



Welcome to

Writing Winning Proposals: Advice from an experienced grant reviewer

Corporation for
**NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE** 



Dial:

Passcode:

Today's Team



Dennis Norris
VISTA Blend Instructor



Sarah Jordan
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VISTA alum 2014-2015
Mentor Greenville
Greenville, SC

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Session Goals

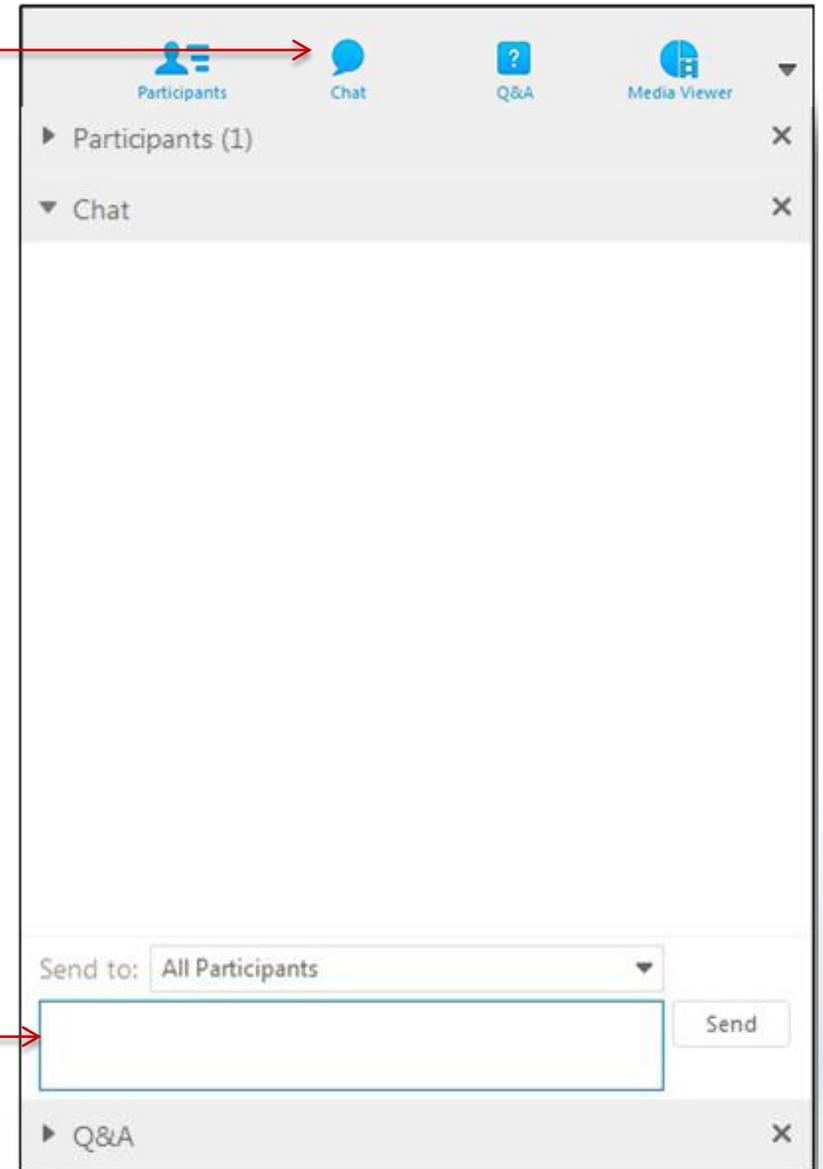
By the end of the webinar, you will be able to:

- Distinguish between a grant and a gift.
- Draft an effective letter of inquiry.
- Appeal to grant reviewers by including information that makes your grant proposal exceptional.
- View each proposal submission as a learning opportunity.

Chat Question

What's your biggest fear about writing a grant proposal?

Click this button if you don't see the chat panel.



Gifts vs. grants

Gifts



- Most come from **individuals**
- Made in response to an **“ask”**
- Also known as a **donation** or contribution

Grants



- Most come from **foundations**
- Made in response to a **proposal**
- Also known as a **contract** or agreement

More about gifts vs. grants

Gifts

- Donor information is owned by the nonprofit and is **not public** information
- Donor gets at least a **thank you** letter with information on the **tax benefits** of the donation

Grants

- Information on funding organizations is **public** information
- Recipient receives a binding **legal contract** with instructions on how to report progress and how to account for every single penny

Examples of good gift solicitation language:

- We believe that lives can experience healing and joy in an environment where unconditional love and the wonderment of a horse connect, creating a haven for unbridled hope. (Agape Therapeutic Riding)
- TNT and LLS are changing the landscape of blood cancer, not someday but today, making TNT the perfect way to fundraise. (The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society)
- The greatest casualty of war is being forgotten. (Wounded Warrior Project).



Examples of good grant language:

- Equestrian therapy for patients with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder has been proven as an effective treatment in several university studies, most notably the recent work of the University of Florida Hospital staff with a group of sixty amputees. (Agape Therapeutic Riding)
- Blood-related cancers have gone from being one of the most incurable forms of the disease, to one of the most curable, due mainly to research partnerships formed between the LLS and our nation's premier cancer centers. (The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society)
- Soldiers returning from war face problems ranging from government bureaucracy in receiving health benefits, to family and friends who do not have the proper tools to recognize or deal with depressive or addictive behaviors. (Wounded Warrior Project).

What Makes Grant Reviewers Smile

- The absence of fundraising language.
- Concise, business-like writing that describes a business relationship.
- Proposals that are well-structured.
- Realistic programming that can be implemented with the available funding.
- Proposals showing a strong understanding of the problem to be solved.



Reactive vs. Proactive Grant Opportunities

Reactive grant opportunities are specific competitions for which the funding parameters are already set.

Proactive grant opportunities are ongoing and represent the philanthropic goals of a foundation.



Reactive Grant Opportunities - Examples

United Way of Central Indiana “Youth As Resources (YAR)”

- grants to youth groups for youth-led service projects
- workshops on how to apply (dates on website)
- application deadline (1/22/2016)
- grant amounts depend on how much was raised in the previous campaign

Proactive Grant Opportunities - Example

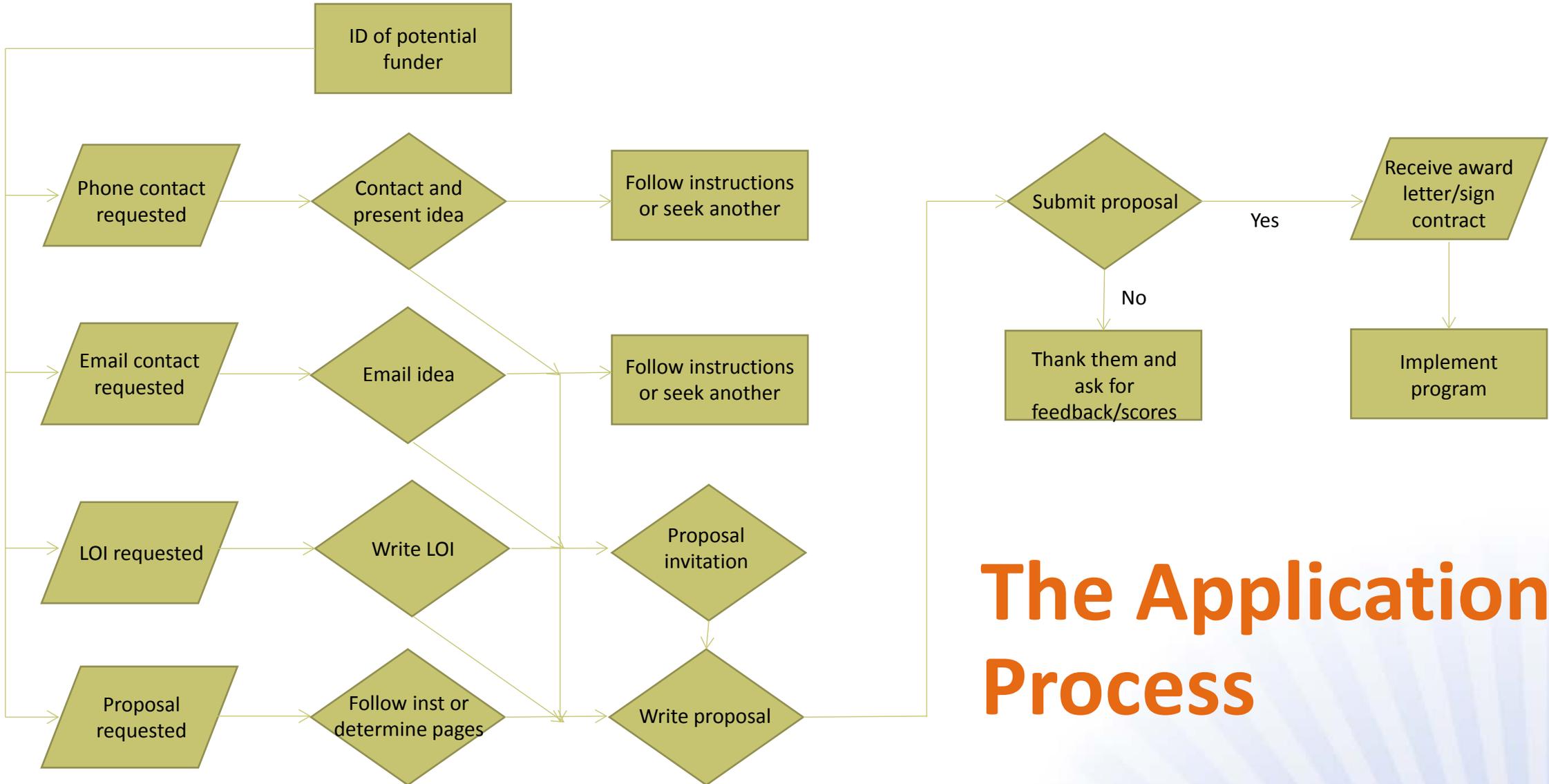
- Lilly Endowment has areas of funding that include religion, education, and community development.
- Lilly Endowment's areas of funding remain constant.
- Lilly Endowment requires an LOI to get started in their process and they make funding decisions quarterly.



Project C.R.O.A.K.!

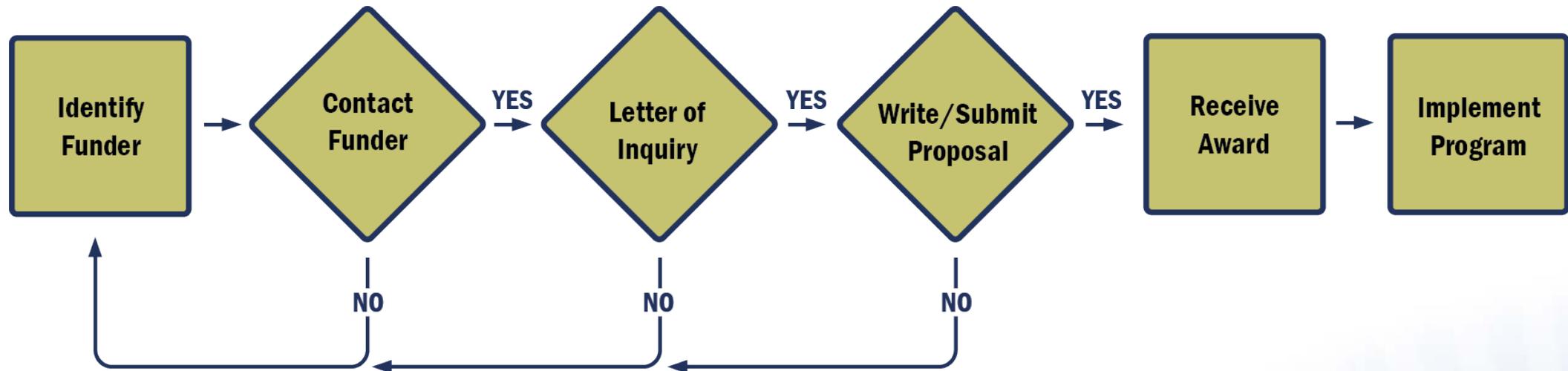
- Creeks, Rivers, Oceans and Kids
- Proactively researched funders interested in environmental education
- Process began with a letter of inquiry, using business language that aligned the project goals with the funder's philanthropic goals





The Application Process

The Application Process



Letter of Inquiry (LOI)

Expected

- The first sentence states:
 - This is who we are and what we do.
 - This is what we want.
 - This is what we want it for.
- The rest supports all of that and touches on measurable objectives.
- It is a letter, so address it properly and sign it.

Exceptional

- 1-page letter is full of crisp, clear sentences; very easy to read.
- The primary focus is on the measurable objectives, which are really the ROI for the funder.
- The letter requests the opportunity to write a full proposal.

Guest Speaker



Sarah Jordan Holcombe

Development Associate

Children's Museum of the Upstate in Greenville, SC

VISTA alum 2014-2015

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Sarah Jordan's Tips – Prep and LOI



- Reviewed previous grants
- Hear from grant reviewers
- Researched grantors past giving and requirements
- Make initial contact with a person at funding agency
- Use LOI as outline
- Use language of grantor to describe program



What if the funder simply says, “write a proposal”?

- A. Submit a Letter of Inquiry.
- B. Write a narrative about your project.
- C. Submit a standard proposal format.
- D. Send an email to the funder and ask what they want.



A Standard 10-Page Proposal

- Executive Summary [1 page]
- Introduction [1 page]
- Goal Statement and Objectives [½ page]
- Needs Statement [1½ pages]
- Methods [4 pages]
- Evaluation [1 page]
- Existing and Future Funding [½ page]
- Budget and Budget Narrative [1½ pages]



Executive Summary – 1 page

Expected

- Good summary of entire proposal
- Gives more info than LOI on measurable objectives and methodology
- Includes the amount requested and what it will be used for
- *The first thing read by a grant reviewer, and often the **only** thing read for the first round.*

Exceptional

- Flows seamlessly from
 - first informative paragraph to
 - a brief need statement (para. 2) to
 - objectives and methodology (para. 3-4), to
 - the summary paragraph.
- Comprehensive, yet compact with crisp and clear writing that shows the program fits the funder's goals.
- *You should be able to reconstruct your proposal using the Executive Summary.*

Introduction – 1 page

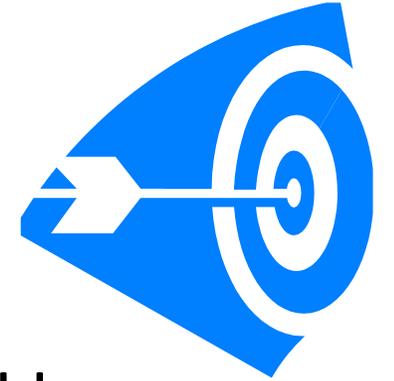
Expected

- Introduce your organization in terms relevant to the grant opportunity.
- Establish credibility and illuminate your accomplishments.
- Provide mission and vision statements.

Exceptional

- Use demographic or socioeconomic data to show why your organization exists.
- List relevant awards received.
- Expand on mission and vision statements to bring them to life.
- Overlap your project goals with the funder's goals.

Goal Statement / Objectives – ½ page



Expected

- A goal that is ambitious but achievable.
- Objectives that lead to your goal.
- At the end of your project, objectives tell you the degree to which you were successful.

Exceptional

- An exceptional proposal has 3-5 strong objectives.
- An exceptional objective describes *who* is going to do *what*, *when* they are going to do it, and *how* it will be measured.
- Exceptional objectives do a good job of measuring.

Needs Statement – 1 ½ pages

Expected

- Is realistic – doesn't try to solve the world's problems.
- Makes funder confident you understand the problem.
- Shows importance, but doesn't convey unsolvable gloom and doom.

Exceptional

- Needs statement quotes valid and up-to-date research.
- Shows the problem on a wide scale and then shows how it affects your clients.
- The objectives are directly related to the need.

Methods – 4 pages

Expected

- Explains the activities you will use to achieve the objectives.
- Includes day-to-day responsibilities, who performs them, timelines, facilities and resources needed, and how the clients are selected.
- Should be a complete roadmap of your program.

Exceptional

- Methods used are economical and achieve objectives in the most cost-efficient manner.
- Sufficient division of labor so that no one individual is burdened with the bulk of the work.
- Periodic measurements built in to gauge progress.

Evaluation – 1 page

Expected

- Valid methods are used to evaluate progress toward objectives.
- Ties into the Needs Statement so that results can be used to further understand the problem.
- Includes a plan for disseminating the results.

Exceptional

- Evaluation techniques are both valid and creative.
- Designed by someone with evaluation expertise.



Future and Existing Funding – ½ page

Expected

- Lists others sources of funding for your program
- Lists methods for seeking additional funding
- Shows that you understand the importance of sustainability

Exceptional

- Shows investment by others or by your own organization
- Includes in-kind contributions as well

Budget & Budget Narrative – 1 ½ pages

Expected

- Accurately reflects your project
- Avoids large amounts under vague categories like “Contingency” or “Miscellaneous”
- Separates personnel from non-personnel costs

Exceptional

- Clearly shows what the funder will provide, and what you and others will provide
- Is easy to for non-financial people to read
- Explains the budget with clear descriptions of revenue and expenses

Tips for Grant Submission



- Submit your proposal on time.
- Use a readable font – Times New Roman 12 point is safe.
- Stay within page limits.
- Attach the proposal with a paper clip or black clamp rather than a staple.
- Only submit an original copy.
- Follow standard desktop publishing rules.

Sarah Jordan's Tips – Proposal & response

- Consult resources to help you write
 - Shapingoutcomes.org, networkforgood.org
 - Complete Book of Grant Writing
- Get “fresh eyes” on your proposal
- Develop a strong sustainability plan
- Send photos, examples of work, quotes from participants
- If denied, ask for feedback
- Library!



If you are funded. . .

- Read grant agreements carefully before signing. Make sure they reflect your proposal.
- Invite your funder to key events.
- Share success stories with your funder while the project is happening.
- Be on time with reports; make sure they are complete and accurate.
- Account for every single penny.
- Remember, this is a business transaction.



If you aren't funded. . .

- Thank the funder for the opportunity and ask to review the evaluations of your proposal.
- Ask if you may resubmit your proposal with changes.
- Never complain about not being funded; not even to friends, family, or staff.
- Learn from the experience, adjust your proposal if necessary, and seek another funder.

Resources

VISTA Campus

- Researching Grants Tutorial
- Webinar on Researching Grants: Finding the Right Opportunities for Your Project

Online Elsewhere

- Foundation Center – FDO online – foundationcenter.org and grantspace.org
- Guidestar.org – Information about non-profits including 990s
- GrantsAlert.com – education grants
- Grants.gov – federal grants

A Resource on Writing

- I purchased this small, \$10 book early in my career and I've never stopped using it.
 - *The PC is not a Typewriter, also The MAC is not a Typewriter*, by Robin Williams.



Next steps...

1. Write the introductory paragraph for an LOI, using grant language.
2. Identify data sources you can use for a Statement of Need.
3. Draft a Goal Statement and several objectives for the project you want to get funded.



Evaluation

- Please take a few moments to share your feedback through the quick poll on the right side of the screen.
- How can we improve these sessions? What topics should we include in future webinars?
- Thank you very much for your time and participation!

Questions?

- To ask a question verbally, call in using the number on this slide and press *1
- To ask a question electronically, use the Q&A feature located in the bottom right corner of the screen. Please ask “All Panelists”

The screenshot shows a user interface with a sidebar on the left containing three items: 'Participants (2)', 'Chat', and 'Q&A'. The 'Q&A' item is highlighted with a red circle. Below the sidebar, there is a section titled 'All (0)'. At the bottom of the interface, there is a form with a dropdown menu labeled 'Ask:' containing the text 'All Panelists', which is also circled in red. To the right of the dropdown is a 'Send' button. Below the dropdown is a large empty text input field.

Thank You for Your Participation!

If you have further questions or for more information, contact us:
VISTAwebinars@cns.gov

Our next webinar:

Using the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award

January 21, 2016

2:00 pm Eastern

*Visit the Webinars for VISTAs page on the VISTA Campus
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