to inadequate resources or lack of staff members experienced in writing grant applications (Table V.3). More than half said the evaluation plan they submitted was inadequate, and half said their application was simply of poor quality or lacked technical merit.

TABLE V.3

PERCEPTIONS OF UNSUCCESSFUL GRANT APPLICANTS AS TO WHY THEIR APPLICATIONS WERE NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO RECEIVE GRANTS

Reason Why Application Not Strong Enough	Percentage	Number
Inadequate resources/lack of experienced staff to prepare the application	74	39
Inadequate evaluation plan	53	27
Poor quality or technical merit of the proposal	50	25
Short time frame between grant announcement and application due date	47	24
Inadequate sustainability plan	44	23
Inadequate matching funds	31	16
Difficulty obtaining help/getting responses to questions from the federal agency	19	10
Inadequate financial controls	19	10
Required credentials of primary staff	19	10
Limited computer availability/internet access	4	2

Source: Faith-Based Grants Study survey of faith-based grant applicants, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., 2007.

Note: N = 53, missing = 0-3 (varies by response).

Among unsuccessful applicants who said their application was not strong enough because they lack experience (Table V.3), more than 80 reported insufficient experience working with federal grants, and three-quarters lacked experience preparing grant applications (Table V.4). More than 40 percent said they lacked experience providing the services they proposed under the application.

TABLE V.4

PERCEPTIONS OF UNSUCCESSFUL GRANT APPLICANTS AS TO WHAT EXPERIENCE  
THEIR ORGANIZATION LACKED

Type of Experience Lacking	Percentage	Number
Working with federal grants	81	39
Preparing grant applications	75	35
Providing proposed services	43	20
Providing services to the target population	17	8

Source: Faith-Based Grants Study survey of faith-based grant applicants, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., 2007.

Note: N = 47, missing = 0.

**C. HOW TO DEVELOP SUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS**

FBOs that participated in in-depth interviews emphasized that preparing and submitting their federal grant application had required a great deal of effort. Applicants rarely had more than a month between release of a grant announcement and the deadline for submitting applications. All successful applicants that participated in the in-depth interviews believed their history in working with the target population and prior experience delivering the proposed services were primary reasons that their grant application received funding.

Interviewees' mix of suggestions to help ensure success on federal grant applications reflected their diverse experiences. Many suggestions centered around the issue of application responsiveness. Suggestions included the importance of following instructions and answering every question on the application. Interviewees indicated that it was vital for applicants to think carefully about what was being asked in each question or section, and respond in a relevant and concise manner. Interviewees also emphasized the importance of doing a thorough assessment of community needs, in order to understand the target population to be served through the proposed program and to document the need in grant applications.

Interviewees also believed that it was useful for FBOs to work on developing ongoing relationships and partnerships with other organizations doing similar or relevant work—and to do so in advance of applying for a grant. Partnership formed for the purpose of applying for a specific grant at the last minute may lack depth and long-term vision, they said, reflecting poorly in the application.

Finally, interviewees said organizations lacking experience in operating programs or applying for grants should start by applying to state, local, or private funders (such as foundations), since application requirements for these sources may be somewhat less burdensome than those for federal grants. If these applications succeed, the organization can use the experience to build grant application skills, and the funding to build their program experience. Seeking out and taking advantage of technical assistance opportunities offered by funders was also mentioned as a useful strategy for FBOs inexperienced with the federal grant application process.

#### **D. POSSIBLE STEPS FEDERAL GRANT MAKERS COULD CONSIDER**

Successful and unsuccessful survey respondents were asked in what areas their organizations needed information or guidance when developing their grant applications. More than half reported needing guidance on the federal contracting and grant-making process (53 percent; Table V.5). Forty-eight percent wanted guidance on program evaluation, 39 percent on grant application formats, and 32 percent on budgeting and reporting requirements.

TABLE V.5

## TOPICS ON WHICH FAITH-BASED APPLICANTS NEED ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE WHEN DEVELOPING GRANT APPLICATIONS

Topic	Percentage	Number
Government contracting and grants process	53	131
Program evaluation	48	119
Grant application formats	39	97
Budgeting	32	79
Meeting reporting requirements	32	80
Developing organizational experience	31	75
Accounting practices	29	72
Financial accountability	20	49
Program implementation	18	45

Source: Faith-Based Grants Study survey of faith-based grant applicants, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., 2007.

Note: N = 249, missing = 0.

Identifying steps in reducing barriers was not a formal goal of the study, however participants did suggest ways they might ease the grant application process. Suggestions focused on (1) providing more information about the grant application process and requirements, and (2) providing more time to prepare applications, and simplifying logistics for submitting them.

### **1. Providing Information About the Application Process and Requirements**

Faith-based organizations that participated in the in-depth interviews had several suggestions for ways federal grant makers might support grant access. Mainly, they discussed the need for information and assistance to help applicants navigate the application process and to better prepare small or inexperienced organizations to compete effectively.

This included providing more information on specific grant programs as well as general information on the grant application process. Interviewees mentioned having federal grant providers

or others hold workshops to provide information and assistance on how to apply for federal grants as a possible approach. They also suggested that community-based organizations could be funded to provide grant information to faith-based and other groups, and to combat misperceptions or fears about government funding. (This is similar to a strategy behind the Compassion Capital Fund grants.)

A number of in-depth interview participants cited the need for more open and frequent communications with federal grant program staff, in order to address questions and concerns from applicants who are writing applications. While writing their own grant applications, they said, they had wanted to communicate by telephone or email directly with a grant program representative to ask questions. HHS operating divisions usually do provide contact information for program staff who can answer questions on applications, but some in-depth interview participants said they had found it difficult to get through or did not receive timely or adequate responses to their questions. When asked about this suggestion during their focus group, program managers agreed that applicants may sometimes experience difficulty reaching program staff to ask questions. However they also pointed out that program staff are constrained from providing any information or guidance that might unfairly advantage an individual applicant, so sometimes they cannot respond as fully as applicants might like.

HHS operating divisions have taken several steps to provide information and guidance to grant seekers, including some provided specifically for faith-based and community organizations. In addition to published guides to grant opportunities (such as those mentioned in Chapter II), grant managers described outreach activities they had organized. Some had invited potential grant applicants to meetings held in regional HHS offices to hear about current and upcoming grant announcements. Some grant managers had held conference calls to brief potential applicants on grant announcements, including answering questions from call participants about the program or



service being funded and the application requirements. Grant managers judged these to be worthwhile activities, when time and budgets permitted them. In some cases, they had been targeted to specific groups, such as faith-based organizations.

As described in earlier chapters of the report, many of the faith-based organizations in the CFBCI database and the survey had applied to and received grants from Compassion Capital Fund programs. Although the Fund's programs are mainly aimed at increasing program capacity rather than the ability to apply for grants, a recent survey of grantees found that many had used the funds in ways that could also have improved their competitiveness for federal grants. For instance, grant recipients reported using funds to improve financial management systems, engage in long-term planning, and develop systems for tracking program outcomes (Fink & Snipe, 2008).

## **2. Providing Time and Improving Submission Logistics**

Time constraints were cited as major challenges by survey respondents and in-depth interview participants. One suggestion highlighted by most applicants participating in the follow-up interviews was to allow more time between the release of grant announcements and the deadline for submitting applications. Announcing upcoming grants even before they can be formally released was a possible approach specifically mentioned by follow-up interviewees.

Improving the Grants.gov website to make it easier to submit applications was also mentioned by interviewees. Eight of 12 applicants participating in the interviews reported that they had submitted their grant applications as a paper copy, rather than via Grants.gov. Of these, three said they had tried using the website but had encountered problems and decided to submit a hard copy application instead. Of the four respondents who did use Grants.gov to submit their applications two had experienced difficulties related to getting authorization to submit the application, and to using electronic signatures.

## **E. SUMMARY**

### **1. Chapter Summary**

Grant program managers and reviewers suggested that competitive applications were those that were highly responsive to application requirements, demonstrated experience with the proposed program and/or target population to be served, and included complete, realistic budgets. Reasons for receiving their grants cited by successful faith-based applicants, including survey respondents and in-depth interviewees, aligned with these criteria. Although unsuccessful applicants in the survey said that too much competition was the main reason their applications were not funded, the additional reasons they cited also reflected the role of these factors.

Study participants suggested that actions by both grant applicants and federal grant makers might improve access to federal grants by FBOs. Strategies for applicants were to improve their capacity for applying for grants and operating programs, enhance their credibility as potential service providers, and plan ahead for responding to grant announcements. They could partner with experienced organizations, and review successful applications. They could also learn from their own unsuccessful applications. For grant makers, it was suggested that HHS and its operating divisions could provide information and assistance to applicants, allow the maximum lead time possible between grant announcements and application deadlines, and give a high priority to making Grants.gov accessible and easy to use for submitting grant applications. The circumstances of individual applicants, specific grant programs, and federal resources will influence which types of actions would be most practical and achievable.

### **2. Next Steps in Assessing Grant Access Challenges and Strategies**

Findings described in earlier chapters indicated that some survey respondents thought issues affecting faith-based groups, such as potential biases on the part of federal agencies or grant

reviewers or confusion about restrictions on religious activities, constituted possible challenges to their ability to access federal grants. However, other types of challenges were cited far more frequently, or were named as major challenges or barriers instead. Participants in the in-depth interviews and focus groups were asked whether they believed, based on their own experiences, that barriers to accessing federal grants identified in the survey were different for faith-based applicants than for other types of grant applicants.

None of the faith-based organizations that participated in the in-depth interviews believed their organization had faced any unique challenges stemming from being faith-based in seeking or obtaining federal grant funds. Grant program managers and grant reviewers participating in focus groups pointed out that they often did not know whether an applicant organization was faith-based. Grant managers and reviewers identified some assets that faith-based organizations can bring to grant programs, such as an ability to mobilize their communities and draw in volunteers. They noted that faith-based organizations already have people's trust and can often work with groups that mistrust secular organizations or public agencies.

Instead, interviewees and focus group members judged that faith-based groups by and large face challenges similar to those experienced by secular nonprofit organizations—particularly by relatively small and inexperienced groups. The most commonly cited challenges were lack of organizational resources, especially staff capacity to write applications, and short timelines for turnaround of applications. Whether or to what extent this is true cannot be assessed by this study, but may be a useful topic for future research.

A few in-depth interviewees and focus group members did speculate that some factors may be keeping faith-based organizations from applying for grants. These factors included difficulty reconciling a faith-based group's religious missions with the broad human service goals of federally funded grant programs, and concerns about whether faith-based groups must maintain separation of

religious activities from grant-funded services or how best to ensure such separation. Since only FBOs that did apply for federal grants were included in the study, this issue could not be addressed. This may be another useful topic to examine in the future.

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**APPENDIX A**

**TELEPHONE SURVEY INSTRUMENT**

OMB No.: 0990-0315  
Expiration Date: 08/31/2010  
Charge Code: 6304-510

**UNDERSTANDING  
BARRIERS AND  
SUCCESSFUL  
STRATEGIES FOR  
FAITH-BASED  
ORGANIZATIONS IN  
ACCESSING GRANTS**

*September 28, 2007*

MPR ID#: |\_|\_|\_|\_|\_|\_|\_|\_|\_|\_|\_|\_|\_|\_|\_|\_|

INT ID#: |\_|\_|\_|\_|\_|\_|\_|\_|\_|\_|\_|\_|



**SECTION A: SCREENER**

A1. May I please speak with [SAMPLE MEMBER]? (My name is [NAME] and I'm from Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., a research company in Princeton, New Jersey.)

- SAMPLE MEMBER AVAILABLE ..... 01 → **GO TO A6**
- SAMPLE MEMBER NOT AVAILABLE AT THE MOMENT .... 00
- SAMPLE MEMBER NO LONGER WORKING AT THE ORGANIZATION..... 02 → **GO TO A2**

A1a. When would be a good time to reach [SAMPLE MEMBER]? **RECORD INFORMATION ON CONTACT SHEET. THANK PERSON AND TERMINATE.**

A2. Is there someone else at your organization who is most knowledgeable about the federal grant application you submitted in 2006 for [PROGRAM NAME AND AGENCY]?

- YES..... 01
- NO..... 00 → **GO TO A4**

A3. May I please speak with this person?

- RESPONDENT AVAILABLE..... 01 → **GO TO A6**
- RESPONDENT NOT AVAILABLE AT THE MOMENT ..... 00

A3a. When would be a good time to reach this person? **RECORD INFORMATION ON CONTACT SHEET. THANK PERSON AND TERMINATE.**

A4. Is there someone else at your organization who is knowledgeable about your organization's experience with grant applications?

- YES..... 01 → **GO TO A5**
- NO..... 00

A4a. **THANK PERSON AND TERMINATE. HAND THIS CALL OVER TO SURVEY ASSOCIATE.**

A5. May I please speak with this person?

RESPONDENT AVAILABLE..... 01 → GO TO A6  
RESPONDENT NOT AVAILABLE AT THE MOMENT ..... 00

A5a. When would be a good time to reach this person? **RECORD INFORMATION ON CONTACT SHEET. THANK PERSON AND TERMINATE.**

A6. My name is [NAME] and I'm from Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., a research company in Princeton, New Jersey. We are doing a study for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to learn more about the experiences of organizations that apply for federal grants. You may have received a letter recently which explained the study to you. We are interested in learning about the challenges organizations experience in applying for grants and successful strategies used in securing funds. The interview will take about 30 minutes. Your participation in the survey is voluntary and will not affect any grant money that you or your organization receive now or in the future. The information you provide about your organization will be treated in a confidential manner. Findings will be reported only in aggregate form, and will not be linked to individual programs or organizations.

OK TO CONTINUE ..... 01 → GO TO B1  
NOT A GOOD TIME ..... 00  
REFUSED..... r

A6a. When would be a good time to do the interview? **RECORD APPOINTMENT, DATE AND TIME ON CONTACT SHEET.**

Thank you for your help. If you should have any questions or want to call in to complete the survey, please call us toll-free 1-877-542-6727, and ask for Frances Booker.  
**TERMINATE**

**SECTION B: CHARACTERISTICS OF ORGANIZATION**

B1. Can you confirm your organization's name? I have [ORGANIZATION NAME], is that correct?

- YES..... 01 → GO TO B2  
 NO..... 00  
 DON'T KNOW..... d } → GO TO B2  
 REFUSED..... r }

B1a. What is the correct name of your organization?

\_\_\_\_\_

- DON'T KNOW..... d  
 REFUSED..... r

B2. Is your organization a non-profit organization?

- YES..... 01  
 NO..... 00  
 DON'T KNOW..... d  
 REFUSED..... r

B3. What is the main mission of your organization? Do you provide . . .

	CIRCLE ONE IN EACH ROW			
	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED
a. Social services?.....	01	00	d	r
b. Education?.....	01	00	d	r
c. Health care? .....	01	00	d	r
d. Religious services?.....	01	00	d	r
e. Other services? (SPECIFY)..... _____	01	00	d	r

B4. Does your organization have ties to a church, denomination, faith tradition, or interfaith group, or is it religiously affiliated?

**PROBE:** Ties and affiliations can be organizational, historical, or theological.

Does this description characterize your organization?

YES..... 01  
NO..... 00  
DON'T KNOW..... d  
REFUSED..... r

B5. Do you consider your organization to be a Faith-Based Organization?

Source:  
John Orr

YES..... 01 → GO TO B7  
NO..... 00  
DON'T KNOW..... d } → GO TO B7  
REFUSED..... r }

**INTERVIEWER: ASK B6 ONLY IF RESPONDENT ANSWERED "NO" TO BOTH B4 AND B5. OTHERWISE, SKIP TO B7.**

B6. Is your organization a secular organization, in the sense that it has no ties, direct or indirect, with religious groups or ideas?


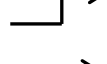

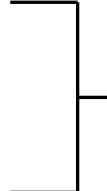

Source:  
John Orr

YES..... 01  
NO..... 00  
DON'T KNOW..... d  
REFUSED..... r

**INTERVIEWER: THANK PERSON AND TERMINATE. HAND THIS CALL OVER TO SURVEY ASSOCIATE.**

B7. How would you describe your organization? Please choose one of the following.

CIRCLE ONLY ONE

- A local affiliate of a national, state, or regional network,..... 01  **GO TO B11**
- An independent nonprofit organization, ..... 02  **GO TO B11**
- A congregation, such as a church, synagogue, mosque, ..... 03  **GO TO B8**
- A faith-based coalition or council, or ..... 04  **GO TO B11**
- Some other type of organization? (SPECIFY) ..... 05  **GO TO B11**
- \_\_\_\_\_
- DON'T KNOW ..... d
- REFUSED ..... r

B8. How many members are in your congregation?

|\_|\_|, |\_|\_|\_| MEMBERS

DON'T KNOW ..... d

REFUSED ..... r

B9. What percent of your members are Hispanic or Latino?

|\_|\_|\_| % HISPANIC OR LATINO MEMBERS

DON'T KNOW ..... d

REFUSED ..... r

B10. What percent of your members would you estimate are best described by each of the following racial categories?

OMB  
Guidelines

	COMPLETE ONE IN EACH ROW		
	MEMBERS	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED
a. American Indian or Alaska Native .....	_ _ _  %	d	r
b. Asian.....	_ _ _  %	d	r
c. Black or African American .....	_ _ _  %	d	r
d. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.....	_ _ _  %	d	r
e. White .....	_ _ _  %	d	r

B11. Is your organization affiliated with a denomination or particular faith group?

YES..... 01  
 NO..... 00  
 DON'T KNOW..... d  
 REFUSED..... r

} → GO TO B12

B11a. With which denominations or faith groups is your organization affiliated?

**RECORD VERBATIM**

---



---

ENTER CODE ONLY    |\_|\_|  
 DON'T KNOW..... d  
 REFUSED..... r

**CODING GUIDE B11a.**

<b>DENOMINATION/FAITH GROUP</b>	<b>CODE</b>
Assemblies of God	01
Baptist	02
Baptist – American Baptist	03
Baptist – Southern	04
Buddhist	05
Catholic	06
Christian – Orthodox	07
Christian – Reformed	08
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)	09
Church of Christ – Independent	10
Church of Christ – United	11
Church of God in Christ (COGIC)	12
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints/Mormon	13
Church of the Nazarene	14
Congregational	15
Episcopal	16
Evangelical Church	17
Foursquare Gospel	18
Jewish – Conservative Judaism	19
Jewish – Orthodox Judaism	20
Jewish – Reform Judaism	21
Lutheran – Missouri Synod Lutheran	22
Lutheran – Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA)	23
Mennonite	24
Methodist (United Methodist)	25
Methodist Episcopal	26
Moravian	27
Muslim	28
Non-denominational	29
Pentecostal	30
Presbyterian	31
Quaker	32
Reformed Church in America	33
Salvation Army	34
Seven-day Adventist	35
Unitarian Universalist	36
Volunteers of America	37
Other	38

B12. In what year was your organization officially organized or founded?

|\_|\_|\_|\_| YEAR

DON'T KNOW..... d

REFUSED..... r

**STAFFING:**

B13. How many paid, full-time staff positions do you have in your organization? Do you have . . .

Source:  
John Orr

**PROBE:** Count all full-time positions whether currently filled or not.

CIRCLE ONLY ONE

1 - 5,..... 01

6 - 10,..... 02

11 - 20,..... 03

21 - 50, or ..... 04

More than 50?..... 05

DON'T KNOW..... d

REFUSED..... r

**SOCIAL SERVICES:**

B14. In what year did your organization first seek federal, state, or other government funding to provide social services?

|\_|\_|\_|\_| YEAR

DON'T KNOW..... d

REFUSED..... r

B15. About how many applications has your organization submitted for federal, state, or other government funding of social services in the past 3 years?

CIRCLE ONLY ONE

1 - 3..... 01

4 - 6..... 02

7 - 10..... 03

MORE THAN 10 ..... 04

DON'T KNOW..... d

REFUSED..... r



B16. In the past 12 months, did your organization directly provide, or cooperate in providing any of the following services for your own members or for people in the community?

Adapted from  
Faith  
Communities  
Today Q5

**PROBE:** "Cooperation" includes financial contributions, volunteer time by organization members, space in your building, material donations, etc.

	CIRCLE ONE IN EACH ROW			
	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED
a. Food pantry or soup kitchen .....	01	00	d	r
b. Cash assistance to families or individuals .....	01	00	d	r
c. Clothing .....	01	00	d	r
d. Emergency or affordable housing .....	01	00	d	r
e. Counseling services or "hot line" .....	01	00	d	r
f. Substance abuse programs .....	01	00	d	r
g. Day care, pre-school, before/after-school programs.....	01	00	d	r
h. Tutoring or literacy programs .....	01	00	d	r
i. Employment counseling, placement or training .....	01	00	d	r
j. Health programs/clinics/health education .....	01	00	d	r
k. Hospital or nursing home facilities .....	01	00	d	r
l. Life skills .....	01	00	d	r
m. Abstinence or family planning programs.....	01	00	d	r
n. Marriage or relationship education or support .....	01	00	d	r
o. Foster care and/or adoption services .....	01	00	d	r
p. Community development .....	01	00	d	r
q. Capacity building assistance.....	01	00	d	r
r. Elementary or secondary education .....	01	00	d	r
s. Other (SPECIFY) .....	01	00	d	r
_____				

**TARGET POPULATION OF SERVICES**

B17. In a typical month, about how many people do you estimate receive the services your organization directly provides?

Los Angeles  
Nonprofit  
Human  
Services Study  
2002 B6

|\_|\_|\_|, |\_|\_|\_|\_| PEOPLE SERVED

DON'T KNOW ..... d

REFUSED ..... r

B18. Overall, of the people who participated in your programs or services during the past year, approximately what percent were Hispanic or Latino?

Los Angeles  
Nonprofit  
Human  
Services Study  
2002 B6

|\_|\_|\_| % HISPANIC OR LATINO

DON'T KNOW ..... d

REFUSED ..... r

B19. Overall, of the people who participated in your programs or services during the past year, approximately what percent were from each of the following race categories?

Los Angeles  
Nonprofit  
Human  
Services Study  
2002 B6

	COMPLETE ONE IN EACH ROW		
	PERCENT	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED
a. American Indian or Alaska Native .....	_ _ _  %	d	r
b. Asian.....	_ _ _  %	d	r
c. Black or African American .....	_ _ _  %	d	r
d. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander .....	_ _ _  %	d	r
e. White .....	_ _ _  %	d	r

B20. Which of the following groups of people does your organization target for the services it provides?

	CIRCLE ONE IN EACH ROW			
	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED
a. Persons with mental or physical disabilities .....	01	00	d	r
b. Neighborhood/community residents .....	01	00	d	r
c. Low-income families .....	01	00	d	r
d. Children or youth .....	01	00	d	r
e. Older Americans or the elderly .....	01	00	d	r
f. Single adults .....	01	00	d	r
g. Married or unmarried couples .....	01	00	d	r
h. Members of your faith community .....	01	00	d	r
i. Fathers .....	01	00	d	r
j. Pregnant women .....	01	00	d	r
k. Homeless.....	01	00	d	r
l. Immigrants/refugees.....	01	00	d	r
m. Non-English speakers .....	01	00	d	r
n. Prisoners or ex-offenders .....	01	00	d	r
o. Substance abusers.....	01	00	d	r
p. Unemployed .....	01	00	d	r
q. Local organization leaders or members .....	01	00	d	r
r. Other (SPECIFY)..... _____	01	00	d	r

**FUNDING:**

B21. During your most recently completed fiscal year, did you receive funding from the following sources?

Los Angeles  
Nonprofit  
Human  
Services Study  
2002 D3

	CIRCLE ONE IN EACH ROW			
	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED
a. Federal grants .....	01	00	d	r
b. State or local grants or funds.....	01	00	d	r
c. Medicare/Medicaid payments.....	01	00	d	r
d. Foundation grants.....	01	00	d	r
e. Individual or corporate donations, including fundraising events .....	01	00	d	r
f. Endowment or investments .....	01	00	d	r
g. Fees charged for services .....	01	00	d	r
h. Financial support from congregations, denominations, or other Faith-Based Organizations.....	01	00	d	r
i. In-kind donations or services.....	01	00	d	r
j. Other (SPECIFY)..... _____	01	00	d	r

B22. What is the total amount of money your organization received in income from all sources during your most recent fiscal year?

\$|\_|\_|\_|\_|\_|,|\_|\_|\_|\_|\_|,|\_|\_|\_|\_|\_| TOTAL AMOUNT RECEIVED → GO TO B23

**INTERVIEWER: IF RESPONDENT NEEDS TO GO LOOK UP INFORMATION, HOLD WHILE HE/SHE DOES SO OR ASK THEM TO COME BACK TO THIS QUESTION AFTER THE REST OF THE INTERVIEW IS OVER.**

**IF RESPONDENT CANNOT LOOK UP DURING THE INTERVIEW, THEN MARK OFF “CALL BACK”.**

B22a. CALL BACK ..... 01 → GO TO B23  
CONTACT SOMEONE ELSE (SPECIFY) ..... 02

**B22b. INTERVIEWER: IF RESPONDENT COULD NOT ANSWER B22, PLEASE ASK:**

Is there someone else at your organization that can tell us the total amount of money received in income from all sources during your most recent fiscal year?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

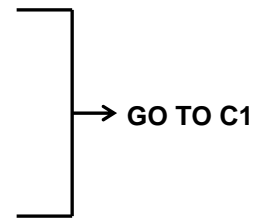
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AREA CODE

**B23. How would you describe the place where your organization is physically located?  
 Is it . . .**

2005 National  
 Survey of  
 Congregations

CIRCLE ONLY ONE

- In or near a city with a population of 50,000 or more..... 01
- In a town or small city with a population between 2,500 and  
 50,000, or,..... 02
- In a rural area, open country, or small town with a  
 population of 2,500 or less? ..... 03
- DON'T KNOW ..... d
- REFUSED..... r



**B23a. Is your organization physically located in . . .**

CIRCLE ONLY ONE

- A downtown or central area of the city,..... 01
- An older residential area in the city,..... 02
- An older suburb around the city, or..... 03
- A newer suburb around the city? ..... 04
- DON'T KNOW ..... d
- REFUSED..... r

**SECTION C: KNOWLEDGE OF FEDERAL GRANT OPPORTUNITIES**

C1. Does someone regularly conduct searches for federal grant opportunities for your organization?

- YES..... 01
  - NO..... 00
  - DON'T KNOW..... d
  - REFUSED..... r
- } → **GO TO C2**

C1a. Is the primary person responsible for this task . . .

- A full-time staff member, ..... 01
- A part-time staff member, ..... 02
- A volunteer, ..... 03
- A consultant, or ..... 04
- Some other person (SPECIFY)..... 05
- \_\_\_\_\_
- DON'T KNOW..... d
- REFUSED..... r

C2. Does your organization employ or work with a grant writer or someone with experience writing grant proposals?

- YES..... 01
  - NO..... 00
  - DON'T KNOW..... d
  - REFUSED..... r
- } → **GO TO C3**

C2a. Is the primary grant writer . . .

- A full-time staff member, ..... 01
- A part-time staff member, ..... 02
- A volunteer, ..... 03
- A consultant, or ..... 04
- Some other person? (SPECIFY)..... 05
- \_\_\_\_\_
- DON'T KNOW ..... d
- REFUSED..... r

C3. Which of the following sources of information does your organization use to become aware of federal grant opportunities?

Guidance Document, White House FBCI, Page 3

	CIRCLE ONE IN EACH ROW			
	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED
a. Grant announcements on the Grants.gov website .....	01	00	d	r
b. The White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives .....	01	00	d	r
c. Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) .....	01	00	d	r
d. The Department of Health and Human Services' Compassion Capital Fund .....	01	00	d	r
e. Information from a denomination.....	01	00	d	r
f. Information from ecumenical or interfaith groups .....	01	00	d	r
g. Information from a non-government source .....	01	00	d	r
h. Other (SPECIFY).....	01	00	d	r
_____				

**SECTION D: EXPERIENCE APPLYING FOR GRANTS**

D1. In what year did your organization first apply for a grant directly from the federal government?

|\_|\_|\_|\_| YEAR

DON'T KNOW..... d  
 REFUSED..... r

D1a. About how many applications has your organization submitted to the federal government for the funding of social services in the past 3 years?

CIRCLE ONLY ONE

1 – 3..... 01  
 4 – 6..... 02  
 7 – 10..... 03  
 MORE THAN 10 ..... 04  
 DON'T KNOW..... d  
 REFUSED..... r

D2. Your organization submitted a grant application to [FEDERAL AGENCY] for [PROGRAM NAME] in 2006. Is that correct?

YES..... 01 → GO TO D3  
 NO..... 00  
 DON'T KNOW..... d  
 REFUSED..... r

} → GO TO D2b

D2a. Please tell me the correct name of the program name and federal agency:

\_\_\_\_\_  
**PROGRAM NAME**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**FEDERAL AGENCY**


DON'T KNOW..... d  
 REFUSED..... r

} → GO TO D3



D2b. Is there anyone at your organization who is knowledgeable about this 2006 grant application?

YES..... 01  
NO..... 00  
DON'T KNOW..... d  
REFUSED..... r



**GO TO D24**

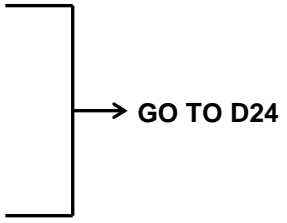
D2c. What is that person's name and telephone number?

\_\_\_\_\_ **NAME**

Phone Number: (|\_|\_|\_|\_|)-|\_|\_|\_|\_|-|\_|\_|\_|\_|\_|

**AREA CODE**

DON'T KNOW..... d  
REFUSED..... r



**GO TO D24**

D3. What service(s) were to be provided in the [PROGRAM NAME] for which these grant funds were requested?

**INTERVIEWER: IF YES:** Please tell me the number of years your organization has provided this service.

	COMPLETE EACH ROW				
	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED	YEARS OF EXPERIENCE
a. Food pantry or soup kitchen .....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
b. Cash assistance to families or individuals .....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
c. Clothing.....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
d. Emergency or affordable housing .....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
e. Counseling services or "hot line".....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
f. Substance abuse programs .....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
g. Day care, pre-school, before/after-school programs	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
h. Tutoring or literacy programs .....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
i. Employment counseling, placement or training .....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
j. Health programs/clinics/health education .....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
k. Hospital or nursing home facilities .....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
l. Life skills .....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
m. Abstinence or family planning programs.....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
n. Marriage or relationship education or support .....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
o. Foster care and/or adoption services .....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
p. Community development .....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
q. Capacity building assistance.....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
r. Elementary or secondary education .....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
s. Other (SPECIFY) .....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
_____					_ _ _

D4. Please list the targeted recipients of the services provided in the [PROGRAM NAME]?

**INTERVIEWER: DO NOT READ THE LIST UNLESS THE RESPONDENT NEEDS PROMPTING.**

**IF MARKED "YES":** Please tell me the number of years your organization has served this population.

	COMPLETE EACH ROW				
	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED	YEARS SERVED
a. Persons with mental or physical disabilities .....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
b. Neighborhood/community residents .....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
c. Low-income families .....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
d. Children or youth .....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
e. Older Americans or the elderly .....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
f. Single adults .....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
g. Married or unmarried couples .....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
h. Members of your faith community .....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
i. Fathers .....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
j. Pregnant women .....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
k. Homeless.....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
l. Immigrants/refugees.....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
m. Non-English speakers .....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
n. Prisoners or ex-offenders .....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
o. Substance abusers.....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
p. Unemployed .....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
q. Local organization leaders or members ....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _
r. Other (SPECIFY).....	01	00	d	r	_ _ _

D5. How much money did you request in this 2006 grant application for [PROGRAM NAME]?

\$|\_|\_|\_|\_|,|\_|\_|\_|\_|,|\_|\_|\_|\_| | **TOTAL AMOUNT REQUESTED**

DON'T KNOW..... d

REFUSED..... r

D6. Faith-Based and other organizations sometimes face challenges in preparing and submitting federal grant applications. Did you face any of the following challenges when submitting the 2006 application?

	CIRCLE ONE IN EACH ROW			
	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED
1. Lack of knowledgeable staff to prepare the grant application .....	01	00	d	r
2. Limited access to technology, such as a computer or the Internet .....	01	00	d	r
3. Difficulty preparing the budget.....	01	00	d	r
4. Difficulty completing federal forms and certifications....	01	00	d	r
5. Difficulty meeting the financial management requirements of the grant .....	01	00	d	r
6. Difficulty meeting requirements for matching funds.....	01	00	d	r
7. Difficulty meeting requirements for sustaining the proposed program after the grant ends .....	01	00	d	r
8. Difficulty identifying staff with the credentials required in the grant application .....	01	00	d	r
9. Difficulty reaching the federal contact person listed in the grant application to ask questions .....	01	00	d	r
10. Difficulty meeting the application deadline .....	01	00	d	r
11. Unsure about restrictions on religious activities as part of the grant program .....	01	00	d	r
12. Difficulty using the grants.gov website .....	01	00	d	r
13. Difficulty obtaining information about a specific grant and how to apply for funds .....	01	00	d	r
14. Other (SPECIFY)..... _____	01	00	d	r

D7. Of all the challenges you told me about, which was the biggest challenge?

**INTERVIEWER: FILL IN NUMBER FROM LIST ABOVE**

\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_| BIGGEST BARRIER

DON'T KNOW..... d

REFUSED..... r

D8. What was the outcome of this application that you submitted in 2006? Did you receive any of the funding you requested?

- YES..... 01  
 NO..... 00 → GO TO D12  
 DON'T KNOW..... d  
 REFUSED..... r } → GO TO D24

D9. Why do you think your application was selected for funding?

	CIRCLE ONE IN EACH ROW			
	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED
1. Technical/scientific merit of your application .....	01	00	d	r
2. Your responsiveness to all application requirements .....	01	00	d	r
3. The overall size of your budget .....	01	00	d	r
4. The size of your budget relative to the population you set out to serve.....	01	00	d	r
5. Your organization's prior experience providing the proposed services .....	01	00	d	r
6. Your organization's prior experience with the population served.....	01	00	d	r
7. Qualifications of your proposed program director or principal investigator .....	01	00	d	r
8. Your adherence to grant application format requirements .....	01	00	d	r
9. Evidence that your program could be effectively implemented	01	00	d	r
10. Evidence of financial controls and accountability .....	01	00	d	r
11. Evidence of other resources such as volunteers or supplemental funds .....	01	00	d	r
12. Faith-based nature of your organization or faith-based content of the program .....	01	00	d	r
13. Other (SPECIFY)..... _____	01	00	d	r

D10. Of all the reasons you told me about, which one do you think contributed most to the success of your application?

**INTERVIEWER: FILL IN NUMBER FROM LIST ABOVE**

MOST IMPORTANT REASON

- DON'T KNOW..... d  
 REFUSED..... r

D11. How much money was your organization awarded for your 2006 grant application?

\$|\_|\_|\_|\_|,|\_|\_|\_|\_|,|\_|\_|\_|\_| **TOTAL AMOUNT RECEIVED**

DON'T KNOW ..... d

REFUSED ..... r

} → **GO TO D24**

D12. Why do you think your application was not funded? Was it because the application your organization submitted was not strong enough?

YES ..... 01

NO ..... 00

DON'T KNOW ..... d

REFUSED ..... r

} → **GO TO D14**

D13. Why do you think your organization's 2006 grant application was not strong enough?

	<b>CIRCLE ONE IN EACH ROW</b>			
	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED
a. Short timeframe between grant announcement and application due date.....	01	00	d	r
b. Inadequate resources/lack of experienced staff to prepare the applications.....	01	00	d	r
c. Difficulty obtaining help/getting responses to questions from the federal agency .....	01	00	d	r
d. Required credentials of primary staff .....	01	00	d	r
e. Inadequate financial controls.....	01	00	d	r
f. Inadequate matching funds .....	01	00	d	r
g. Inadequate sustainability plan .....	01	00	d	r
h. Inadequate evaluation plan .....	01	00	d	r
i. Poor quality or technical merit of the proposal .....	01	00	d	r
j. Limited computer availability/Internet access .....	01	00	d	r
k. Other (SPECIFY).....	01	00	d	r

D14. Do you think your organization's 2006 grant application was not funded because the proposed project was not appropriate for the federal program or agency providing the grant?

YES..... 01  
 NO ..... 00  
 DON'T KNOW..... d  
 REFUSED..... r

} → **GO TO D16**

D15. Why do you think your organization's proposed project was not appropriate for the federal program or agency?

	<b>CIRCLE ONE IN EACH ROW</b>			
	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED
a. Proposed project too small .....	01	00	d	r
b. Religious nature of the proposed project .....	01	00	d	r
c. Proposed project did not include target population specified by grant announcement .....	01	00	d	r
d. Proposed services were not ones that are normally funded by this grant program or federal agency.....	01	00	d	r
e. Grant reviewers had limited understanding of Faith-Based Organization's eligibility .....	01	00	d	r
f. Bias against Faith-Based Organizations.....	01	00	d	r
g. Other (SPECIFY) .....	01	00	d	r

D16. Do you think your organization's 2006 grant application was not funded because your organization lacked experience?

YES..... 01  
 NO ..... 00  
 DON'T KNOW..... d  
 REFUSED..... r

} → **GO TO D18**

D17. Did your organization lack experience . . .

	CIRCLE ONE IN EACH ROW			
	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED
a. Providing the proposed services? .....	01	00	d	r
b. Providing services to the target population?.....	01	00	d	r
c. Working with federal grants? .....	01	00	d	r
d. Preparing grant applications? .....	01	00	d	r
e. Other (SPECIFY)..... _____	01	00	d	r

D18. Do you think your organization's 2006 grant application was not funded because there was too much competition?

- YES..... 01
- NO ..... 00
- DON'T KNOW..... d
- REFUSED..... r

D19. Do you think your organization's 2006 grant application was not funded because you did not submit materials correctly, or made other application errors?

- YES..... 01
- NO ..... 00
- DON'T KNOW..... d
- REFUSED..... r

**INTERVIEWER: IF "YES":** Please describe the application or submission errors.

**RECORD VERBATIM**

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D20. Was there some other reason why your organization's 2006 grant application was not funded?

- YES..... 01
- NO ..... 00
- DON'T KNOW..... d
- REFUSED..... r

**INTERVIEWER: IF "YES":** Please describe the reason.

**RECORD VERBATIM**

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**FEEDBACK FROM GRANT REVIEW PROCESS**

D21. Did you request feedback from [FEDERAL AGENCY] on why your application was not funded?

- YES..... 01
- NO ..... 00
- DON'T KNOW..... d
- REFUSED..... r

D22. Did you receive feedback from [FEDERAL AGENCY] on why your application was not funded?

- YES..... 01
  - NO ..... 00
  - DON'T KNOW..... d
  - REFUSED..... r
- } → GO TO D24

D23a. What reasons were given?

**INTERVIEWER: RECORD VERBATIM**

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DON'T KNOW..... d  
REFUSED..... r

D23b. How useful was the feedback? Was it . . .

Not at all useful, ..... 01  
Somewhat useful, ..... 02  
Useful, or..... 03  
Very useful? ..... 04  
DON'T KNOW..... d  
REFUSED..... r

**PERCEIVED BARRIERS TO WINNING FUTURE GRANTS**

D24. What barriers do you think your organization will face when applying for federal grants in the future?

Adapted from HHS Staff Survey on Barriers to American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native American Communities Access to HHS programs 2005

	<b>CIRCLE ONE IN EACH ROW</b>			
	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED
1. Lack of staff who can track or search for grant opportunities on a regular basis .....	01	00	d	r
2. Lack of staff to prepare grant applications.....	01	00	d	r
3. Difficulty in meeting financial management and administrative reporting requirements .....	01	00	d	r
4. Difficulty in meeting matching fund requirements.....	01	00	d	r
5. Difficulty in developing sustainability plans.....	01	00	d	r
6. Difficulty in identifying staff with credentials required in grant applications.....	01	00	d	r
7. Lack of experience in delivering services.....	01	00	d	r
8. Difficulty in implementing grant activities.....	01	00	d	r
9. Lack of full-time staff.....	01	00	d	r
10. Bias against Faith-Based Organizations .....	01	00	d	r
11. Rating procedures that favor larger, more well-known or experienced organizations.....	01	00	d	r
12. Limited computer availability/Internet access .....	01	00	d	r
13. Requirements for evaluation too stringent.....	01	00	d	r
14. Confusion about eligibility of Faith-Based Organizations .....	01	00	d	r
15. Time between learning about grant opportunity and application deadline too limited .....	01	00	d	r
16. Organization not comfortable with restrictions on religious activities.....	01	00	d	r
17. Other (SPECIFY).....	01	00	d	r

D25. Of all the barriers your organization may face, which is the biggest barrier?

**INTERVIEWER: FILL IN NUMBER FROM LIST ABOVE**

MOST IMPORTANT REASON

DON'T KNOW..... d

REFUSED..... r

**REASONS WHY ORGANIZATION MIGHT NOT APPLY FOR FUTURE GRANTS**

D26. Do you think your organization will apply for a federal grant in the next year?

YES..... 01 → GO TO D29  
 NO..... 00  
 DON'T KNOW..... d  
 REFUSED..... r → GO TO D29

D27. Why don't you think your organization will apply for a federal grant in the next year?

Adapted from HHS Staff Survey on Barriers to American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native American Communities Access to HHS programs 2005

	CIRCLE ONE IN EACH ROW			
	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED
1. Too difficult to separate religious activities from federally-funded social service programs .....	01	00	d	r
2. Skeptical of government aid .....	01	00	d	r
3. Prefer to partner with other faith-based groups .....	01	00	d	r
4. Problems with federal employment policies .....	01	00	d	r
5. Lack of organizational and financial structures in place to comply with public performance and audit requirements.....	01	00	d	r
6. The services for which federal funding is available do not match our needs.....	01	00	d	r
7. Federal agencies are not likely to fund the kind of services we provide .....	01	00	d	r
8. Inadequate resources available to devote to the application process.....	01	00	d	r
9. Lack of experienced staff.....	01	00	d	r
10. Bias against Faith-Based Organizations .....	01	00	d	r
11. Too difficult to obtain help from federal agencies .....	01	00	d	r
12. Other (SPECIFY)..... _____	01	00	d	r

D28. Of all reasons you mentioned, what is the most important reason you might not apply for future grants?

**INTERVIEWER: FILL IN NUMBER FROM LIST ABOVE**

\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_| MOST IMPORTANT REASON

DON'T KNOW..... d

REFUSED..... r

D29. In what areas do you feel your organization needs information or guidance when developing grant applications?

	CIRCLE ONE IN EACH ROW			
	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED
a. Government contracting and grants process.....	01	00	d	r
b. Accounting practices .....	01	00	d	r
c. Meeting reporting requirements.....	01	00	d	r
d. Budgeting .....	01	00	d	r
e. Developing organizational experience.....	01	00	d	r
f. Grant application formats .....	01	00	d	r
g. Implementation of your program.....	01	00	d	r
h. Evaluation of your program .....	01	00	d	r
i. Financial accountability .....	01	00	d	r

**SECTION E: STRENGTHS AND CAPACITIES OF ORGANIZATION**

**TECHNICAL/GENERAL CAPABILITIES OF ORGANIZATION**

E1. Next, I would like to ask you some questions about how your organization uses technology. Does your organization currently use . . .

Los Angeles  
Nonprofit  
Human Services  
Survey, 2002 J1

	CIRCLE ONE IN EACH ROW			
	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED
a. Email? .....	01	00	d	r
b. Computers for key staff or volunteers?.....	01	00	d	r
c. An internal computer network? .....	01	00	d	r
d. Cell phones or pagers? .....	01	00	d	r
e. Electronic financial records?.....	01	00	d	r
f. Electronic database of your programs or services? .....	01	00	d	r
g. Software for planning and tracking activities that achieve program objectives? .....	01	00	d	r

E2. In the past three years, has your organization . . .

	CIRCLE ONE IN EACH ROW			
	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED
a. Developed a strategic plan? .....	01	00	d	r
b. Had an audit? .....	01	00	d	r
c. Met with a Board of Directors? .....	01	00	d	r
d. Held regular staff meetings?.....	01	00	d	r
e. Interacted with other social service organizations? .....	01	00	d	r
f. Identified concrete outcomes that your program intends to accomplish? .....	01	00	d	r
g. Evaluated any of your programs?.....	01	00	d	r

E3. Which of the following strategies does your organization currently use when developing grant applications?

	CIRCLE ONE IN EACH ROW			
	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED
a. Develop knowledge of the target population and its needs .....	01	00	d	r
b. Implement a community-needs and strengths assessment .....	01	00	d	r
c. Identify public and private social service programs whose services may complement those that you plan to offer .....	01	00	d	r
d. Develop collaborative relationships with the staffs of other public and private agencies whose services complement yours .....	01	00	d	r
e. Develop a plan for the long-term financial stability of your program .....	01	00	d	r

**SECTION F: RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS**

F1. How many years have you worked at this organization?

|\_|\_| YEARS |\_|\_| MONTHS

DON'T KNOW..... d  
 REFUSED..... r

F2. Are you a . . .

CODE ONLY ONE

Full-time, paid staff member, ..... 01  
 Part-time, paid staff member,..... 02  
 Volunteer, or a ..... 03  
 Consultant?..... 04  
 DON'T KNOW..... d  
 REFUSED..... r

F3. What is your job title at [ORGANIZATION NAME]?

**INTERVIEWER: RECORD VERBATIM**

\_\_\_\_\_

DON'T KNOW..... d  
 REFUSED..... r

F4. What are your responsibilities at this organization?

**INTERVIEWER: RECORD VERBATIM**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

DON'T KNOW..... d  
 REFUSED..... r



F5. How many total years of experience do you have in this line of work?

**PROBE:** Include experience both at this organization and elsewhere.

|\_|\_| YEARS |\_|\_| MONTHS

DON'T KNOW..... d

REFUSED..... r

F6. What is the highest degree you have obtained?

Los Angeles  
Nonprofit  
Human Services  
Survey, 2002 L6

CODE ONLY ONE

LESS THAN HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA..... 01

HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR GED ..... 02

SOME COLLEGE OR TECHNICAL SCHOOL..... 03

ASSOCIATE DEGREE ..... 04

BACHELOR'S DEGREE ..... 05

MASTER'S OR PROFESSIONAL DEGREE ..... 06

DOCTORAL DEGREE ..... 07

DON'T KNOW..... d

REFUSED..... r

F7. **INTERVIEWER: IF WE DO NOT HAVE A CONTACT NAME, ADDRESS, AND/OR DIRECT PHONE NUMBER, PLEASE ASK:**

Can we have your name, address, and direct phone number in case we need to follow-up with about any of your answers?

Respondent Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: (|\_|\_|\_|)|-|\_|\_|\_|\_|-|\_|\_|\_|\_| x |\_|\_|\_|\_|  
AREA CODE EXTENSION



**APPENDIX B**

**IN-DEPTH TELEPHONE INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SURVEY RESPONDENTS**

**Understanding Barriers and Successful Strategies for Faith-Based Organizations in  
Accessing Grants**

**In-Depth Telephone Interview Guide for Survey Respondents**

INTERVIEWER INSTRUCTIONS: Before conducting the interview, review grants management administrative data and survey results for the participant, and answer any of the following questions from those sources to the extent possible. Eliminate any questions not appropriate for certain types of applicants or certain types of grant programs (such as questions in Part C), and tailor the interview to any special issues identified through the survey. Based on this review, select 12-14 of the following questions most pertinent to cover during the interview. If time permits, ask about missing or incomplete answers from the survey.

**INTRODUCTION (2 minutes)**

My name is NAME and I work for Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., an independent research firm. We are doing a study for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to learn about the experiences of faith-based organizations that apply for federal grants. You recently participated in a survey we conducted for the study. As we described in a letter you should have received in the past few days, we are contacting a few people who participated in the survey to learn more about their experiences applying for federal grants during fiscal year 2006. The interview should take about 45 minutes.

Everything you tell me is confidential. Your participation in the survey is voluntary and will not affect any grant money that you or your organization receive now or in the future. ]

Is now a good time to talk?

- IF YES: Do you have any questions before we get started?
- IF NO: When would be a good time to call you back? [SCHEDULE INTERVIEW, THANK RESPONDENT, AND END CALL.]

**A. RESPONDENT'S ROLE IN THE APPLICANT'S ORGANIZATION (3 minutes)**

To begin, I'd like to learn about your role in ORGANIZATION NAME.

1. Your official job title [OR ROLE IN THE ORGANIZATION IF VOLUNTEER OR CONSULTANT] is [JOB TITLE FROM SURVEY], is that right?

IF NO: What is your current job title?

- a. Please describe your responsibilities in that position/role. *PROBE: Are you a grant writing specialist? Program administrator or staff member? Organization staff member? Organization leader or manager? Other?*

**B. PREVIOUS GRANT APPLICATION EXPERIENCE (5 minutes)**

2. What was your role in developing the application ORGANIZATION NAME submitted to the HHS OPERATING DIVISION for the GRANT PROGRAM NAME during FY 2006 (between October 1 2005 and September 30 2006)? *PROBE: Main author? Designed or developed program to be proposed? Drafted the budget? Organized and led the proposal application process? Submitted the application?*
3. Prior to applying for the GRANT PROGRAM NAME in FY 2006, how would you describe your own experience, and the experience of ORGANIZATION NAME applying for grants of any type (such as from the federal or state government, foundations, or other sources), for any of your organization's activities? *PROBE: Very experienced, grants are a common source of funding, and have used many sources; have done before on some occasions but not regularly, using a few grants but have other main sources of funds; inexperienced, just beginning to seek grant funds, may not have applied for federal grants before this.*
4. Did any other community organizations partner with you in this program or on this grant? If so, who? Did these partners help prepare the proposal?

**C. PROGRAM OR SERVICES PROPOSED FOR FUNDING (8 minutes)**

Let's talk first about the program or services that you proposed in your application.

5. Please briefly describe the program or services that you proposed in your GRANT PROGRAM NAME application. Was this an existing or new program or service? If existing, how long had it been in operation?
  - IF YES: Was the target population or group you proposed to serve through the program/services different in any way from those you were already serving?
6. Were any special provider or staff qualifications required, either by law or by the grant announcement, for the services you were proposing to conduct, such as certain licensing, credentials, or training? If so, how did you plan to meet these requirements?

**D. PREPARING AND SUBMITTING THE GRANT APPLICATION (15 minutes)**

Now let's talk about planning your application.

7. Besides yourself, who worked on the grant application, and what did they do? *PROBE: Plan the program to be proposed? Develop the budget? Write the narrative? Write the evaluation plan? Write the sustainability plan? Fill out forms and documents? Submit the application?*
  - a. Which ORGANIZATION NAME staff worked on the application?
  - b. Did you use any consultants to help write the grant?
  - c. Did you use any volunteers to help write the grant?

- d. Did staff or members of any other organizations help write the grant? Who?
8. Please tell me how you OR ORGANIZATION IF RESPONDENT WAS NOT MAIN AUTHOR went about planning the grant proposal.
  - a. How did you develop the budget?
  - b. How did you develop an evaluation plan? *PROBE: Did you consider collecting data that could be used to evaluate the program? Did you work with an evaluation committee? A consultant?*
  - c. How did you develop a sustainability plan? *PROBE: Did you propose a strategy for raising funds to continue the program after grant funding ended?*
9. Over what period of time (total number of days, weeks, or months) did you work on the proposal, from your decision to apply to the day you submitted the application?
10. Did you have someone review drafts of your proposal and/or give you advice about it? If so, who was it, and how did they help?
11. Did you seek and/or receive assistance from OPERATING DIVISION in preparing your grant application? If so, what help did you receive, and how useful was it? *PROBE: bidder's workshops or conference calls, individual contact with federal staff either by phone or email, webcasts, other)?*
12. Now I'd like to talk about your experience with actually putting the grant application together and submitting it. Tell me about your experiences, both positive and negative, with completing the following steps for your fiscal year 2006 GRANT PROGRAM NAME application:
  - a. Following instructions provided in the grant program announcement for completing the application.
  - b. Determining the criteria that the government would be using for making grant award decisions.
  - c. Understanding and/or meeting federal requirements for administration, accounting, and reporting on grant activities and funds.
  - d. Understanding and/or meeting federal regulations or guidelines pertaining to charitable choice or faith-based applicants. *PROBE: Such as separating service delivery from religious activities? Meeting hiring requirements?*
  - e. Identifying costs that were allowable according to the grant requirements.
  - f. Completing the budget form.
  - g. Completing the budget narrative (which explains the budget and documents costs).

- h. Completing required certifications and assurances *PROBE: For example, certifications regarding lobbying and drug-free workplace.*
- i. Registering at grants.gov on the internet.
- j. Submitting the application via the grants.gov website.

**E. UNDERSTANDING WHY YOUR APPLICATION WAS SUCCESSFUL OR UNSUCCESSFUL (12 minutes)**

Now I would like to ask you about what lessons others could learn from your experience.

- 13. Your 2006 application to NAME OF PROGRAM AND OPERATING DIVISION was SUCCESSFUL/UNSUCCESSFUL, is that correct?
  - a. Why do you think ORGANIZATION NAME was AWARDED/NOT AWARDED the grant? In your opinion, what made your application successful/unsuccessful?
  - b. Did you receive any feedback from OPERATING DIVISION about why your organization was AWARDED/NOT AWARDED the grant? If so, what reasons were given? How helpful was this feedback and why?
- 14. IF ORGANIZATION'S GRANT APPLICATION WAS SUCCESSFUL: Are there any special strategies or approaches you used on the application for GRANT PROGRAM NAME or that you use in general on grant applications to help ensure success? If so, what are they?  
  
IF ORGANIZATION'S GRANT APPLICATION WAS NOT SUCCESSFUL: If you could write this application and submit it over again, would you do anything differently? If so, what would you do differently?
- 15. What do you think are the biggest challenges in winning federal grant funds that organizations like yours face?
  - a. In your opinion, what can organizations do to overcome these challenges?
  - b. Do you have suggestions for steps the federal government could take to help organizations overcome these challenges?
- 16. Faith-based organizations may sometimes face unique challenges in preparing and submitting federal grant applications.
  - a. Do you think that ORGANIZATION NAME has experienced any special challenges applying or being considered for this or other federal grants due to the faith-based nature of your organization or of the program for which you sought funding?

- b. Do you think that OPERATING DIVISION or others in the federal government, or those who serve on the panels that review federal grant applications, have any special concerns or biases regarding certain types of organizations or providers? *PROBE: For example, very small organizations, organizations from some parts of the country, faith-based organizations?* What do you think these concerns or biases might be?

**F. WRAP UP**

17. Are there any other lessons learned from your experience applying for federal grants that you would like to share before we end the interview?

Thank you again for participating in the interview and survey!



**APPENDIX C**

**FOCUS GROUP GUIDE FOR FEDERAL GRANT MANAGERS**

# Understanding Barriers and Successful Strategies for Faith-Based Organizations in Accessing Grants

## Focus Group Guide for Federal Grant Managers

### INTRODUCTION (10 minutes)

My name is [NAME] and I work for Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., an independent research firm. We are doing a study for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to learn about the experiences of faith-based organizations that apply for federal grants.

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this conversation. Your participation is very important to the success of the study. Today I'd like to learn about your experiences with the grant review process, your observations of grant quality and competitiveness, and your experiences with proposals from faith-based organizations.

- I'm going to moderate the discussion. It is really important for everyone to speak up so we can have a lively and informative conversation.
- We have many topics to cover during our discussion. At times, I may need to move the conversation along to be sure we cover everything.
- It will be helpful if you speak one at a time, so everyone has a chance to talk.
- We ask that we all respect each other's points of view. There are no right and wrong answers, and it is okay to disagree. You are the experts; we want to learn from you.
- We also ask that you not repeat any of the conversation you've heard here after you leave the room today.
- I would like to tape record today's conversation. I am taping it so I can listen to it later when I write up my notes. No one besides our research team will listen to the tape.
- We realize some things about this topic could be sensitive. We hope you will feel comfortable enough to be candid with us. We are not here because we suspect people are doing something wrong or improper. Everything you say here is confidential. Only our research team will have access to our notes and the tape. When we write our report, we will include a summary of people's ideas and opinions, but no one will be identified or quoted by name.
- The discussion will last about 90 minutes, and we will not take any formal breaks. But please feel free to get up at any time if you need to, such as to stretch or go to the restroom.

Once again, thank you for coming today. Let's get started.

**Ice Breaker:** To begin, let's go around the room and introduce ourselves. Please tell us your first name, and what you think is the most challenging aspect of reviewing and selecting grant applications, and the most rewarding aspect.

## A. PROCESS OF REVIEWING FEDERAL GRANT APPLICATIONS (10 minutes)

1. To make sure we all have a common understanding of the grant review process, could someone please walk us step-by-step through the grant review process—that is, the process of reviewing and scoring grant applications once they have been received, and of selecting awardees?
  - AFTER ONE PERSON DESCRIBES THE PROCESS: Procedures for reviewing grants may vary somewhat by operating division and grant type. Does anyone follow a different set of steps? If so, can you please describe the differences for the group?
  - As a grant manager, what is your role in the grant review process?
  - After applications are scored by review panel members, do you make the final selection of applications recommended for funding?
    - IF YES: What kinds of criteria do you typically use?
    - Do the criteria vary by grant program? Can you give me some examples?
    - IF NO: Who makes the final selection? What kinds of criteria are typically used?
2. In typical grant reviews you have managed, what proportion of review panel members are federal staff, and what proportion are external reviewers?
  - How do you select review panel members?
    - How do you select external reviewers, and what qualifications do they usually have? How does this differ by grant type? Do you ever need different types of reviewers to review grants from different types of applicants? Can you give us any examples?
  - Have you ever managed a grant review panel that includes reviewers having expertise on faith-based organizations?
    - IF YES: What types of organizations were they from? Can you give me some examples? Why were these reviewers selected? Was it because they were from faith-based organizations or because of their expertise in a specific area, or just by chance?

## B. QUALITY OF GRANT APPLICATIONS (10 minutes)

3. Now, I'd like you to think about the applications you have received in the past two years in response to a typical program announcement. Roughly what percentage of applications are usually what you consider to be strong applications—that is, very competitive for funding?
  - What is it that makes some applications especially strong or competitive? *PROBE: Well written? Clear and concise? Demonstrated knowledge of target population? Well-qualified staff proposed? Strong community partners? Clear evaluation plans? Adequate sustainability plans?*

4. What kinds of weaknesses or mistakes do you most often see in grant applications? *PROBE: Not well written? Proposal does not follow format and outline described in program announcement? Staff don't meet qualifications described in the program announcement? No demonstrated experience providing the service or working with the target population? Weak evaluation plan? Weak or no sustainability plan? No consultation with community in developing the proposal? Other?*
5. Some grant applications never get to the review process at all because they are screened out for being out of compliance with submission requirements. When this happens, what are the main reasons for being screened out? *PROBE: Failure to submit all required forms? Late submission? Ineligible applicant? Improper format? Proposal not responsive to grant announcement (in what ways)? Other?*

**C. EXPERIENCE REVIEWING PROPOSALS FROM FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS  
(25 minutes)**

Applications for federal grants are received from many types of organizations. Recently, faith-based organizations have become eligible to apply for more types of grants. We would like to know what you have observed about how these applicants fare in the review process.

6. When reviewing grant applications as part of a review panel, are panel members able to identify applications from faith-based organizations? Are you as the grant manager able to identify applications from faith-based organizations?
  - IF YES: How do they/you usually identify applications from faith-based organizations? *PROBE: By name of the organization? By the description of the organization in the proposal? By the narrative description of services to be provided?*
  - Do you think it matters for any reason whether you or the reviewers can determine or are aware whether an applicant is an FBO or not? Why or why not?
7. When managing a grant review panel, have you ever received questions from reviewers about how to evaluate applications from faith-based organizations? What questions did you receive, and how did you respond?
8. In your role as grant manager, have you yourself ever had any questions about how to evaluate applications from faith-based organizations? What were they?
9. Are any additional criteria used when reviewing applications from faith-based organizations?
  - For example, do you look for evidence of separation of religious activities in time and place from service delivery?
  - Do you look for evidence of nondiscriminatory hiring practices?
10. In your opinion, what are the typical strengths of applications from faith-based organizations? What are their typical mistakes or weaknesses?

11. From your observation, do you think grant reviewers ever have concerns or questions about whether faith-based organizations have the capacity to provide promised services, or whether it is appropriate for them to receive federal funds to do so?

**D. PROVIDING FEEDBACK ON GRANT APPLICATIONS (10 minutes)**

12. What is the process of providing feedback to grant applicants, including both successful and unsuccessful applicants? What kind of feedback do unsuccessful applicants automatically receive, and what do they have to request?
  - From your experience, are faith-based applicants more or less likely than other types of applicants to request feedback?
  - How helpful do you think the written and direct feedback is that applicants receive? Why? Do you think there are ways to make the feedback more useful to applicants? How?

**E. RECOMMENDATIONS ABOUT THE REVIEW PROCESS (10 minutes)**

Now I'd like to ask you some questions about whether there are ways to improve the review process.

13. Regardless of the type of application or applicant being reviewed, what are the most difficult aspects of the grant review process? Are there ways you can think of to improve the process, or make it go more smoothly?
14. In your opinion, would any type of additional training and/or guidance be valuable in assisting review panelists to evaluate applications from faith-based organizations?
15. Is there any additional training or guidance that would help grant managers in overseeing reviews of applications from faith-based organizations?

**F. RECOMMENDATIONS AND ADVICE FOR FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS (15 minutes)**

The process of applying for and administering federal grants can be daunting to some organizations—such as small community-based groups, faith-based groups, or others.

16. Do you think faith-based organizations—especially those that might be new to the federal grant process—are able to compete for federal grants on an equal footing with other kinds of applicants? If not, what do you see as the main barriers that faith-based organizations face to obtaining discretionary federal grant funds? *PROBE: Lack of information about the availability of funds? Lack of staff skills in writing grant applications? Lack of experience in service provision? Lack of qualified staff?*

17. Federal grant funds are limited, so not every applicant can win a grant. What can faith-based organizations themselves do to improve the quality of their grant applications and their chances of winning grant awards?
18. In your opinion, what kinds of assistance or tools might help faith-based organizations improve the quality of their grant applications?

**G. WRAP UP**

We are reaching the end of the time we have for this conversation.

20. Are there any other comments related to reviewing grant applications from faith-based organizations or any other recommendations that you would like to make before we close?

Thank you so much for taking the time to participate in this discussion!

**APPENDIX D**

**FOCUS GROUP GUIDE FOR FEDERAL GRANT REVIEWERS**

# Understanding Barriers and Successful Strategies for Faith-Based Organizations in Accessing Grants

## Focus Group Guide for Federal Grant Reviewers

### INTRODUCTION (10 minutes)

My name is [NAME] and I work for Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., an independent research firm. We are doing a study for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to learn about the experiences of faith-based organizations that apply for federal grants.

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this conversation. Your participation is very important to the success of the study. Today I'd like to learn about your experiences as federal grant reviewers, and in particular, your experiences evaluating proposals from faith-based organizations.

- I'm going to moderate the discussion. It is really important for everyone to speak up so we can have a lively and informative conversation.
- We have many topics to cover during our discussion. At times, I may need to move the conversation along to be sure we cover everything.
- It will be helpful if you speak one at a time, so everyone has a chance to talk.
- We ask that we all respect each other's points of view. There are no right and wrong answers, and it is okay to disagree. You are the experts; we want to learn from you.
- We also ask that you not repeat any of the conversation you've heard here after you leave the room today.
- I would like to tape record today's conversation. I am taping it so I can listen to it later when I write up my notes. No one besides our research team will listen to the tape.
- We realize some things about this topic could be sensitive. We hope you will feel comfortable enough to be candid with us. We are not here because we suspect people are doing something wrong or improper. Everything you say here is confidential. Only our research team will have access to our notes and the tape. When we write our report, we will include a summary of people's ideas and opinions, but no one will be identified or quoted by name.
- The discussion will last about 90 minutes, and we will not take any formal breaks. But please feel free to get up at any time if you need to, such as to stretch or go to the restroom.

Once again, thank you for coming today. Let's get started.

**Icebreaker:** To begin, let's go around the room and introduce ourselves. Please tell us your first name, and what you think is the most challenging aspect of reviewing grant applications, and the most rewarding aspect.



## **A. EXPERIENCE REVIEWING FEDERAL GRANT PROPOSALS (10 minutes)**

1. To make sure we all have a common understanding of the grant review process, could someone please walk us step-by-step through the review process, as you have experienced it?
  - AFTER ONE PERSON DESCRIBES THE PROCESS: Procedures for reviewing grants may vary somewhat by operating division and grant type. Has anyone followed a different set of steps? If so, can you please describe them for the group?
  - What are your responsibilities as a grant reviewer?
  - Tell me about the instruction or training you have received on the review process—either initially or most recently? What topics were covered, and how long did the training last?
  - Have any of you ever chaired a grant review panel?
  - IF YES: What were your responsibilities as chair?
2. In a typical grant review in which you have participated, what proportion of review panel members have been federal staff, and what proportion are external reviewers?
  - Have you ever served on a review panel with external reviewers that have expertise on faith-based organizations?
  - IF YES: What types of organizations were they from? Can you give me some examples?

## **B. QUALITY OF GRANT APPLICATIONS (10 minutes)**

3. Now, I'd like you to think about the applications you have reviewed for a typical federal grant announcement. Roughly what percentage of applications are typically what you consider to be strong applications—that is, very competitive for funding?
  - What is it that makes some applications especially strong or competitive? *PROBE: Well written? Clear and concise? Well-qualified staff proposed? Strong community partners? Clear evaluation plans? Demonstrate knowledge of target population? Previous experience? Good sustainability plan?*
4. What kinds of weaknesses or mistakes do you most often see in grant applications? *PROBE: Not well written? Proposal does not follow format and outline described in program announcement? Staff don't meet qualifications described in the program announcement? No demonstrated experience providing the service or working with the target population? Weak evaluation plan? No consultation with community in developing the proposal? Sustainability not adequately addressed?*

### C. EXPERIENCE REVIEWING PROPOSALS FROM FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS (25 minutes)

Applications for federal grants are received from many types of organizations. Recently, faith-based organizations have become eligible to apply for more types of grants. We would like to understand how this might have affected the review process, and also what you have observed about how they fare in the grant review process.

5. When reviewing grant applications as part of a review panel, are you able to identify which applications are from faith-based organizations?
  - IF YES: How do you identify them? Are there any particular items or sections of the proposal that help you identify faith-based applicants? *PROBE: By name of the organization? By the description of the organization in the proposal? By the narrative description of services to be provided?*
  - Do you think it matters, positively or negatively, whether or not reviewers can identify faith-based applicants? Does the number of faith-based applicants seem to you to be growing?
6. When serving on a grant review panel, have you or others ever had questions about how to evaluate applications from faith-based organizations?
  - IF YES: What were the questions?
  - Did you consult with the chair of your review panel or someone else? If so, what answers did you receive?
7. Are any additional criteria used when reviewing applications from faith-based organizations?
  - For example, do review panels look for evidence of separation of religious activities in time and place from service delivery?
  - Do panels look for evidence of nondiscriminatory hiring practices?
  - IF YES: Can you provide a few examples of situations in which applications have appeared not to meet these criteria? *PROBE: What information or evidence in application directly led to the conclusion that applicant DID NOT meet these criteria?*
  - Can you provide a few examples of situations in which this came up, but the applications have met the criteria? *PROBE: What information or evidence in application directly led to the conclusion that applicant DID meet these criteria?*
8. In thinking about the applications from faith-based organizations you have reviewed, what are their typical strengths and weaknesses?

- Do applications from different types of faith-based organizations—such as affiliates of large, national networks, small nonprofits or interfaith groups, and congregations—have different kinds of strengths and weaknesses? What are they, and can you give me some examples?
9. From your observation, do you think grant reviewers ever have concerns or questions about whether faith-based organizations have the capacity to provide promised services, or whether it is appropriate for them to receive federal funds to do so?

**D. PROVIDING FEEDBACK ON GRANT APPLICATIONS (5 minutes)**

10. Tell me about the feedback that applicants receive on their grant proposals, including both successful and unsuccessful applicants.
- How helpful do you think the feedback is that applicants receive? Why?
11. Have any of you ever been involved in providing such feedback to applicants?
- IF YES: What was your role? Have you ever spoken directly on applicants about the written feedback they received?
12. Do you have any suggestions or ideas about ways to make feedback to unsuccessful applicants more useful to them in improving the quality of future applications?

**E. RECOMMENDATIONS ABOUT THE REVIEW PROCESS (10 minutes)**

Now I'd like to ask you some questions about whether there are ways to improve the review process.

13. Regardless of the type of application or applicant being reviewed, what are the most difficult aspects of the grant review process? Are there ways you can think of to improve the process, or make it go more smoothly? *PROBE: Better or more training for review panel members? More or different information provided on applicants? Structure of review process such as time or scoring?*

**F. RECOMMENDATIONS AND ADVICE FOR FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS (15 minutes)**

The process of applying for and managing federal grants can be daunting to some organizations—such as small community-based groups, some faith-based groups, or others.

14. Do you think faith-based organizations are able to compete for federal grants on an equal footing with other kinds of applicants? If not, what do you see as the main barriers that faith-based organizations face in obtaining federal grant funds? *PROBE: Lack of information about*

*the availability of funds? Lack of staff skills in writing grant applications? Lack of experience in service provision? Lack of qualified staff?*

15. In your opinion, what kinds of assistance or tools might help faith-based organizations improve the quality of their grant applications?
16. As a previous grant reviewer, what advice would you give to faith-based organizations applying for federal grant funds about how to improve the quality of their applications? Would this advice apply to any type of applicant, or do you think there are special issues faith-based applicants will need to address?
  - What can faith-based organizations do to improve their chances of receiving grant awards?
17. Do you have any advice you could give to the DHHS operating division(s) for whom you have reviewed grants about how to make discretionary grant programs more accessible to faith-based organizations? Would this advice apply to any type of applicant, or do you think there are special issues faith-based applicants will need to address?

## **G. WRAP UP**

We are reaching the end of the time we have for this conversation.

18. Are there any other comments related to reviewing grant applications from faith-based organizations or any other recommendations that you would like to make before we close?

Thank you so much for taking the time to participate in this discussion!