NISN FACILITIES PROGRAM

Grant and Proposal Development

Topic 3: Demonstrating Project Need

This slide set is part of a learning module for school leaders who are writing grants and other types of funding proposals.

For access to other slides in this series and referenced tools, visit the Facilities Resource Hub and Preparing Grant Requests module.

TOPIC OVERVIEW

This topic covers writing of the problem or need statement. This section comes early in grant proposals and sets the stage for your proposed solution. This section is also often research heavy.

THE PROBLEM: Function of a Need Statement

NEED STATEMENT

Typical placement of the needs statement or problem description in a grant narrative

Needs Statement

Project Design

Goals and Objectives

Organization & Partner Info

Evaluation

FUNCTION OF NEED STATEMENT

Characteristics of Strong Need or Problem Statements:

- Makes a critical first impression and justify your proposed work
- Focuses on the need of the community and/or population served
- Demonstrates expertise
- Shows that the need is important, significant, and urgent/timely
- Is supported with recent, quality research
- Answers the question "Why care?"

FUNCTION OF NEED STATEMENT

A grant proposal, distilled...

Problem + **Action** = **Solution**

FUNCTION OF NEED STATEMENT

A grant proposal, distilled...

Problem + **Action** = **Solution**
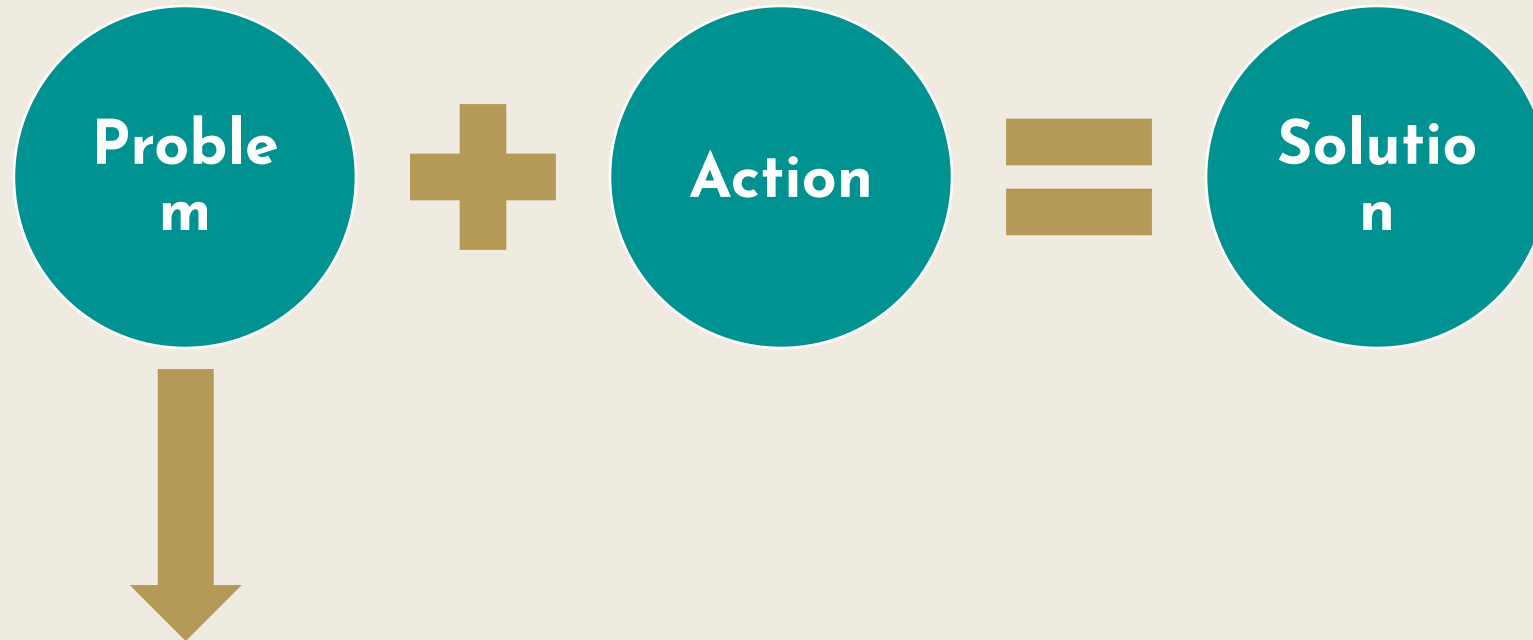
Problem or need. This is for the constituency, not your agency

Avoid Agency Framing: "We need a new teacher for Lakota language classes."

Use Constituency Framing: "Native language loss is increasing, and many students only have Lakota learning opportunities when they are provided at school."

FUNCTION OF NEED STATEMENT

A grant proposal, distilled...

Problem + **Action** = **Solution**

What *you* propose to do to address the problem

The action is what you propose to do about the need or problem. This is not part of the needs statement, but it should address the needs you describe.

FUNCTION OF NEED STATEMENT

Because this is usually the first in-depth section the reader sees, this is your first big opportunity to build trust. What do we mean by "trust"? This is where you set the stage for yourself as an expert, you demonstrate insightful knowledge about the specific area of need, and you show that you are honest in portraying an issue.

THE PROBLEM: Developing the Need Statement

Photo Credit: NACA

THE PROBLEM DESCRIPTION SCOPE

Think like a reporter (again)

- Who?
- What?
- Where?
- Why?
- When?

THE PROBLEM DESCRIPTION SCOPE

- **Who** | Who is the target population? What are the characteristics and circumstances for this population?

- **What** | What is the problem—not only from your vantage point but from the community or population of focus' view? What is currently being done to address this problem?

- **Where** | Where is the problem happening or where is the population you'll serve located?

- **Why** | Why is this problem or need happening? If it's not clear, why is the situation you're describing problematic? Tip: Identifying root causes and system failures helps you avoid deficit-based framing of populations.

- **When** | When did the problem start? Did this problem become significantly worse recently? Is this a critical time of need or of opportunity to address the challenges?

USING DATA AND RESEARCH

Use of Data

- Data and statistics back up what you're saying. They are supporting but not the foundation of your needs statement.

- Data points alone are not persuasive. They need to be presented with context.

- Don't seek the source that gives you the "best numbers" - seek sources that are high quality.

USING DATA AND RESEARCH

Good Practices for Data and Research

- Timely: Use the most current, quality data available - even if old data supports your problem better!

- Relatively Unbiased: There are no perfect, bias-free data sources but avoid research that is not transparent about data collection or only shows data supporting a certain agenda.

- Reliable: Use reliable, verifiable sources. You want to be sure that the organization compiling the research is credible.

USING DATA AND RESEARCH

Good Practices for Data and Research

Sources of qualitative (descriptive) data and less formal sources of quantitative (countable) data can be important too. Examples:

- Top concerns or goals that were identified by area residents in a community meeting

- Staff survey results on training priorities

- Powerful quotes from outside leaders that recognize the issue

- Stories of students or families that illustrate the issues

- School and student data that is not captured in public, standardized data sets

Data Functions

- Describes
- Compares
- Shows trends
- Explains

Photo Credit: NACA
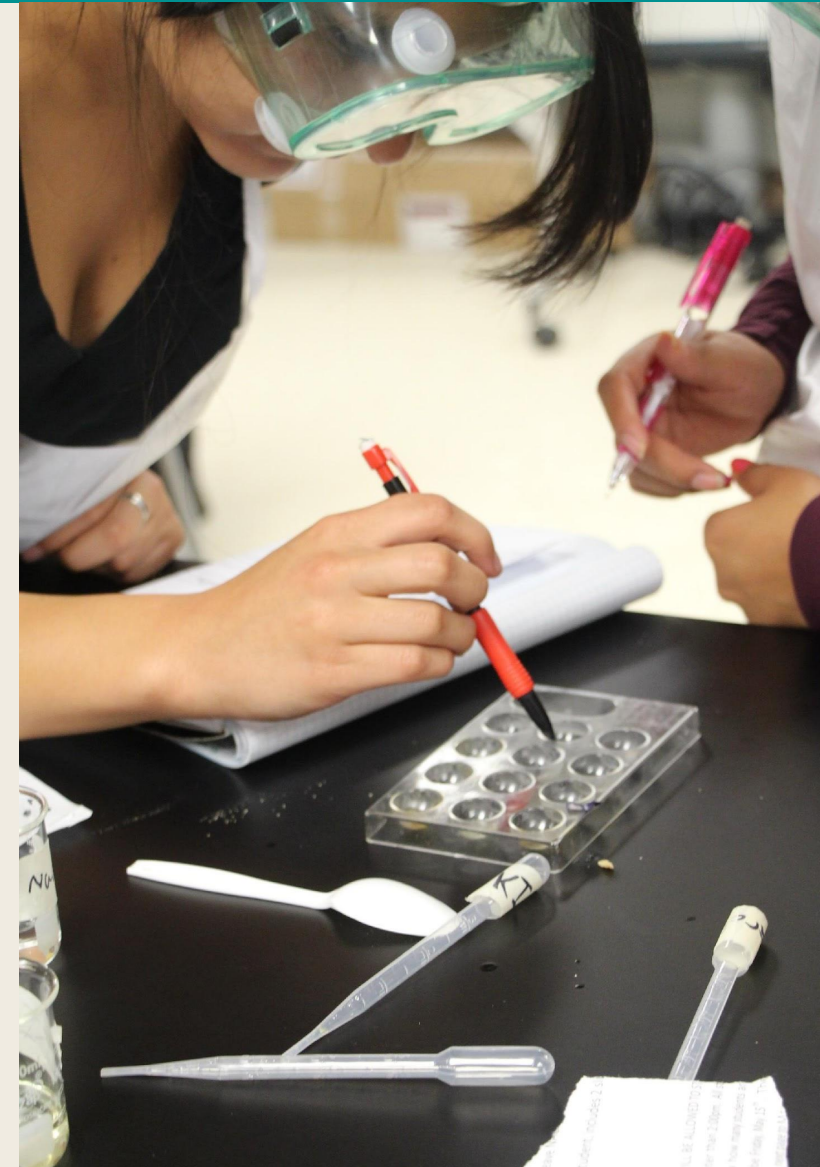
FUNCTION OF DATA & DATA RESEARCH

Examples from the 2019 National Indian Education Study

- **Describes:** 36% of eighth grade teachers report that they never have students read about, or discuss, current issues of concern to the American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) community.

- **Compares:** Among fourth grade AI/AN students with higher reading scores, 93% have home internet access. This falls to 62% for students with lower reading scores.

- **Shows Trends:** Average fourth grade reading scores for AI/AN students in BIE schools has increased steadily between 2005 and 2019, increasing from 178 to 186.

- **Explains:** Community engagement matters—higher performing AI/AN students were more likely to attend schools with increased family involvement in voluntary programs and parent-teacher organizations.

DATA AND RESEARCH SOURCES

- US Census: www.census.gov

- Census My Tribal Area: www.census.gov/tribal

- Census Household Pulse (Covid survey): www.census.gov/householdpulsedata

- Department of Health & Human Services: www.hhs.gov/reference

- CDC Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System: www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/index.htm

- AECF Kids Count Data Center: www.datacenter.kidscount.org

- Prosperity Now Scorecard: www.scorecard.prosperitynow.org

- Rural Health Information Hub: www.ruralhealthinfo.org

- NCES National Indian Education Study: www.nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/nies/

- State and tribal health and education departments