

Journal

of the



Editors' Note

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the 2020 edition of the *Journal of the Grant Professionals Association*. As the research publication of the GPA, the *Journal* provides a forum for scholarly examination of the profession, discussions of best practices, and presentation of case studies. The *Journal* is devoted to the improvement of the grants professional and our growing and changing profession.

Like previous editions, this year's *Journal* mirrors the diversity of work in our profession, which provides a rich variety of experience from which to learn. The five articles in this edition reflect this diversity and opportunity for learning. We thank the authors for their time and dedication to preparing and writing scholarly manuscripts that bring new research and insights to our professional community.

As with recent editions, the 2020 *Journal* also includes GPA *Strategy Papers* published in 2020. *Strategy Papers* stimulate discussion and innovative thinking about a single topic that furthers the knowledge, skills, and understanding of grant professionals. *Strategy Papers* are shorter than full-length *Journal* articles and offer practical solutions to current and emerging issues. Like *Journal* articles, *Strategy Papers* undergo a double-blind peer-review process.

For the 2021 *Journal* and *Strategy Papers*, we invite you to contribute your valuable experience to these publications, as either an author or as a peer reviewer. We seek articles that address new ideas in our field, contribute research-based information, provide a case study or best practices, or examine any of the GPCI competencies and skills. We seek peer reviewers to evaluate manuscripts submitted to these publications. Please contact us at journal@grantprofessionals.org if you are interested.

We would like to thank the authors, editorial board, and peer review managers for contributing extensive time and effort to this year's *Journal*, especially given the challenges posed by COVID-19 during this year. We also deeply appreciate the time and effort of the peer reviewers in providing valuable insights for *Journal* articles and *Strategy Papers* alike; while anonymous, the peer review team members are critical to ensuring the strong professional caliber of GPA's publications.

We welcome your comments on this issue of the *Journal*, and we look forward to your suggestions and article ideas for future issues.

Sean M. Kirby
Editor

Joshua Einhorn
Associate Editor

About the *Journal of the Grant Professionals Association*

The *Journal of the Grant Professionals Association* is devoted to the improvement of the grants professional and the profession. The *Journal* provides a forum for scholarly examination of the profession, discussions of best practices, and presentation of case studies. Papers submitted to the *Journal* are peer-reviewed by top professionals from around the country.

Proposals for articles may be submitted at any time to the *Journal's* Editorial Board via email to journal@grantprofessionals.org. Proposals must be no more than 300 words and follow the guidelines published on the GPA website (www.grantprofessionals.org/journal). Both proposals and full articles must be submitted as email attachments in Microsoft Word format. Each full article must contain a short biography of each author (100 words) and an abstract (150 words). References, punctuation, grammar usage, and paragraph formatting must follow the *APA Style Manual for Publication* (6th Edition). Submissions are peer-reviewed anonymously. Once selected for publication, editors will work with authors to address reviewer comments and other necessary revisions. The Editorial Board reserves the right to delay or withhold publication of any article submitted.

All submissions accepted for publication (except reprints of articles) will remain the copyrighted property of the GPA. Written permission must be obtained from GPA to reprint any published article. Please email journal@grantprofessionals.org with any questions. Submission requirements, annual cut-off dates, and other information are posted on the GPA website.

Articles in this publication represent the opinions and views of the author(s) only.

Editorial Board

Sean M. Kirby

Editor

Grant Specialist
Robert J. Miller and Associates
Tonawanda, NY

Joshua Einhorn, EdD

Associate Editor

Grants Officer
California State University, Northridge
Michael D. Eisner College
of Education
Northridge, CA

Johna Rodgers, GPC

Board Liaison

Principal Consultant
Johna Rodgers Consulting, LLC
Bowling Green, KY

David Lindeman, CFRE, GPC

Chair, Publications Committee

Director, Grants and Development
Society for Neuroscience
President, Global Grant Solutions LLC
Washington, DC

Peer Review Team

Joan L. Whitman, PhD

Peer Review Manager

Director of Grant Research and
Evaluation
Grant Associates LLC
Brookfield, WI

Paris K. Wilson, MPA

Assistant Peer Review Manager

Compliance Manager
Chicago International Charter School
Chicago, IL

Associates

Kelli Romero

Staff Liaison

Membership & Marketing Director
Grant Professionals Association
Overland Park, KS

Oswaldo “Ozzie” Perez

Acquisitions Manager

Coordinator, Grants and Funding
Orange County Department of
Education
Costa Mesa, CA

Carole Katz

Copy Editor/Graphic Designer

Oxford, OH

GPA Mission

The Grant Professionals Association (GPA) is a nonprofit 501(c)(6) membership association. It builds and supports an international community of grant professionals committed to serving the greater public good by practicing the highest ethical and professional standards. To achieve this mission, GPA:

- Serves as a leading authority and resource for the practice of grantsmanship in all sectors of the field
- Advances the field by promoting professional growth and development
- Enhances the public image and recognition of the profession within the greater philanthropic, public, and private funding communities, and
- Promotes positive relationships between grant professionals and their stakeholders.

GPA does not discriminate in its provision of services due to race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, ethnic group identification, sex, age, sexual orientation, and/or condition of physical or mental disability in accordance with all requirements of Federal and State Laws.

Validated Competencies and Skills

Grant Professionals Certification Institute (GPCI)

Below are the GPCI professional competencies and skills covered in the *Journal*. For more detail on each competency, please visit the GPCI website (www.grantcredential.org).

GPCI Competency 01: Knowledge of how to research, identify, and match funding resources to meet specific needs

GPCI Competency 02: Knowledge of organizational development as it pertains to grant seeking

GPCI Competency 03: Knowledge of strategies for effective program and project design and development

GPCI Competency 04: Knowledge of how to craft, construct, and submit an effective grant application

GPCI Competency 05: Knowledge of post-award grant management practices sufficient to inform effective grant design and development

GPCI Competency 06: Knowledge of nationally recognized standards of ethical practice by grant developers

GPCI Competency 07: Knowledge of practices and services that raise the level of professionalism of grant developers

GPCI Competency 08: Knowledge of methods and strategies that cultivate and maintain relationships between fund-seeking and recipient organizations and funders

GPCI Competency 09: Ability to write a convincing case for funding

Table of Contents

Journal of the Grant Professionals Association Volume 18, Number 1

Burnout in the Grants Profession: An Initial Analysis Trish Bachman, GPC, Bethany Planton, GPC, SMS, and Johna Rodgers, GPC	1
Managing Up: Explaining the Essential Need for Research Administration to Senior Leaders Sarah Marina, MA, Zoya Davis-Hamilton, EdD, CRA, and Simin Nikbin Meydani, DVM, PhD	20
The Grant Professionals Certification Institute (GPCI) Quest for Accreditation Bonnie Houk, GPC	32
The Good Financial Grant Practice (GFGP) Standard as a Fiduciary Tool for Non-Governmental Organizations Joseph Gichuru Wang'ombe, DBA, Vincent Nkundimana, MPP, and Hannah Ngugi, IBA.....	42
Maintaining GPC Validity, Reliability, and Legal Defensibility Through Analysis of the Grant Profession Amanda Day, GPC and Johna Rodgers, GPC	60

GPA Strategy Papers, Volume 7

Issue 1

Virtual Study Group for the GPC Exam: Results and Recommendations Katherine F.H. Heart, GPC, MEd and JulieAnna Carsen, GPC, BS.....	74
---	----

Issue 2

Nonconventional Tips from a Veteran Grant Professional Joshua Einhorn, EdD	81
--	----

Issue 3

Key Strategies for Compliance with the Procurement Standards under the Uniform Guidance: 2 CFR 200 of the Code of Federal Regulations Theresa Harris, EdD, CPCM	89
---	----

Burnout in the Grants Profession: An Initial Analysis

Trish Bachman, GPC

The Write Stuff Delaware, Lewes, DE

Bethany Planton, GPC, SMS

bmpconsulting, Louisville, KY

Johna Rodgers, GPC

Johna Rodgers Consulting, LLC, Bowling Green, KY

GPCI Competency 02: Knowledge of organizational development as it pertains to grant seeking

GPCI Competency 03: Knowledge of strategies for effective program and project design and development

GPCI Competency 07: Knowledge of practices and services that raise the level of professionalism of grant professionals

Abstract

Burnout is prevalent among grant professionals. For many years, burnout has been a topic of self-help literature. The World Health Organization recently acknowledged it as a specific, diagnosable syndrome resulting from chronic workplace stress, often identified by feelings of exhaustion, inefficiency, and cynicism. In 2019, three members of the Grant Professionals Association created a first-of-its-kind survey to assess the prevalence of burnout in the grants profession. A total of 345 grant professionals participated in an anonymous, online survey consisting of 21 targeted questions that assessed stress related to their work. The findings revealed that burnout affects grant professionals of all sectors and all experience levels, causing people to leave the profession at an alarming rate.

Introduction

News items appear almost daily about people quitting their jobs with no reason, collapsing at their desks, or being hospitalized due to stress. References to workplace stressors flood social media. “Burnout in the Grants Profession: An Initial Analysis” explores whether burnout is prevalent in the grants profession.

Maslach and Leiter (2016) define burnout as the three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and professional inefficacy. The recently released definition by the World Health Organization (WHO) mirrors that definition (WHO, 2018). For the first time, the organization recognizes burnout as a specific, diagnosable syndrome, “...resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed” (WHO, 2018). The WHO included the definition in the newest version of its International Classification of Diseases (ICD), revised in April 2019 and set to take effect following member endorsement in January 2022 (WHO, 2019).

The WHO also clarifies an important concept of burnout. The organization defines burnout as “...phenomena in the occupational context and should not be applied to describe experiences in other areas of life” (WHO, 2018).

To be clear, burnout in the workplace is not a new concept. Many studies show the effects of burnout on multiple health and social services fields and nonprofit organizations. Leiter et al. (2014) noted 6,000 articles, book chapters, dissertations, and other works within the academic literature on the subject of burnout. However, while grant professionals anecdotally confirm burnout as a serious issue particular to their field, it has not yet been measured or addressed. A 2019 literature review by the authors found no academic articles studying burnout in the grants profession.

This article proposes a framework to initially document burnout among grant professionals based on a survey of 345 grant professionals conducted in December 2019. It will establish a baseline for— in subsequent work—a deeper dive into the causes, economic impact, and potential remedies for burnout within the grants profession.

Literature Review

Ask anyone, “Have you ever experienced burnout?”, and they will share a story of how stress in the workplace affected their productivity and wellbeing. Regardless of the answer, the question often leads to a tangled web of stories and experiences— anecdotal reports that start with “someone I know...” or “let me tell you about what happened to me....”

The authors themselves experienced symptoms of burnout to varying degrees, which brought them together to examine whether burnout is, indeed, a valid and prevalent consequence of work in the grants profession. Burnout and self-care are topics found frequently in contemporary self-help literature. Articles support self-diagnosis

and potential steps to prevent burnout among professionals, especially women in the workplace. However, what does this information mean? More importantly, how does it apply to the work of grant professionals?

What the Authors Did Not Find

The Grant Professionals Association (GPA) is the authority on grantsmanship. Looking for information within the association's archives seemed ideal. An initial search conducted on September 11, 2019, of the *Journal of the Grant Professionals Association* published from 2002 to 2019 yielded no scholarly articles explicitly written on the topic. In addition, a review of other types of postings on the GPA website brought forth only mentions or an occasional conference session related to the topic.

Another organization closely aligned with the grants profession is the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP). The AFP focuses on fundraising as a whole, with grant writing as one component of that work. As with the GPA, the authors were unable to find any published research data or studies that address either the rate or the factors of burnout in the field as of March 10, 2020. The information found in the AFP's Research and Reports does not add to the academic knowledge of the field for grants. Further, work regarding burnout in fundraising is minimal and does not include academic study or data collection, nor does it disaggregate for the grants field.

The authors conducted a comprehensive internet search of peer-reviewed publications on Google Scholar and did not find any academic articles focused on burnout in the grants profession.

Expanding the Search

With the inconclusive evidence, the authors expanded the literature review to a) inform the investigation and b) confirm a lack of information on burnout in the field. They agreed on standard search terms:

- Burnout
- Burnout in the grants profession
- Burnout in fundraising
- Organizational culture
- Compassion fatigue
- Exhaustion
- Workplace
- Self-care
- Stress response
- Maslach

Further research led the authors to examine parallel fields, in which many grant professionals work, such as social services, human services, victim advocacy, law enforcement, medicine, and education. Additional research revealed a prevalence of articles describing burnout in high-level executives of all types and in many professions.

What the Authors Did Find

The WHO recognizes burnout as an occupational phenomenon in the 11th Revision of the International Classification of Diseases, known as ICD-11 (WHO, 2018, 2019). These findings promote a greater understanding and recognition of the condition, as well as potential paths to identify helpful countermeasures.

In actuality, the study of burnout is underway. The authors identified a large body of work associated with the research of American social psychologist Christina Maslach including the Maslach Burnout Inventory™ (MBI), which yielded results on occupational burnout (Maslach et al., n.d.). This finding created the starting point for the authors' approach to investigating the relevance and prevalence of burnout in the grants profession.

Methodology

To determine if burnout exists in the grants profession, the authors conducted an anonymous, online survey through Google Forms. The Grant Professionals Burnout Survey (Bachman et al., 2019) was open for responses from December 16 through 28, 2019. The authors promoted the survey on December 10 in the *Grant Professionals Association Weekly*, an email newsletter sent to all GPA members (more than 3,000); on December 17 in the Foundant for Grantseekers *Grantseekers Connections*, a monthly newsletter sent to Foundant for Grantseekers' subscribers (more than 46,300); on December 12 in GrantZone, a GPA member-only site; and multiple times through the authors' business and personal social media accounts (unknown reach). The survey had 345 responses.

The Grant Professionals Burnout Survey (Bachman et al., 2019) consisted of 21 questions; 20 were multiple choice and one was open-ended. The authors split the survey questions between demographic and professional arenas. The first 10 questions asked for demographic information, including race, age, gender, how long the individual has worked in the field, and how much of their time is spent on grant-related activities. The other 11 questions related to the individual's experience with workplace stress and included:

- What causes you the most stress?
- Rate the level of stress in your current position.
- Rate your level of stress outside of your current position.

- Have you ever experienced unexplained symptoms of exhaustion, including but not limited to fatigue, anxiety, sleeplessness, or poor concentration?
- Have you ever been cynical or distrustful of the motives and decisions of colleagues and/or leadership in your workplace?
- How often do you feel a lack of control related to your current professional duties?
- Do you feel you have a choice in whether you stay or leave your current position?
- Have you ever left a job or transitioned internally to a new role because you wanted to spend more time “with family” or because you “need a break”?
- Have you ever been diagnosed or hospitalized for stress-related ailment(s), including but not limited to physical conditions caused or exacerbated by stress?
- Do you think you can recognize burnout in other grant professionals?
- Do you have a personal experience you would like to share?

Findings, Analysis, and Potential Impact of Findings

Respondents

Demographic data paint a clear picture of the respondents. Simply put, the vast majority of the 345 grant professionals who answered were White, well-educated women with more than five years of experience in the field who are employed by an organization and spend most of their time on grants. Also, most were members of the Grant Professionals Association (GPA). Of the 345 respondents:

- 86% were White with just 4% identifying as Black/African American, 4% as multiple races, and less than 2% per category for other racial/ethnic categories;
- Nearly all reported at least a bachelor’s degree or higher (95%); 60% reported a graduate, professional, or doctoral degree;
- 76% have more than five years of experience in the field;
- 304 respondents were women, with just 37 men and three non-binary respondents completing the survey. One respondent preferred not to disclose;
- The majority of respondents were employees (77%), not consultants (21%). A small number were between jobs or in a different field (<2%); and,
- 77% were GPA members.

The age of respondents varied generationally. That is, 335 of the 345 respondents fell into one of three age ranges: Baby Boomers, 30% (born 1946-1964); Generation X, 35% (born 1965-1976); and Millennials, 33% (born 1977-1995). The other 10 respondents were either younger or older than these clear majorities. Notably, the three authors also represent those three age categories.

Respondents worked in a wide range of sectors. The top three were human services (43%), education (42%), and healthcare (23%). Respondents were allowed to indicate more than one sector, creating an overlap in the responses.

The authors considered the amount of time individuals' jobs require them to work solely on the development, submission, and management of grants. They found that 70% of respondents spend 80% or more of their time on grants.

Finally, the survey invited respondents to provide anecdotal information regarding their work as grant professionals, and 29% of respondents did so. The findings, below, include some of those comments. All comments were retained and will be reviewed again as part of the data collection process and the authors' future research.

Overall Findings

It is important to remember what the survey did *not* ask. It did not ask respondents, "Have you ever suffered from burnout?" This was an intentional decision of the authors as the definition of burnout in the *community* likely differs from the definition within the *research*. Instead, questions aligned to the key elements of the definitions posed by both Maslach et al. and the WHO. Questions and responses focused on whether grant professionals have suffered from or noted any physical or socio-emotional impacts related to their work and the workplace.

The authors began by separating two key areas of stress—the workplace and outside the workplace (e.g., family, finance, life). In the survey, 56% said their workplace causes more stress than other areas of their lives. The survey also asked respondents to rate their levels of stress on a Likert scale of 0-5, with 0 as "no stress at all" and 5 as "very stressed."

One respondent—whose thoughts were repeated often among survey commenters—simply said, "The flow of work never stops" (survey response, December 15, 2019). Another expanded on that theme, expressing:

In my experience, it's not always the actual grant writing that caused feelings of burnout, but the unrealistic expectations, piling on of work (both grant writing and other), etc. However, one way grant writing as a profession leads to burnout is because it's never

OVER...it's never ENOUGH. It's constant churning and, "What are you going to do for me next?" (survey response, December 16, 2019)

The nature of the work—deadline-driven, focused work—was a common element within respondents' comments. Employers and workmates do not understand the impact of constant interruptions or the need for quiet, thinking time in the writing and planning processes. Some noted a lack of priority given to their work as grant professionals in general as well as a lack of collaborative decision-making that might put them in a position to guide their workloads. Employee evaluations, many said, focus on inconsistent or impossible dollar amounts. The driving factor, said one, "...seems to be 'Get all the money you can'" (survey response, December 13, 2019). This last quote is a red flag; it is a clear sign of an organization that is chasing money rather than strategically supporting its initiatives and thoughtfully using its employees for the overall good, as reflected in GPC Competency 2.08 (2017).

Figure 1 demonstrates how the weight of stress at work outpaces stress from all other factors outside of work for most respondents. When asked, 75% said workplace factors were stressful to very stressful (ratings of 3-5). In a separate question, just 50% rated stress outside of work at those rates.

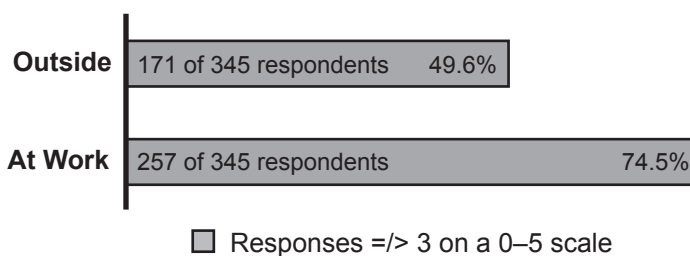


Figure 1: Stress at work versus stress outside of work (Source: 2019 Grant Professionals Burnout Survey)

Perhaps more importantly, respondents reported distinctive physical and socio-emotional impacts attributable to burnout. As illustrated in Figure 2, these include the following:

- 84% of respondents reported some physical symptoms identified with burnout. They responded affirmatively when asked if they experienced unexplained symptoms of exhaustion (e.g., fatigue, anxiety, sleeplessness, and/or poor concentration).
- 33% also reported diagnosed ailments. One-third said they had been diagnosed with a physical condition caused or exacerbated by stress (29%), hospitalized for that condition (1%), or both (3%). Anecdotally,

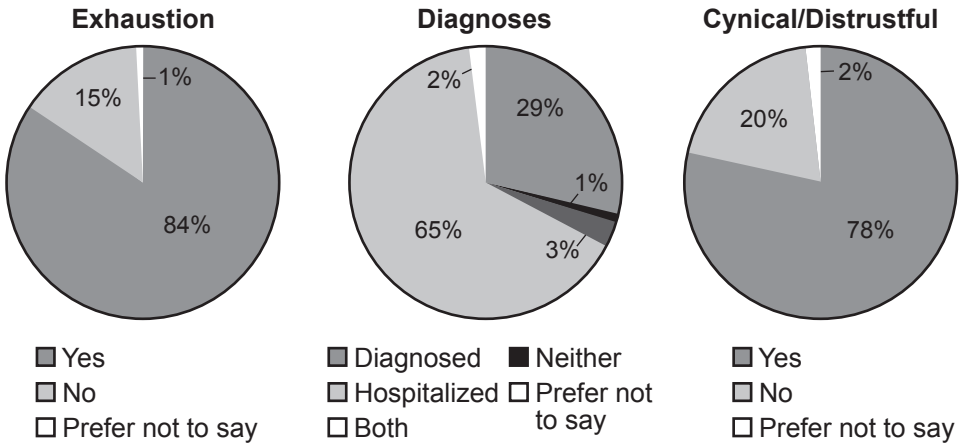


Figure 2: Physical and socio-emotional indicators (Source: 2019 Grant Professionals Burnout Survey)

many specifically stated they suffer from anxiety, depression, or other ailments.

- 78% have experienced the socio-emotional indicators of burnout that directly impact their work. Interestingly, 94% of the 81 respondents who said they did not have a choice in leaving their current roles reported cynicism and distrust in the workplace.

Figure 3 illustrates the following findings:

- 66% reported feeling a lack of control related to their current professional duties; that is, two-thirds indicated ratings of 3-5 on a Likert scale, where 0=Never and 5=Very Often.
- 55% left a job or transitioned to another position internally to spend more time with family or because they needed a break (phrases often associated with underlying symptoms of burnout).

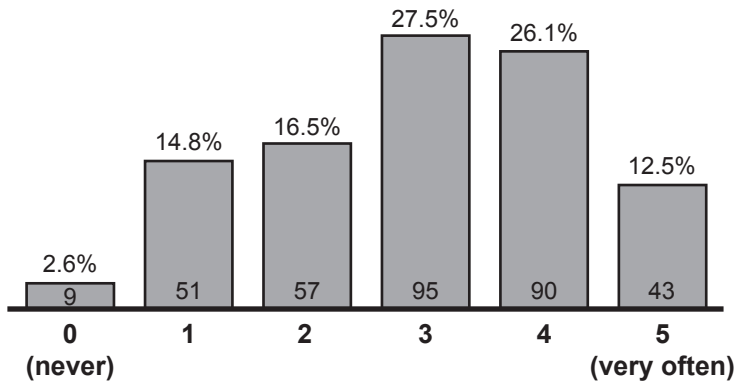


Figure 3: Lack of control (Source: 2019 Grant Professionals Burnout Survey)

- 70% of those who left/transitioned (149 of 191 respondents) now report they did so because of chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job (i.e., burnout).

This final data point is telling. More than half of the grant professionals surveyed left the job and perhaps the profession; more than two-thirds point to the working environment as the cause. To break it down further, 149 individual grant professionals of the 345 asked (43% overall) ultimately left a job or transitioned internally due to the workplace issues aligned to burnout.

By disaggregating for consultants and employees, a more focused view appears (Figure 4). Consultants clearly left a job or transitioned more often than employees; however, the ratio of departure-to-feelings of burnout is higher across every category for employees. This suggests, perhaps, that a) consultants feel freer to leave (or have left in the past) or b) may be quicker to recognize the signs of burnout than are employees.

The authors cannot connect the rate of job departures or transitions to actual turnover rates in the grants profession. However, the data certainly raise an alarm for agencies who employ or contract with grant professionals. Burnout does lead to job attrition in the grants field.

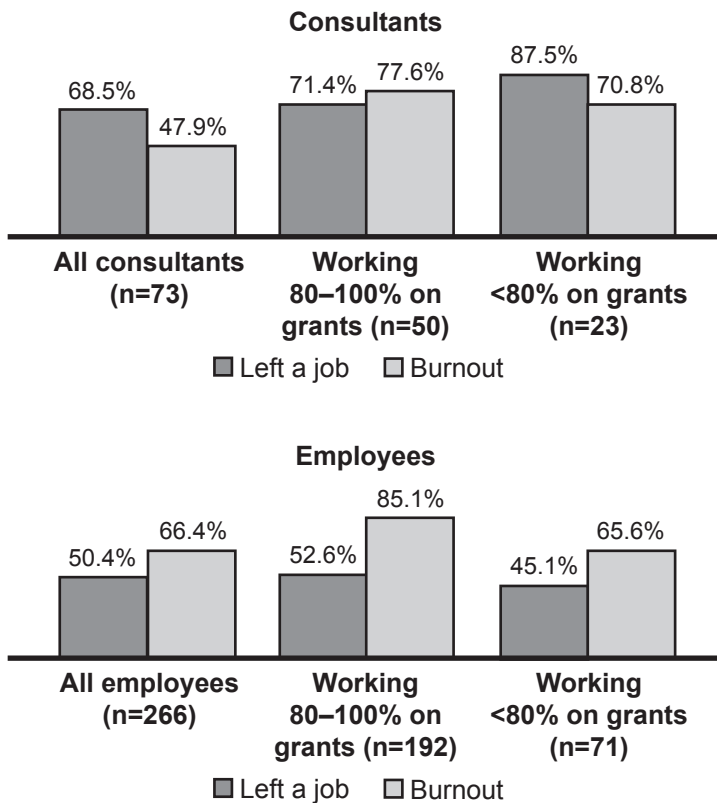


Figure 4: Consultants versus employees who left a job or transitioned to a new role (Source: 2019 Grant Professionals Burnout Survey)

The data point to a significant difference related to the overall stress and workplace autonomy for consultants versus employees, which is seen in at least two ways. *First*, when asked, “What causes you more stress: grant-related work or something else besides work (e.g., life, family, financial)?”, employees were more likely to be stressed about grant-related work than consultants. This difference was highest among respondents working less than 80% of their time on grants (Figure 5).

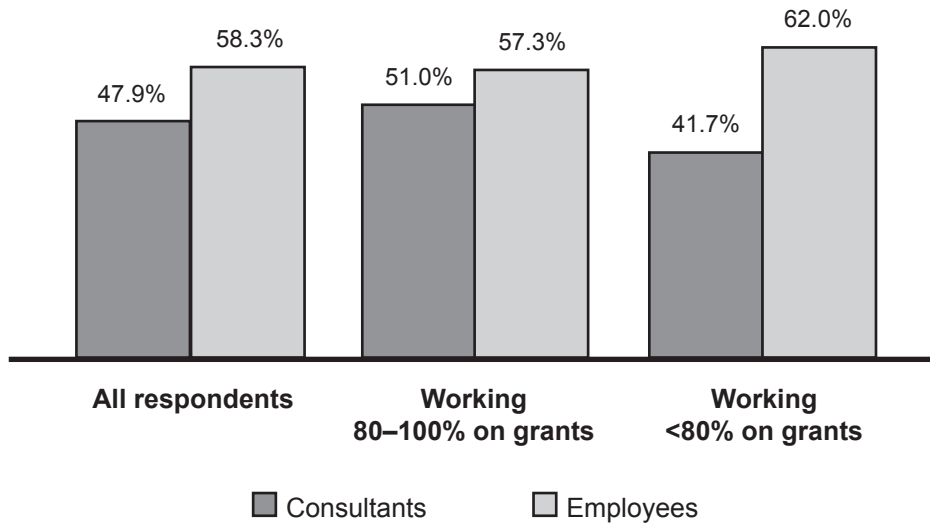


Figure 5: More stressed by grants (Source: 2019 Grant Professionals Burnout Survey)

Second, while a lack of control is apparent for all respondents (Figure 3), there is a significant difference between employees and consultants who respond strongly to the question, “How often do you feel a *lack of control* related to your current professional duties?” On a Likert scale rating of Never (0) to Very Often (5), grant professionals who work as employees responded Often to Very Often at *nearly twice the rate* (Figure 6); this is true regardless of the amount of time dedicated to grants in their workday. However, the highest level for any group was for employees working on grants less than 80% of their time. This suggests employees who have other roles in their job description in addition to grant writing are in a particularly vulnerable position.

Another disaggregated finding is the number of respondents by years of experience who report symptoms of burnout (e.g., unexplained exhaustion, fatigue, anxiety, sleeplessness, and/or poor concentration). The authors found no trend; however, 91% of grant professionals with 20+ years of experience responded affirmatively—a rate that was the highest among all survey participants and 15 points above the responses of those with 15–20 years of experience (Table 1).

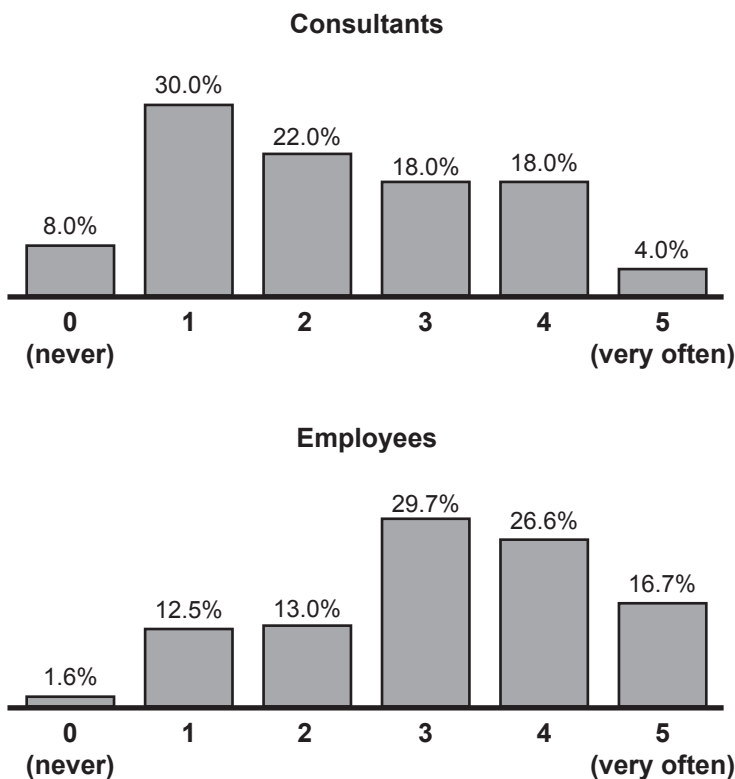


Figure 6: Lack of control for consultants versus employees (Source: 2019 Grant Professionals Burnout Survey)

Table 1: Burnout symptoms experienced by respondents by years in the field

Years of Experience	Number (n=)	Percentage Reporting Burnout Symptoms
<5 years	n=82	86.6%
5–9 years	n=82	84.1%
10–14 years	n=48	87.5%
15–20 years	n=68	75.0%
20+ years	n=64	90.6%

Source: 2019 Grant Professionals Burnout Survey

Finally, the Grant Professionals Burnout Survey (Bachman et al., 2019) asked a revealing question: “Do you think you can recognize burnout in other grant professionals?” Half of all respondents (50%), regardless of their years of experience in the field, did not know if they can or would

recognize burnout in other grant professionals. The data suggest an alignment between less experience in the field with increased uncertainty as to what burnout might look like in action. As noted in Figure 7, the two least experienced groups—those with less than five years' experience and 5–9 years' experience—have the highest response rate of “do not know” than any other group.

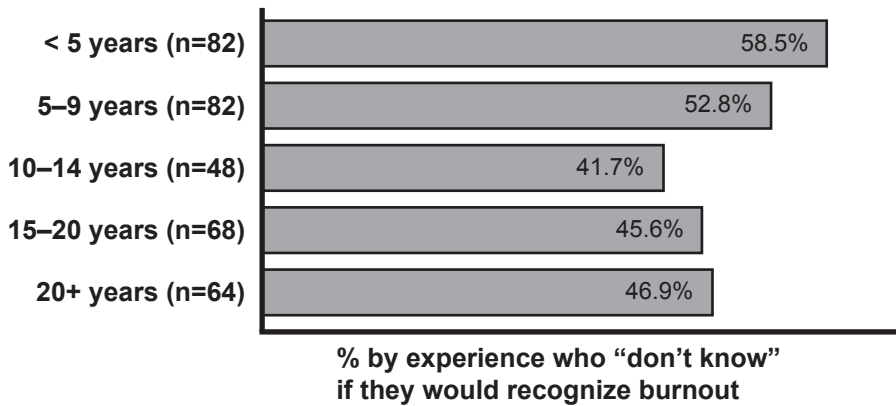


Figure 7: Recognizing burnout in others (Source: 2019 Grant Professionals Burnout Survey)

Much work is needed, the survey indicates, to help grant professionals recognize the signs and symptoms of burnout—symptoms noted by the Maslach and WHO definitions. Before grant professionals can address the symptoms of burnout, they must understand those symptoms exist as part of a real syndrome and that the impetus for improvement lies with the workplace, not just the struggling grant professional.

Limitations

While the Grant Professionals Burnout Survey (Bachman et al., 2019) provided the first-ever view of burnout in the field, the findings are limited in part by what is generally known about burnout, and by conflicting definitions of burnout. It remains unclear, for example, whether the prevalence of burnout in this sample is generalizable to the grants profession at large. Additional study is needed to confirm these findings.

Nor does the survey disclose with certainty whether burnout in the grants profession is more widespread than in other fields. However, the Gallup® Perspective (2019) found a 28% burnout rate across all fields. In previous years, Gallup® Perspective, which is a longitudinal panel, has indicated a slightly lower level (25%).

Still, Rotenstein et al. (2018) warn against comparing burnout data across studies. In their 2018 meta-analysis of burnout among physicians, they found burnout rates ranging from 0 to 80% across the 182 studies

reviewed. The researchers also questioned popular media and other articles within the literature that estimated the rate at 50% of all physicians. The lack of a single set of measures within the studies makes any comparisons invalid, they noted.

The authors attempted, however, to make *internal comparisons* of disaggregated data from the Grant Professionals Burnout Survey (Bachman et al., 2019) across the multiple demographic groups. The intent was to determine whether hypotheses related to particular indicators might be supported. For example, the data indicate that 81 respondents (24%) do not feel they have a choice in whether to stay or leave their current jobs. Among the 81 grant professionals, 76 said they have been cynical or distrustful in the workplace. But, for those same 81 grant professionals, no difference in prevalence was seen in any other indicators for burnout, including the physical impacts noted above. The 81 were diagnosed with stress-related or exacerbated ailments, hospitalized, or both at 33%—the same rate as that of all 345 respondents.

These similarities across the various groups were remarkable for their *lack of key findings*. The authors anticipated differences between and across demographics, areas of work, experience, education levels, or age yet found few. These non-findings related to nearly every survey question regarding burnout and, importantly, where trends might have been anticipated. For example, there was *no significant difference* between grant professionals who:

- Have grant-related duties as *part* of their work versus those who spend nearly or all of their workday (80-100%) on grants.
- Work in certain areas of the grants profession. A review of the top five categories by respondent participation—arts and culture, education, healthcare, government, and human services—showed reasonably consistent findings to the whole. That is surprising as the literature is replete with studies noting the impact of burnout on workers in the healthcare and human services fields. This suggests either (a) the non-front-line position of the grant professional mitigates for the impact of healthcare and human services providers, or (b) grant professionals see the same or similar impacts of those two fields.
- Have more or less experience (years in the field). While there was some variance for more or less experienced grant professionals, that variance remained less than 10 percentage points for the most part. As noted above, the more experienced respondents (more than 20 years) reported symptoms of burnout at a higher rate, but it is unclear why this is so.
- Were diagnosed or hospitalized for a stress-related ailment. The overall rate of 33% includes a 29-37% range across every age and experience level, type of grant work, and rate of work time on grants.

- Leave or transition from their jobs by age or education levels. The data *seem* to suggest grant professionals with 5-20 years of experience leave at a slightly higher rate of exit than those at the beginning (<5 years' experience) or ends of their careers (>20 years) with comparative rates of 59% and 48%, respectively. By age level, Millennials, Generation X, and Baby Boomers all left at about the same rate; Generation Z (born in or after 1996) and Traditionalists (born in or before 1945) only comprised a combined seven responses (one and six, respectively).
- Have bachelor's degrees versus those with graduate levels of education. Simply put, the majority of respondents have either a bachelor's degree (121; 35%), master's degree (174; 50%), or higher (31; 9%). Only 19 of the 345 respondents have less than a bachelor's degree, including a high school diploma or equivalent (3, <1%), some college (11, 3%), or an associate degree (5, 1%). Levels of stress, exhaustion, cynicism, and feeling out of control were within 5 percentage points across bachelor and graduate degree levels for those who worked 80-100% on grant-related work. Of note:
 - Grant professionals who left or transitioned from a job (63% bachelor to 50% graduate or above) who now believe burnout was the reason (52% bachelor to 32% graduate).
 - Grant professionals diagnosed or hospitalized for stress-related ailments (8% bachelor to 27% graduate).

Conclusions and Areas of Future Research

The Grant Professionals Burnout Survey (Bachman et al., 2019) and the resulting article have accomplished the authors' intended purpose to establish an initial baseline of information related to burnout in the grants profession. Anecdotally and through first-hand experiences, the authors have observed a high rate of concern among other professionals and have, in various ways, worked to find remedies for burnout in the fast-paced, deadline-driven field. The initial survey clearly indicates:

- Burnout is a real, diagnosable syndrome in the grants profession and impacts grant professionals of every sector and experience level at significant rates.
- More than three in four grant professionals experience physical symptoms, socio-emotional symptoms, or both, of burnout.
- Burnout appears across all ages, experience levels, and specialty categories at nearly equal rates.
- More than 40% of grant professionals left a job or transitioned internally due to burnout.

- One in three grant professionals has been diagnosed with a physical condition caused or exacerbated by stress, hospitalized for stress, or both.
- Employees report symptoms of burnout at a much higher rate than consultants and are more likely to blame burnout for their decision to leave a job. Employees also feel a lack of control at a much higher rate than consultants.
- More experienced respondents—those with more than 20 years in the field—reported symptoms of burnout at a higher rate.
- Half of all grant professionals say they do not know if they would recognize burnout in others. The data suggest less experienced grant professionals are more likely to be uncertain than the more experienced.

While these are significant findings and, again, provide the first baseline for the field, the study falls short in several important ways. *First*, the survey response rate (n=345) was strong, given the small circle of grant professionals available. In truth, no estimate for the number of grant professionals in the United States exists. The next step might include establishing that number and determining a method to reach professionals with the next survey iteration. This is more difficult than it sounds, as only a small percentage of the nation's grant professionals are among the 3,000-plus members of the Grant Professionals Association or the estimated 5,000 grant professionals self-identified on LinkedIn. The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) does not list the profession itself in its Standard Occupational Classification System (2018). The DOL *does* list fundraisers among its 867 detailed occupations (#13-1131), but that role includes donations and promotional activities, not proposal development or grant management. Various other data points may help intuit the number in the profession, including, for example:

- The September 2018 memo (M-18-24) from Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney, which estimates “more than 40,000 grant recipients receive Federal awards annually.” (Mulvaney, 2018)
- The research of the Urban Institute, which notes 1.5 million nonprofit organizations in the United States. (McKeever, 2018)
- EducationUnlimited, which reports more than 3,300 public and private nonprofit colleges and universities. (EducationUnlimited, 2019)
- The U.S. Census or other population centers that might inform the number of city and county governments that are large enough to likely support a grant professional.

Certainly, these data points lead the authors to believe the survey results, while important, will need to be validated in later work with a larger sample.

Second, this work would benefit from statistical design and analysis that considers the power of that sample size and more accurately controls for the variables of age, experience, and more. Narrowing some survey questions to more clearly focus on, for example, types or areas of work and years of experience might ferret out additional information among and between the categories.

As for other areas of work, the list might be endless. The rate of grant professionals leaving their jobs due to burnout is an area of concern, but so too is the number who do not know if they could recognize burnout in others. Diagnoses and hospitalizations for stress-related ailments raise additional concerns.

As a start, the authors suggest additional work to compare workplaces with and without high levels of burnout (e.g., case studies, additional survey). A survey of employers may also help to determine their knowledge of the needs of their grant employees and provide additional information as this work moves forward. Disaggregating employee and consultant data might also be an area of new learning. Finally, the work must continue so that grant professionals will have strategies to:

- First, increase their influence and ability to improve their workplaces. Survey respondents commented on leadership and organizational actions that are direct stressors, including comments to “...stay in my lane and stop asking for grant information from my peers.” This, and dozens of other comments, suggests a lack of employer knowledge regarding best practices in grant development.
- Second, treat or mitigate factors that lead to burnout when improvements are not possible. This latter point suggests more than the need for self-care, though it is certainly needed. Rather, the authors suggest the development of targeted workplace strategies that might be shared broadly with grant professionals to prolong their effectiveness in this space. This might include additional articles, workshops or webinars, conference presentations, and more.

Grant professionals represent a crucial component of the economic and social fabric in the United States and beyond. Educating employers, organizations, other stakeholders, and grant professionals themselves on how to improve the work environment must be a priority for all.

The critical nature of this work can be demonstrated through the eyes, feelings, and words of a survey respondent. She is a 20+ year grant professional—a Baby Boomer with many years in the field—who holds a master’s degree and works 80% or more of her time on grants. She also reports being very stressed (4 of 5 on a Likert scale) in her work and experiences a lack of control very often (5 of 5 on a Likert scale). She lives and sees the workplace impact of burnout every day:

For over a year I was the only grant professional for a large safety-net hospital and raised over \$8M. There was no one else to ever cover a grant deadline. I worked overtime daily and missed funerals and other personal events. My healthcare is free, and due to a physical condition I can't easily leave. Hard to balance work and life due to workload. Another grant professional was hired to expand the team. We now bring in \$19M. Several times she has come to my office crying and exhausted. (survey response, December 10, 2019)

Across the nation, and around the world, leaders in the grants profession are working to elevate the level of competency among practitioners in the field. However, a code of ethics, technical know-how, productivity tools, and fostering meaningful collaborations are only *part* of the solution. For a lasting impact on the profession, it is imperative for leaders to consider and address the mental health aspect of the work and actively support the wellbeing of grant professionals today and into the future.

References

- Bachman, T., Planton, B., & Rodgers, J. (2019). *Grant professionals burnout survey*. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NIh_pt5hjXzX36OWV2uxurDTFJNTozO-/view
- EducationUnlimited. (2019, August 5). *How many universities & colleges are in the United States?* <https://www.educationunlimited.com/blog/how-many-universities-colleges-are-in-the-us/>
- Gallup. (2019). *Gallup's perspective on employee burnout: Causes and cures*. <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/282659/employee-burnout-perspective-paper.aspx>
- Grant Professionals Certification Institute (GPCI). (2017). *Validated competencies and skills*. <https://www.grantcredential.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/GPCComptenciesandSkills2017.pdf>
- Leiter, M.P., Maslach, C., & Frame, K. (2014). Burnout. In R.L. Cautin & S.O. Lilienfield (ed.), *The encyclopedia of clinical psychology* (1st ed., pp. 1-7). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Maslach, C., Jackson, S.E., Leiter, M.P., Schaufeli, W.B., & Schwab, R.L. (n.d.). *Maslach burnout inventory™*. <https://www.mindgarden.com/117-maslach-burnout-inventory>

- Maslach, C. & Leiter, M.P. (2016). Burnout. In G. Fink (Ed.), *Stress: Concepts, cognition, emotion, and behavior: Handbook of stress series*, Volume 1 (pp. 351-357). Academic Press.
- McKeeever, B. (2018). *The nonprofit sector in brief 2018: Public charities, giving, and volunteering*. <https://nccs.urban.org/publication/nonprofit-sector-brief-2018>
- Mulvaney, M. (2018). *Strategies to reduce grant recipient reporting burden*. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/M-18-24.pdf>
- Rotenstein, L.S., Torre, M., Ramos, M.A., Rosales, R.C., Guille, C., Sen, S., & Mata, D.A. (2018). Prevalence of burnout among physicians: a systematic review. *JAMA*, 320(11), 1131-1150.
- World Health Organization. (2018). ICD-11 for mortality and morbidity statistics. <https://icd.who.int/browse11/l-m/en#/http://id.who.int/icd/entity/129180281>
- World Health Organization (2019). Health workforce burn-out. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, 97(9), 585-586. World Health Organization. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.2471/BLT.19.020919>

Biographical Information

Trish Bachman, GPC is the owner and lead consultant for The Write Stuff Delaware LLC. Her grant journey began with a volunteer assignment with Mothers Against Drunk Driving. Since then, Trish has worked in grant development, program design, implementation, and reporting in nonprofit and government agencies. She received the Certified Grant Writer credential from American Grant Writers Association in 2014 and earned the Grant Professional Certified (GPC) credential in 2017. Today, she is president and a founding member of the Delmarva Chapter of GPA. She can be reached at writestuffde@outlook.com.

Bethany Planton, GPC, SMS is the Founder and CEO of bmpconsulting, a consulting firm located in Louisville, Kentucky. After earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Communications Studies from Ball State University, Bethany got her start in the grants profession as an AmeriCorps VISTA member in 2011. Bethany has worked with many different organizations such as arts

and culture, after-school youth programming, historic preservation, healthcare, and community centers, to secure more than \$5 million in federal, state, and foundation funds. Bethany earned a Graduate Certificate in Nonprofit Administration from Western Kentucky University in 2015, the Grant Professional Certified (GPC) from the Grant Professionals Certification Institute in 2016, and the Social Media Strategist certification from the National Institute for Social Media in 2020. She can be reached at bethany@bmpconsulting.org.

Johna Rodgers, GPC has worked nearly 30 years to support and manage organizations of all types and sizes. A specialist in federal grant proposal development, she has secured more than \$195 million for schools and educational groups. In 2013, she joined Grant Writing USA as a national trainer; in 2015, she traded in a regular paycheck for consulting. She is a 15-year member of GPA, a GPA Approved Trainer, and currently serves as Vice President of the GPA Board of Directors. She also is a founding member of the Kentucky Chapter of GPA. Johna has received national awards from both GPA and the Grant Professionals Certification Institute (GPCI) for contributions to the field. She is an original GPCI Subject Matter Expert and served as the first GPCI Exam Administrator, creating and implementing the first exam protocols. She can be reached at johnarodgersgpc@gmail.com.

Managing Up: Explaining the Essential Need for Research Administration to Senior Leaders

Sarah Marina, MA

Tufts University, Medford, MA

Zoya Davis-Hamilton, EdD, CRA

Tufts University, Medford, MA

Simin Nikbin Meydani, DVM, PhD

Tufts University, Medford, MA

GPCI Competency 02: Knowledge of organizational development as it pertains to grant seeking

Abstract

Grant professionals are aware that research administration is an essential function for any research-based institution. However, investment into a research administration infrastructure can be a difficult sell for senior leadership, as it is an expensive undertaking and relies heavily on intellectual capital. In this paper, the value proposition of research administration is examined, with examples of what is gained from a strong research administration enterprise. The authors conducted an Institutional Review Board (IRB)-approved mixed methods survey of supply and demand in research administration hiring, which revealed that institutions across all regions of the United States share similar experiences in hiring across research administration positions, including both centralized and school-based positions. Finally, techniques such as storytelling and a report card approach that explain the value proposition of research administration with senior leaders are detailed.

Introduction

It is often said that the premise of creating something that is fast, cheap, and good is impossible to achieve. In research administration, this truism holds (i.e., a fast and good unit will not be cheap). Research

administration is an essential function for any institution that conducts research; additionally, it is expensive, requiring intellectual capital (specifically personnel salaries) that has become increasingly costly, with not enough professionals to fill the growing number of research administration jobs available. While grant professionals are aware of this paradox, senior institutional leadership at research institutions and universities often does not fully appreciate the critical role of an agile, well-funded research administration enterprise. Techniques are needed to teach senior leaders how a well-functioning research administration unit can create, maintain, and grow a robust externally funded research portfolio, particularly in this era of limited research funding and the downward pressure on institutional budgets. Education is also required to make leadership aware of the consequences of inadequate investment in research administration, including compliance issues and a decline in research funding.

This paper will discuss how to increase senior leadership's awareness of the need for high-quality research administration and how to get senior leaders on board with the time, expense, and continued investment that building a successful research administration enterprise requires.

Why Research Administration is Expensive

There are three main costs to the creation and maintenance of a research administration enterprise: system costs, space costs, and salaries for research administrators. As the field turns to more electronic systems for day-to-day work, the system costs can be high but can be planned for and managed, with most systems incurring a large one-time cost followed by associated maintenance. Space costs include furnished office space and computer equipment. These costs can also be managed through remote work or flextime policies for employees.

Personnel salaries comprise the bulk of costs associated with building and maintaining a research administration enterprise, as research administration is all about the people. This cost is variable by the size of an institution, the region, and the particular skill sets that are needed. However, as competition between institutions increases, demand in research administration talent may have begun to outpace supply in areas with a high concentration of research institutions, creating competition that drives up salaries, regardless of these factors.

Using the Global Competency Framework Korn Ferry Leadership Architect™, a tool designed to help organizations create a competency-based model (2014-2015), Tufts University identified specific sets of competencies for various levels of research administration positions, both central and school-based. After applying the Korn Ferry model, Tufts found that many research administration skills are hard to come by. Some research-administrator job competencies such as financial acumen, driving results, and instilling trust are in high supply and easy to

develop in employees once they are hired. Other competencies are either not in high supply (e.g., resourcefulness, collaboration), more difficult to develop (e.g., managing complexity, nimble learning, situational adaptability, effective communication), or both (e.g., interpersonal savviness, situational adaptability, and conflict management). Specifically, interpersonal savviness, situational adaptability, and conflict management are critical in order to work properly with different offices and individuals across the institution in order to serve as “the locus of knowledge for all processes that intersect with the administration of grants and contracts” (Viviani & Browngoetz, 2016, p. 6).

Hiring Survey and Survey Results

Tufts University Human Resources classifies research administration job positions as medium to high difficulty to hire. Specifically, the skills needed are found to be in low to medium quantity in the general labor supply. Research administration positions are also classified as high in competition for labor, meaning that many employers are trying to hire for similar positions (proprietary recruiter’s notes, August 2019). To test this assessment, the authors conducted an IRB-approved mixed-methods survey of supply and demand in research administration hiring (2019), which revealed that institutions across all regions of the U.S. have similar experiences in hiring across central and local roles. This anonymous survey was distributed to the subscribers of the national research administration discussion list RESADM-L listserv. The survey was open between September 4, 2019 and September 18, 2019 and collected 160 total responses, of whom 153 respondents reported hiring for at least one research administration position in the last year. Of all respondents who shared their affiliation, 115 were based at a university or college, 13 at a hospital, and 21 at other institutions. All but one respondent reported being in one of the four U.S. regions (based on Society of Research Administration International definitions) with representation from the Northeast (45), Southern (39), Midwest (33), and Western (31) regions. Questions asked were broken out by the level of the position being hired for: junior, mid-level, and senior. For each position level over the past 24 months, respondents were asked to provide averages of how many positions they had hired for; how many applicants responded to each position; how long in weeks the hiring process took; and, if the salary offered was at, above, or below candidate’s expectations, and if known, the difference between expectations and offered salary. Respondents were also asked for their general thoughts about the hiring process for research administration at their institutions over the past 24 months.

Respondents reported relatively low numbers of applicants to their open positions, per Figure 1. The number of junior and mid-level applicants reported was relatively steady, with most respondents reporting 20 or fewer applicants on average for their junior and mid-level

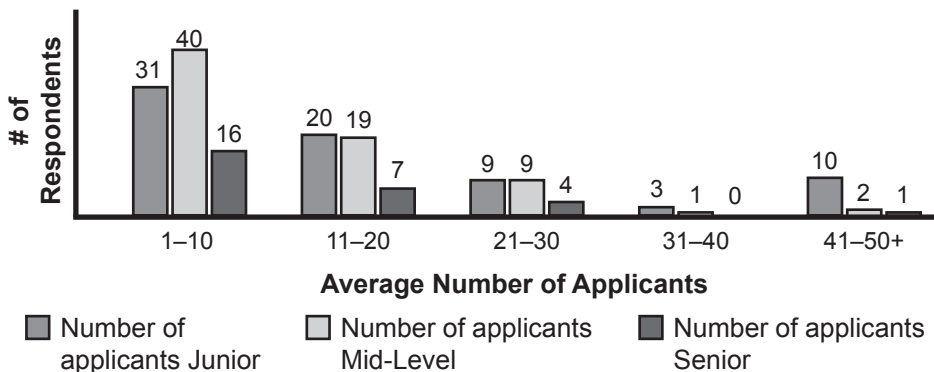


Figure 1: Average Number of Applicants to Open Research Administration Positions, by Position Level

positions, with many receiving 10 or fewer applications. Senior-level positions were, unsurprisingly, more difficult to fill, and more than half of respondents reported 10 or fewer applicants for their senior-level positions.

As noted by the respondents (Figure 2), junior and mid-level positions took the least time to fill, at a median of eight and nine weeks, respectively. Senior-level positions took longer on average to fill, with a median of 12 weeks. More than 20 respondents reported that it took them 20+ weeks to fill research administration positions across all levels of experience—junior, mid-level, and senior.

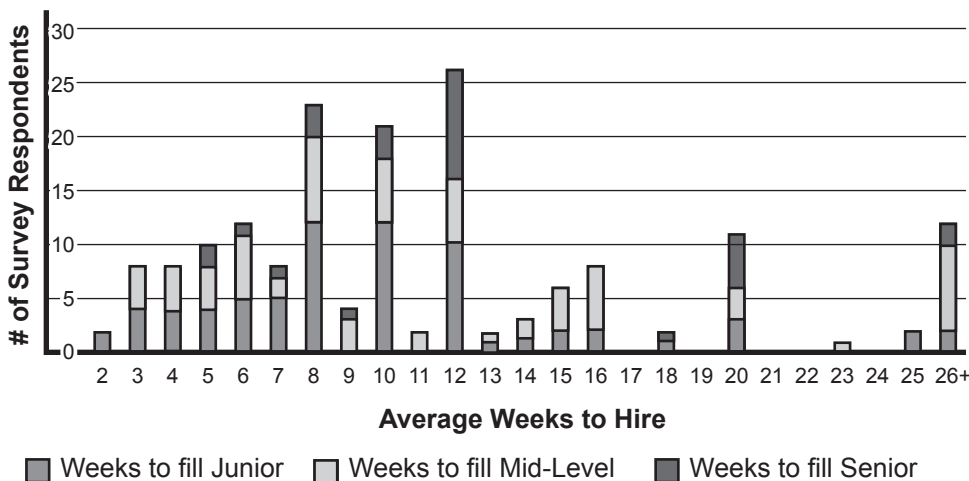


Figure 2: Time in Weeks to Fill Posted Positions, by Level

Respondents reported that for junior-level positions, the salary offered was at (34.35%) or below (32.88%) candidate expectations, with only 9.59% making a higher-than-expected offer. Similarly, those hiring for mid-level positions reported that their salary offers were at (33.78%) or below (32.43%) candidate expectations, with only 13.51% offering a higher salary than expected. For senior-level research administrators, 35.58% of respondents each reported that their salary offered was at or below candidate expectations, with only 17.24% above the expected salary range. This demonstrates that, among respondents, research administration salaries across positions are lower than expected by candidates in more than a third of cases.

According to the survey results, across respondents, most hiring happens at the junior and mid-level, with hiring to senior-level positions accounting for half that of junior and mid-level positions. In addition, many institutions are hiring for multiple positions per year across multiple levels. This suggests that there was high turnover and/or rapid expansion among the respondents. Lastly, the number of people applying for both experienced and new-to-the-field research administration positions is low (about 10 or fewer). Furthermore, once a suitable candidate has been identified, the salary offered to them is likely to be lower than expected, suggesting that qualified applicants are in high demand.

The quantitative data from the survey is supported by qualitative results, which convey high competition for a limited number of applicants, many of whom do not have research administration experience, and high turnover for those who do accept a position. Many respondents point to a lack of appreciation among human resources offices of the difficulty and cost of hiring and retaining talented research administrators as adding to their struggles to secure qualified candidates. Such difficulties further illustrate the importance of educating other units within an institution about the unique personnel needs of research administration offices, which begins with senior leaders.

Why is Research Administration Valuable?

Given the high costs of building and maintaining a high-quality research administration enterprise, coupled with many other competing priorities, it is crucial that senior university leaders comprehend the value of research administration to their organizations. Despite the associated costs and challenges in hiring, research administration is a necessary part of an institution that conducts research, whether intramural or extramural. At a minimum, each institution must have a signing official that signs off on proposals and commits the institution to each project. There must also be staff to accept awards, negotiate contracts, issue subcontracts, bill sponsors, and perform many other tasks related to research administration. Those institutions that include only the bare minimum of required functions miss significant potential value offered

by research administrators to help the faculty expand their research activities.

Senior leaders must consider the financial cost of research administration units—that is, the costs of systems, space, and salaries needed to maintain them—in the context of the opportunity costs of not having a strong research administration enterprise. These include:

1. Diminished ability to attract research faculty and support their progression to tenure by providing a user-friendly grant administration ecosystem that facilitates their submission and winning of external funding. Since an estimated 44.3% of faculty time is taken away from active research by administrative duties, having a robust research administration unit can be a highly attractive perk for research faculty (Schneider, 2018).
2. Lost revenue and research opportunities from sponsored solicitations for which no faculty applied, or did not apply successfully, due to a lack of strong pre-award research administration support.
3. Increased faculty teaching loads due to decreased ability to hire teaching and research assistants because of loss of sponsored funding.
4. Compliance issues, which have the potential of not only resulting in disallowed costs that must be repaid but also other costs such as lost credibility, lost time to restore confidence in one's institution, and potentially, loss of future funding opportunities. In these terms, there are increased risks and diminished benefits—in faculty productivity, lost opportunities, unsuccessful proposals, and potential compliance lapses—to not maintaining a well-funded, highly functioning research administration unit.

Research administration provides added value to both upstream (senior leaders, faculty members, and researchers) and downstream stakeholders (undergraduate and graduate students) in the organization. At Tufts University, the overall value of research administration and development is defined as follows (Stanchak & Cox, 2019):

- Provide a full view of research lifecycle throughout the university
- Report on research data for stakeholders to make better decisions
- Help investigators navigate all aspects of grant seeking and management, including support for securing sponsored awards
- Help investigators maximize their funds by ensuring spending is well managed
- Ensure compliance for the investigator and the university.

Many of the ways that research administrators provide the value defined above are through supportive functions, including those tasks that are a part of the pre- or post-award extramural funding process that help investigators in applying for and maintaining funding for their research.

Some examples of supportive services provided by a high functioning research administration unit such as that at Tufts include the following:

- Ensure that proposals include all the required parts and are appropriately formatted to minimize the chances of rejection.
- Prepare administrative elements of the proposals, including budgets, curriculum vitae (CVs), facilities, etc.
- Liaise with collaborating institutions to obtain necessary proposal components.
- Manage proposal submission timelines and completion of required proposal elements (especially useful for complex proposals).
- Develop responses to sponsor requests related to submission (also known as “Just in Time” in some funding institutions) such as revised budget, compliance approvals, and other support information.
- Match institutional initiatives with funding opportunities and help identify synergies among faculty research areas to assist in building cross-disciplinary teams. (This is only in scope for research administration when staff are not stretched too thin.)
- Monitor project budgets during the life of the award and develop burn rate analyses and projections.
- Support investigators in determining and processing allocable and allowable charges.
- Prepare and submit to sponsors timely and accurate award reporting and closeout documentation.

These functions, if not performed by the research administration enterprise, largely fall on researchers themselves, further cutting into the amount of time available to conduct research. In contrast, a large suite of supportive services can give investigators a competitive advantage over peers who do not have such services. The lack of strong research administration support can also lead to lost opportunity cost (i.e., lost revenue and research opportunities that were not applied for or that were rejected for quality and/or compliance reasons).

Building a robust research administration enterprise, one that includes both required and supportive functions, allows an institution's researchers to spend more of their time conducting actual research. This is a key issue for faculty across institutions. In a recent survey, The

Federal Demonstration Partnership Project found that total time taken away by administrative burden from active faculty research remains extremely high, at 42.3% in 2012 and at 44.3% in 2018 (Schneider, 2018). Some of this time is dedicated to tasks that only a researcher can accomplish, but many included tasks that a skilled research administrator could do, allowing the researcher more time to focus on the scientific aspects of the proposal. The lack of high-quality research administration also has other associated costs, such as compliance issues, and the loss of credibility with funders and collaborating institutions.

Communicating the Research Administration Value Proposition for Senior Leaders

A gap exists between accepting that research administration brings value to an institution and explaining the importance of needed investments to senior institutional leadership. To bridge this gap, it is important to illustrate how investments in research administration impact research projects that further a university's mission. Specifically, in the climate of fiscal strain and pursuit of efficiency, demonstrating connections of an institution's ambition to have socioeconomic impact and improve societal life through education, research, and community outreach with the work of research management is essential (Estermann & Kupriyanova, 2019).

Institutional leaders are aware of the societal impact of research, the ability of a robust research program to boost an institution's reputation, and its value in attracting high-quality faculty and students. However, many may not be aware of the value of research administration in helping achieve these goals. It is then the job of the leaders of research administration units to convey this information. A hindrance to doing so is the lack of an effective, evidence-based metric standard that captures the complexity of the research administration (Marina, Davis-Hamilton, & Charmanski, 2016) as well as an absence of a good set of shared definitions to evaluate the return on investment. For example, Marina et al. found that leaders in research administration often define high levels of achievement as successful compliant submissions with high customer service, metrics for which research administrators are largely responsible (late submissions notwithstanding). Similarly, senior leadership views achievement for research administration through the broader lens of the research enterprise, using measures such as dollars/grants applied for and awarded. These are metrics that reflect volume for a research administration, but where success or failure is determined by many other confounding factors in addition to that contributed by research administrators. This lack of a shared definition runs the risk of, at best, not making a clear case for the value of the research administration enterprise, and at worst, giving a false impression of its failure or success that is outside of the control of research administrators themselves.

Communicating through Data and Storytelling

How can research administrators overcome this gap—giving senior leaders the metrics they expect, while also explaining achievement from a research administration perspective—in a way that will resonate with those senior leaders? One way is to expand reporting, providing senior leadership the data they expect while also including metrics that are definitional to achievement from a research administration perspective. This expanded reporting provides a holistic view of the contribution of research administration. Data reported can include quantitative data on the number of proposals and dollars submitted and received, faculty satisfaction metrics that reflect reduced administrative burden, on-time proposal submission, compliance and risk-related metrics, and reputational metrics relevant to the key mission of the institution. Including quantitative and qualitative metrics that highlight important elements to research administration alongside metrics requested by senior leadership helps to elevate issues important from a research administration perspective into a report that is more likely to be read.

In the last two years, Tufts has transitioned from a largely data-free research administration environment—where only high-level metrics such as volume of proposals were available—to one that is data-rich, including numerous, more nuanced metrics. This involved significant work from Tufts Research Administration and Development (RAD) team to ensure that research administration is no longer “a black box” and that data reported goes beyond the requested high-level numbers (such as the number of proposals and awards) and is instead representative of the research administration enterprise as a whole. In addition to data collection, RAD developed “report cards” for all Schools and Centers, providing them with individual metrics in terms of grant volume, expenditures, and how their Schools and Centers interacted with Office of The Vice Provost units such as the IRB in the past year. In this work, effort was made to differentiate metrics related to faculty productivity that are not in direct control of research administration (e.g., proposal and award volume) from metrics that research administration can influence (e.g., satisfaction with services, turnaround times).

The report card structure gave research administration leadership the opportunity to include metrics that would rarely be on the radar of senior leaders but are hugely important to the success of research administration staff. Just seeing data does not provide a full perspective, however. To present these data, individual meetings were arranged and conducted by the Associate Vice Provost for Research Administration and Development with senior leaders at each School and Center, followed by presenting comprehensive data to Tufts’ senior leadership. This approach allowed the opportunity to explain the data, the importance of metrics that may be new to School and Center leaders, and to discuss and align goals around research administration support. This is a key part of

any data-driven approach, as some metrics are not easily understood by leaders outside of the Office of Research, which presents a major obstacle to the “communicability of concept” (Workman, 2016, p. 17).

Even with interpretation, data only tell a part of the story of the value a well-functioning research administration enterprise brings to an institution. To communicate this value, a second key element, storytelling, should be incorporated into the approach. This involves sharing the value of research administration and research administrators in a way that relies more on the people involved than on quantitative data. Using stories to advocate is a new technique at Tufts and one that is being applied in multiple forums. Regardless of the story being told, the most impactful advocates have been faculty. Helping faculty tell their stories of success due to research administration support, and challenges because of lack of adequate support, has been a focus. Ways to tell these stories include forums for investigators to share their feedback and qualitative results from faculty satisfaction surveys. Faculty are also asked to share their successes and challenges with their research deans and other school leaders.

The next step after providing convincing evidence to senior leadership of the importance and value of research administration is to ask for resources and support. Such resources may include staffing, professional development funds to travel to professional conferences, and systems to support research administration workflows. Published standards for sponsored programs operations are available from the National Council of University Research Administrators (NCURA, 2019) and can be used to benchmark the institutional needs. These standards are geared towards providing “a supporting environment for the conduct of extramurally funded activities” (NCURA, 2019). NCURA standards include the following: investment in research infrastructure and alignment to institutional resources, staffing and staff development, commitment to support research administration, attention to faculty engagement and faculty burden, information systems supporting research, role in funding information and proposal services, infrastructure for administrative management of sponsored programs, and other indicators.

A shared understanding of data and the stories that illustrate the data, as well as concrete, data-driven goals aligned with how senior leaders view value, will increase the likelihood of success of requests to strengthen research administration structures.

Conclusion

Research administration is an expensive function that is nonetheless critical to an institution’s success in seeking and maintaining extramural funding. While costs such as space and infrastructure can be planned for, the highest cost in research administration is that of personnel (i.e.,

salary and benefits). Nationwide, hiring for research administration is difficult, with demand outstripping supply, especially for staff with experience. Staff are the backbone of a successful research administration enterprise, however, and well-trained, effective staff help to lower faculty's administrative burden. Best practices in garnering buy-in from institutional leadership in funding or even expanding the operations of the research office can be accomplished through compelling data and metrics presented in conjunction with anecdotal stories of faculty succeeding in funding and conducting their research with the assistance of the research office.

References

- Estermann, T. & Kupriyanova, V. (2019). University efficiency: What's on the horizon for research managers? *NCURA Magazine*, 51(4), 27-28.
- Korn Ferry (2014-2015). *Korn Ferry Leadership Architect™ global competency framework, Version 14.2a*. <https://kpccompetencies.humancontacthosting.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/KF-FYI-for-your-improvement-license-ENG-3-4-15.pdf>
- Marina, S., Davis-Hamilton, Z., & Charmanski, K. (2016). Evaluating research administration: Methods and utility. *Journal of Research Administration*, XLVI(2), 95-108.
- National Council of University Research Administrators (NCURA) (2019). *Standards for effective unit-level sponsored programs operations*. <https://www.ncura.edu/InstitutionalPrograms/PeerReviewPrograms/Unit-LevelReview/Standards.aspx>
- Schneider, S. (2018). *2018 FDP faculty workload survey: Plans & preliminary results*. Federal Demonstration Partnership. <http://thefdp.org/default/assets/File/Presentations/FDP%20FWS%20Prelim%20Summary%20090618%20post.pdf>
- Stanchak, K. & Cox, T. (2019, April 2). *Design Practice, Tufts Technology Services*. Design Thinking Workshop 2019, Tufts University Research Administration and Development, Medford, MA.
- Viviani, J. & Browngoetz, S. (2016). We are the prism: It's all about perspective. *NCURA Magazine*, XLVIII(2), 7-8.
- Workman, J. (2016). *Selecting core performance metrics: Filtering process to identify administrative unit measures and strategies for triggering actions*. EAB. Available from <https://eab.com/research/business-affairs/study/selecting-core-performance-metrics/>

Biographical Information

Sarah Marina, MA is Associate Director of Research Administration and Development at Tufts University. Drawing on her background in research development, she designs and implements programs to strengthen the research administration and development enterprise. Sarah has specific expertise in metrics and evaluation, designing evaluations for Tufts and professional organizations, and has written and presented extensively about metrics and evaluation for research administration and development. She can be reached at sarah.marina@tufts.edu.

Zoya Davis-Hamilton, EdD, CRA is the Associate Vice Provost for Research Administration and Development at Tufts University with multifaceted experience in administration of sponsored funding, strategic planning, and change management. Zoya serves as an administrative representative of Tufts University in Federal Demonstration Partnership. She has a BS in secondary education, an MS in psychology, and an EdD in administrative leadership, as well as graduate training in sociology, law, and accounting. She can be reached at zoya.hamilton@tufts.edu.

Simin Nikbin Meydani, DVM, PhD is a Senior Scientist, Professor of Nutrition and Immunology, and Director of the Nutritional Immunology Team at the Jean Mayer Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University (HNRCA). She also served as Director of the HNRCA from 2009 until she was appointed Vice Provost for Research at Tufts University from 2016–2019. In her role as the Vice Provost for Research, Simin led the creation of a strategic vision for Tufts' wide-ranging research enterprise. She can be reached at simin.meydani@tufts.edu.

The Grant Professionals Certification Institute (GPCI) Quest for Accreditation

Bonnie Houk, GPC

Southeast Kansas Education Service Center, Girard, KS

GPCI Competency 02: Knowledge of organizational development as it pertains to grant seeking

GPCI Competency 06: Knowledge of nationally recognized standards of ethical practice by grant developers

GPCI Competency 07: Knowledge of practices and services that raise the level of professionalism of grant developers

Abstract

The Institute for Credentialing Excellence, through its accrediting body, the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA), epitomizes the very essence of excellence for certifying organizations. Certification programs administered by organizations assessing professional competence in a field and successfully receiving NCCA accreditation, demonstrate compliance with established *Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs*. This article details the Grant Professionals Certification Institute's journey to achieving accreditation. Key findings of a comprehensive job analysis, a massive policies and procedures overhaul, exam cut score analyses, and an equating study of previous exam administrations are discussed. The achievement of accreditation status validates the Grant Professionals Certification Institute as offering the only nationally recognized and accredited credential for grant professionals.

Introduction

The Grant Professional Certified (GPC) credential, administered by the Grant Professionals Certification Institute (GPCI), validates knowledge and competency in the grants profession through education, experience, professional development, community involvement, and a

psychometrically sound examination. Key terms related to this validation process include the following:

- *Credential*: Noun—Evidence of authority, status, rights, entitlement to privileges, or the like, usually in written form; Verb—To grant credentials to, especially educational and professional ones.
- *Accreditation*: The process by which a private, non-governmental agency or association grants public recognition to an institution or program of study that meets certain established qualifications and periodic evaluations.
- *Professional Certification* as defined by the Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE): “A voluntary process by which a non-governmental entity grants a time-limited recognition and use of a credential to an individual after verifying that he or she has met predetermined and standardized criteria” (Knapp et al., 2006, p. 6).

The methods for validating knowledge and competency are based on widely accepted sociological theories of the professionalization of careers, adherence to an established code of ethics (<https://www.grantprofessionals.org/ethics>), an extensive literature review, the expertise of highly experienced authorities in the grants field, and examination development processes of the American Psychological Association. GPCI was purposely established on the quality standards for credentialing organizations set forth by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA), the accreditation arm of the Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE) (<https://www.credentialingexcellence.org/p/cm/ld/fid=65>). NCCA’s mission and purpose is

to ensure the health, welfare, and safety of the public by providing accreditation services to certification programs that assess professional competence. The NCCA accomplishes this mission by promulgating the Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs (Institute for Credentialing Excellence, 2017), evaluating program compliance with its standards, recognizing programs that have demonstrated compliance, and serving as a resource on quality certification. Organizations that achieve NCCA Accreditation of its certification programs have demonstrated a valid and reliable process for development, implementation, maintenance, and governance of their certification programs. Although specific to certification programs, the NCCA Standards are consistent with the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, &

National Council on Measurement in Education, 2014)
(Johnston et al., 2017).

The achievement of accreditation provides impartial, third-party validation that an organization has met recognized national and international credentialing industry standards for development, implementation, and maintenance of certification programs. As of June 30, 2020, only 135 organizations have current accreditation status through NCCA. The GPCI board conducted a thorough review and developed a response for the following 24 NCCA Standards for Accreditation of Certification Program (<https://www.credentialingexcellence.org/d/do/126>) outlined in Table 1:

Table 1: NCCA Standards

Standards 1–5: Purpose, Governance, and Resources	
1. Purpose	4. Financial Resources
2. Governance and Autonomy	5. Human Resources
3. Education, Training, and Certification	
Standards 6–12: Responsibilities to Stakeholders	
6. Information to Candidates	10. Confidentiality
7. Program Policies	11. Conflict of Interest
8. Awarding Certification	12. Security
9. Record Retention and Management Policies	
Standards 13–21: Examinations	
13. Panel Composition for SMEs	18. Examination Administration
14. Job Analysis	19. Scoring and Score Reporting
15. Examination Specifications	20. Reliability
16. Examination Development	21. Exam Score Equating
17. Standard Setting	
Standards 22–24: Maintaining Certification	
22. Maintaining Certification	24. Maintaining Accreditation
23. Quality Assurance	

Historical Context

Accreditation of the GPCI was always a goal of GPCI's board of directors. As daunting as the idea of accreditation was, members of the GPCI board and key volunteers were committed to work through the various aspects towards achieving accreditation, no matter how challenging the process.

The development of a professional certification for the grants field can be traced to the establishment of the American Association for Grant Professionals (AAGP) in 1997 (now the Grant Professionals Association, GPA). In that year, its founders identified two inter-related issues facing the field: 1) the need for ethical practices and 2) the need for a mechanism to promote and uphold those ethical practices. The mechanism would come to be defined as "certification." From its inception, AAGP recognized the enormity of the task. It stood firm in its belief that certification should reflect only the highest testing standards and be devoid of any potential conflicts of interest. AAGP committed its efforts and resources to the assurance that all aspects of the certification process would be conducted within the psychometric parameters established by the NCCA. (Annarino and Blymiller, 2006). In 2004, the AAGP board established a separate entity, the Grant Professionals Certification Institute (GPCI), to oversee the development, administration, and maintenance of the Grant Professional Certified (GPC) credential.

By the time the first GPC examination was administered to more than 100 individuals at the annual AAGP (now GPA) conference in 2007, a lot of time, energy, and equity had been invested in the development of the exam questions, format, and protocols for determining eligibility, administering the exam, and maintaining the credential. The entire exam process, from eligibility determinations to administering the exams at conferences to maintaining accurate records of examinees, was completed entirely by dedicated volunteers and subject matter experts. GPCI is still managing these processes with the assistance of dedicated board members and volunteers.

Consisting of a multiple-choice component and an essay component, the GPC exam was administered at selected locations across the US and at regional and national conferences, a few times each year between 2007 and 2011 (18 test administrations). The GPCI board quickly realized the next logical step was to administer the exam electronically in order for more potential GPC candidates to take the exam at a location and time of their choosing. In late 2011 the board suspended the administration of paper/pencil exams and in June 2012 transitioned to administering the exam electronically through a testing agency, Kryterion Global Testing Solutions. From 2012 to 2017 the exam administered was still functioning on the premise the original competencies and skills developed in 2006 were applicable to the profession. In 2016, the board of directors commissioned the process of a complete exam overhaul in preparation of an accreditation application.

These forward-thinking, ground-breaking grant professionals who were at the helm of AAGP, GPA, and GPCI had a strong desire and a vision which took two full decades to come to fruition.

In order to apply for accreditation, a certification organization must have administered an examination to a minimum of 500 candidates. GPCI met this threshold in 2018. There are multiple processes which must be completed for the development of a credentialing examination. All are critical to ensure a valid examination and a subsequent quality accreditation application. From 2016 to 2018, the GPCI board of directors; the GPA board of directors and administrative team; GPC subject matter experts; GPCI's psychometrician; GPCI's test administration partner, Kryterion Global Testing Solutions; and a credentialing consultant from SeaCrest Company were all instrumental in the completion of the application. A summary of each of the various processes GPCI completed are detailed below.

Processes

Literature Review

The first process was to conduct an updated literature review to determine if the current trends and concepts for grant professionals had significantly changed over the decade since the original literature review. GPCI reached out to Michael Wells, GPC-Retired, who had conducted the previous review, to request a revision. Wells welcomed the opportunity to continue supporting the grants profession and worked tirelessly on the second literature review for GPCI. After his passing, the literature review was finalized posthumously in 2017 by two GPCI board members.

Job Analysis

In conjunction with the literature review, the GPCI board commissioned a national job analysis in early 2016 to identify: (a) the professional tasks and knowledge which must be mastered to competently perform the role of a grant professional, (b) the changes in professional practice since the last job analysis study (2007), and (c) how those changes can be integrated into the professional tasks and knowledge to generate a content outline supporting all skills appropriate to the certified grant professional latent construct. The methodology selected for the job analysis study was consistent with the validation processes recommended in the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (2014), published jointly by the American Psychological Association, the American Educational Research Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education; the NCCA's Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs; and international standard ISO/IEC 17024:2012 General requirements for bodies operating certification of persons,

published by the International Organization for Standardization/ International Electrotechnical Commission. These standards help organizations who certify individuals in a variety of occupations and professions protect the integrity and ensure the validity of individual certification programs. It also promotes consumer and public confidence in the capabilities and competence of the people who provide specialized services.

The job analysis committee met in late 2016 to review and discuss the survey findings and to revise the competencies and skills which were approved by the GPCI board in November 2016 (<https://www.grantcredential.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/GPCCompetenciesandSkills2017.pdf>). The competencies and skills changed for the multiple-choice section, while the job analysis findings indicated the initial competencies and skills for the essay section of the exam did not change.

In August and September 2017, final comparison of the existing examination items to the updated competencies and skills was completed by a team of seven GPCI board members. This final content mapping was used to determine gaps and areas in need of additional items for the examinations to be developed in November 2017.

Test Revision for the Multiple-choice Section

GPCI commissioned a team of 14 subject matter experts (SMEs) to participate in a multiple-choice test revision process in conjunction with the 2017 GPA annual conference in San Diego. The team completed an extensive analysis of each multiple-choice item to determine if the questions were correctly mapped to the identified competencies and skills. Test items were eliminated based on past performance, some items were revised, and new items were developed.

Utilizing a Modified Angoff procedure (a well-known and proven standard-setting technique, Ricker, 2006) the SMEs determined the pass/fail cutoff score for each version of the exam. The modified Angoff procedure uses the concept of “minimal competence” to identify the number of correct responses needed to indicate the appropriate level of content mastery. The Angoff procedure requires judges to render the expected pass rate for a group of minimally competence examinees for each test item.

A second group of five new SMEs and four original SMEs from the 2017 exam development process were asked to respond to both versions of the exam as if they were actual examinees. The SMEs completed this through the Kryterion Webassessor system for a realistic view of how the exam is presented for an examinee over a course of two days. The committee convened a final time for additional discussion and to approve a final cut score for recommendation to the GPCI board of directors. The GPCI board approved the cut score in February 2018.

Test Revision for the Essay Section

A similar procedure for the essay section of the GPC exam had previously been conducted in 2014. In April 2014, GPCI brought together a committee of 12 SMEs to develop and set the passing standards for four new essay writing prompts. At the conclusion of the meeting, the committee recommended the board approve the mean composite scores from the committee competency ratings as the passing standards for the four writing prompts. The board approved the essay cut scores in April 2014. However, since the job analysis conducted in 2016 determined competencies and skills for the essay section did not change, the board opted not to develop new essay prompts for the exam until after the accreditation process was complete.

Policies and Procedures

An essential requirement for an accreditation application is to ensure the organization meets recognized national and international credentialing industry standards for development, implementation, and maintenance of certification programs. The GPCI board of directors worked tirelessly throughout 2017 and 2018 to update, revise, and develop multiple policies and procedures covering all facets of organizational management.

Technical Report

A key component for the accreditation process is the completion of a technical report summarizing the design, development, and psychometric procedures used to develop and administer the examination. The report addresses issues such as job task analysis, validity, item writing, examination development indices, cut score determination, scoring, and equating. A technical report was completed for the GPC examinees who completed the exam in 2017 and also documented historical statistics for the exam since transitioning to electronic administration in 2012. The psychometrician reviewed the preliminary item analysis with members of the Certification Committee using the classical test theory (classical item analysis) which includes the P Value (difficulty index) and the Point Biserial correlation (discrimination index). Classical test theory predicts outcomes of psychological testing such as the difficulty of items or the ability of test-takers. It is a theory of testing based on the idea that a person's observed or obtained score on a test is the sum of a true score (error-free score) and an error score. These are used to improve the reliability of examinations (Wolkowitz, 2019).

Equating Study

The purpose of equating is to establish, as nearly as possible, an effective equivalence between raw scores on two test forms. Despite attempts to construct test forms that are very similar in content, format, and

difficulty, different forms of an examination will often vary some in the level of difficulty. Equating is used to identify an equivalent raw cut score when a new or alternate test form is more difficult or easier than the other test form. This helps to ensure a fair assessment process for test takers regardless of which test form they receive.

GPCI contracted with Kryterion Global Testing Solutions to conduct an independent equating study to meet accreditation requirements. Kryterion conducted analysis on the two versions of the multiple-choice examination administrations from 2012 to 2018.

Kryterion utilized a circle-arc method as proposed by Livingston and Kim (2009). Circle-arc equating methods produce more accurate results at all levels of the score distribution compared to other methods, especially in samples of less than 200 test takers. Through circle-arc equating, statisticians equate test forms by reducing the number of parameters for estimating the equating relationship in small samples by neglecting the assumption the equating relationship is linear. Circle-arc equating is recognized by NCCA as a valid statistical method and is widely accepted by the psychometric field.

Other Processes

GPCI undertook and completed other processes, including the refinement of the eligibility requirements and the application template; modifying GPC notification documentation; updating exam development and essay scoring training manuals; amending writing prompt and rubric development processes; and assembling documentation such as financial statements; annual reports; logs of testing irregularities; training rosters of SMEs, raters, and proctors; and SME qualifications.

Conclusion

With the assistance of a consultant from SeaCrest Company, the NCCA accreditation application was submitted on behalf of the Grant Professionals Certification Institute in January 2019. Between February and April, NCCA's professional contracted staff conducted a preliminary review and made inquiries to GPCI's accreditation committee for additional information. NCCA staff then forwarded the application to the full NCCA committee. In May 2019 NCCA rendered their decision to award GPCI accredited status for a period of five years, making the GPC the only nationally recognized credential for grant professionals. GPCI will be responsible for maintaining the accreditation through annual reporting to NCCA on board policies and procedures, eligibility and administration of the exam, conferring of the GPC to candidates, and updates as necessary to remain relevant and current with NCCA standards. GPCI's accreditation achievement ensures the GPC is more widely recognized as the gold standard and sets the GPC credential apart from other non-accredited certifications or credentials.

Acknowledgements

The quest to receive certification could not have been accomplished without the following dedicated individuals who sat on the GPCI board in 2018 and 2019: Meghann Adams, GPC; Julie Assel, GPC, 2019 President; Allison Boyd, GPC, 2018 President; Mara Gerst, GPC; Kent Hornberger, GPC; Lisa Jackson, GPC, 2019 Treasurer; David Lindeman, GPC, 2018–2019 Secretary; LaKeesha Morris-Moreau, GPC; Dana Northcott, GPC; Egongdu Onuoha, GPC; Sylvia Redic, GPC, 2018 Vice President; Theresa Reyes-Cummings, GPC; Amanda Ripstra, GPC; Nancy Robbins-Lackey, GPC; Nancy Smallwood, GPC, 2018 Treasurer; and Tammy Tilzey, Public Board Member and 2019 Vice President. Other major contributors included Mike Chamberlain, GPA CEO; Walter Chason, GPCI Psychometrician; Patricia Young, Kryterion Psychometrician; Lisa Nepi, SeaCrest Company Consultant; and Bonnie Houk, GPC, 2012–2018 GPC Certification Chair.

References

- Annarino P. & Blymiller, H. (2006). Setting the standards for the grants profession: Identification and validation of the competencies and skills. *Journal of the American Association of Grant Professionals, Monograph: A Series of Papers on the Topic of Professionalization in the Grant Field*, 39–57.
- Gasiorowski-Denis, E. (2012). *Updated ISO/IEC 17024 standard for personnel certification expected to bolster confidence in providers of specialized services*. International Organization for Standardization. https://www.ansi.org/news_publications/news_story?menuid=7&articleid=84c9aa49-cc06-4546-afa8-4be7fb15dd55
- Johnston, J.M., Carr, J.E., & Mellichamp, F.H. (2017). A history of the professional credentialing of applied behavior analysts. *The Behavior Analyst*, 40(2), 523–538.
- Knapp, J., Fabrey, L., Rops, M., & McCurray, N. (2006). *Basic guide to credentialing terminology*. Washington, DC: Institute for Credentialing Excellence.
- Livingston, S. & Kim, S. (2009). The circle-arc method for equating in small samples. *Journal of Educational Measurement*, (46)3, 330–343.
- NCCA (National Commission for Certifying Agencies). *Certification accreditation: Self-assessment checklist*. [https://www.credentialingexcellence.org/p/cm/ld/fid=514&tags\[0\]=Standards](https://www.credentialingexcellence.org/p/cm/ld/fid=514&tags[0]=Standards)

Ricker, K.L. (2006). Setting cut-scores: A critical review of the Angoff and modified Angoff methods. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 52(1), 53-64.

Wolkowitz, A.A. & Wright, K.D. (2019). Effectiveness of equating at the passing score for exams with small sample sizes. *Journal of Educational Measurement*, 56(2), 361-390. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jedm.12212>

Biographical Information

Bonnie Houk, GPC is the Director of Grants Management for the Southeast Kansas Education Service Center in Girard, KS. She has served as director since 1999 and has been instrumental in the awarding of 299 proposals totaling more than \$81 million for school districts, community organizations, and foundations. She is a member of the Grant Professionals Association (GPA), the National Grants Management Association (NGMA), and the American Evaluation Association (AEA). She served as the Chair of the GPA Ethics Committee from January 2010 to December 2012. She is in her third year as a member of the GPA Board of Directors. She served as a member of the GPCI Board of Directors from September 2011 to December 2017, serving as vice president (three years) and president (two years). She worked extensively with SeaCrest Company and the psychometricians on the development of GPCI's accreditation application. Contact: bonnie.houk@greenbush.org.

The Good Financial Grant Practice (GFGP) Standard as a Fiduciary Tool for Non-Governmental Organizations

Joseph Gichuru Wang'ombe, DBA

African Population & Health Research Center,
APHRC Campus, Kitisuru, Nairobi, Kenya

Vincent Nkundimana, MPP

African Academy of Sciences, Karen, Nairobi, Kenya

Hannah Ngugi, IBA

African Academy of Sciences, Karen, Nairobi, Kenya

GPCI Competency 02: Knowledge of organizational development as it pertains to grant seeking

GPCI Competency 05: Knowledge of post-award grant management practices sufficient to inform effective grant design and development

GPCI Competency 08: Knowledge of methods and strategies that cultivate and maintain relationships between fund-seeking and recipient organizations and funders

Abstract

This paper reviews a new and innovative standard published by the African Organization for Standardization (ARSO). The standard referred to as the Good Financial Grant Practice (GFGP) has been purposely developed to provide a common platform for funders to assess their grantees. It covers all the major areas of organizational development, including financial management, procurement, human resources management, and governance. The paper reviews some of the delineating features of the four tiers of the standard: bronze, silver, gold, and platinum. It reviews the standard's benefits for funders, grantees, and the general public. The standard has

value beyond grant management and provides good indicators of the nature of governance in an organization. Additionally, the GFGP is an excellent tool for capacity development of organizations, as it can be used to establish a baseline from which clear aspirations for development can be articulated.

Introduction

Public companies have very clear ownership structures where shareholders have specific holdings attributable to them. Using the voting power which, in most cases, is commensurate with their shares, they vote to elect directors who represent their interests. The directors have a fiduciary responsibility that requires them to make decisions in good faith and in a reasonably prudent manner. They are required to exercise the utmost care in making business decisions in order to fulfill their fiduciary duty (to act on behalf of shareholders' best interests).

The fiduciary responsibility lines are not as clear in non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The "investors" are mainly donors, also sometimes referred to as funders, who in most cases have no role in the appointment of directors. In quite a number of these organizations, the directors do not make any financial contributions, unlike limited liability companies where most directors hold shares in the company. The donors are therefore left exposed and have to devise systems and processes to safeguard their interests and reputations, especially to guard against potential inappropriate business practices, including financial misappropriation. Donors also want assurances that their funds are being used to achieve the intended social good.

Before donors extend funding to NGOs, they carry out due diligence, part of which may involve officials of the donor agencies visiting the organization. Others will hire an audit firm to carry out an extensive due diligence exercise. Once donors have reasonable assurance of the grantee organization's capacity to implement the project in a financially prudent manner, they confirm funding by way of a grant agreement or contract. Donors usually craft contracts that are designed to safeguard their funds and to provide assurance that particular programmatic outcomes are achieved. Some of the key clauses in contracts that help provide some level of assurance include:

1. The grant will only be used for the objectives set out in the grantee proposal. Diversion of funds to other activities is taken as a breach of contract.
2. Expenditures should follow agreed budget lines with any changes requiring the approval of the funder. Usually, funders allow up to 10% movement between budget lines without the need for seeking approval.

3. Funds unexpended at the end of the grant are to be returned to the funder.
4. The funder has the right to review performance and to audit the grantee. The funder may commission an audit or require the grantee to organize an audit that meets specified criteria.
5. The funder arranges for a periodic review of the funded program and requires the grantee to provide financial and narrative reports on particular dates. The donor usually stipulates the elements that should be included in the financial and narrative report. The donor also makes visits to review progress and may in some cases include a provision for regular telephone calls.
6. Additional terms and conditions are often added to the agreement especially if the recipient's organizational policies are not aligned to the donor's requirements.

Each donor has its own requirements. As such, multi-funded NGOs must invest in structures that allow them to meet diverse donor requirements. Investing in structures and people to handle compliance can be daunting, especially when an organization is not able to raise enough resources to cover donor compliance. Additionally, poorly-resourced organizations do not enjoy economies of scale that allow recruitment of highly-qualified staff to proficiently navigate funders' requirements. The result is that small and upcoming NGOs often struggle to comply with funders' requirements even though they may be successfully implementing programs and/or projects. Though not well documented, the failure rate of small and upcoming NGOs is substantial. It is no wonder that a very small proportion of donor aid is handled by locally-incorporated organizations (which are usually small) in low- and middle-income countries.

Besides accountability to funders, NGOs need to be accountable to governments, which provide the legal and regulatory framework; to beneficiaries, who provide the basis for the organizations' purpose and moral legitimacy; to employees, who provide their time; and to the general public, which is affected by the organizations' operations (Lloyd & de las Casas, 2006). NGOs are also accountable to the mission they have set for themselves (Najam, 1996).

To demonstrate accountability, NGOs have made various attempts at self-regulation, including aspirational codes of principles/ethics that signatories strive to achieve; information sharing services across particular sectors and with the general public that enhance transparency; working groups that share best practices and encourage adoption; award plans which highlight and reward good practice; and certification systems where compliance with clear standards can be verified by a third party (Warren & Lloyd, 2009). Figure 1 examines various self-regulation initiatives and their strengths in terms of compliance.

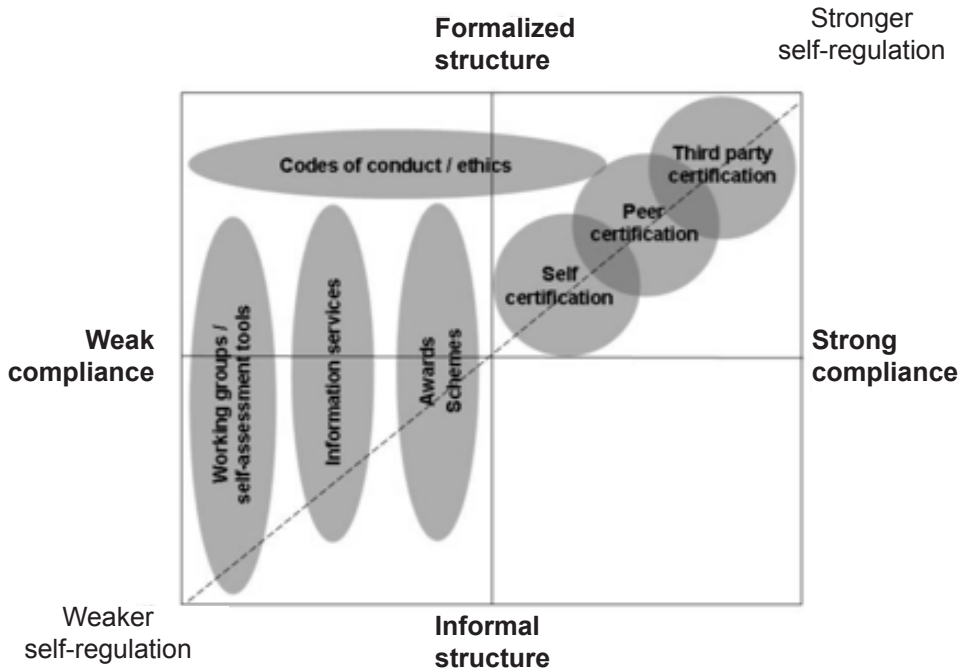


Figure 1: Strength of civil society organizations (CSO) self-regulatory initiatives

(Reprinted from *Civil Society Self-regulation* by Warren & Lloyd (2009) published by One World Trust, Briefing paper number 119, June 2009.)

In an analysis of 35 codes of conduct and certification methods for NGOs in countries across the globe, it was observed that the focus of attention tends to be on the actors who have leverage on the organization—funders and governments (Lloyd & de las Casas, 2006). The analysis indicated that certification systems, including certification by a third party, generally ensure better compliance from NGOs.

Innovative Models for Increasing Engagement of Developing Countries’ Local Institutions in Funded Programs

Realizing that work in developing countries is usually led by institutions from outside the region, funders have come up with ways of increasing the share of funding to local institutions. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Forward initiative that promoted working with local institutions is a case in point. At the peak of USAID Forward in 2015, USAID missions obligated 27% of their funding to local actors (USAID, 2016). This was a substantial improvement, but it still left more than 70% of the resources going through non-local entities.

In 2009, The Wellcome Trust came up with the African Institutional Initiative (AII) where the lead organization was required to be a local or an African-based entity. The Rand Corporation conducted an evaluation

of the AII and identified the attraction and retention of human resources and weak financial management capacity as significant challenges (Cochrane et al., 2014). The funding mechanism that followed the AII incorporated an innovative way of standardizing assessment of grantees through a tool that was fully developed into the Good Financial Grant Practice (GFGP) Standard in 2018 (ARSO, 2018).

GFGP Standard Development Journey

The GFGP standard development journey started in 2015 at a stakeholder meeting hosted by the African Academy of Sciences (AAS) that brought grantees, funders, financial experts, and the African Organization for Standardization together to discuss how to develop a standard for the governance of grants using international standard development best practices (African Academy of Sciences (AAS), 2019). The Wellcome Trust, the Medical Research Council (UK), the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP), the Department of Health and Social Care (UK), and the IKEA Foundation funded the development of the GFGP. After the initial stakeholder meeting, engagements continued at different levels as depicted in Figure 2.

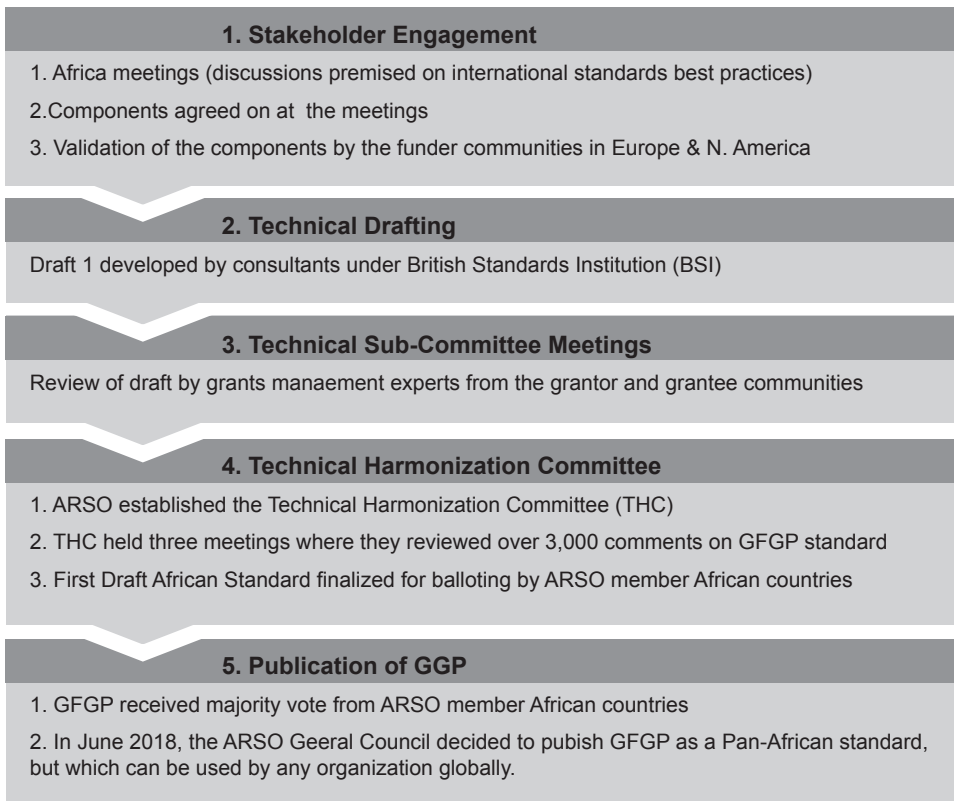


Figure 2.: GFGP standard development process

Key components for the GFGP standard were agreed on at grant finance managers' workshops held in Eastern, Western, and Southern Africa. The funder communities in Europe and North America thereafter validated these components. The First Technical Draft GFGP standard was developed by a technical author working under the management of the British Standards Institution (BSI). A sub-committee made up of grants management experts from the grantor and grantee communities discussed this First Technical Draft GFGP standard and submitted a revised draft to ARSO.

The ARSO established a stand-alone Pan-African Technical Harmonization Committee (THC) to discuss the First Technical Draft GFGP standard. To come up with a Draft African Standard to put to a vote by ARSO member African countries, the THC discussed and reviewed over 3,000 comments on the GFGP standard in three meetings held in Nairobi. The Draft African Standard for GFGP received a majority vote from ARSO member African countries and in June 2018, the ARSO General Council decided to publish the GFGP as a pan-African standard that can also be used by any organization globally.

The GFGP as a Governance Tool

The GFGP standard is at the core of the Global Grant Community (GGC), a global platform that promotes transparency and strengthens the governance of grant funding and management worldwide. To facilitate the use of the GFGP in assessments, an online portal was developed through a consultative process involving funders and grantees. The Global Grant Community Portal facilitates organizations to undertake pre-certification assessment for their compliance to the requirements of the GFGP standard. Funders subscribing to the portal do not need to do independent due diligence assessments, as they can use the portal to review the reports of the pre-certification assessments done by their grantees.

Aside from the use of the tool for grantee assessment, the GFGP is a powerful governance tool that can facilitate progressive improvement in the capacity of not-for-profits. The GFGP has the usual components of a due diligence tool including governance structure, policies and codes of conduct, and an emphasis on financial management standards. What separates the GFGP from other due diligence tools is the codification into different tiers to avoid a one-size-fits-all configuration. The GFGP has four tiers with the lowest being bronze, then silver, gold, and platinum as depicted by Figure 3 on the next page.

The GFGP defines a *procedure* as a documented step-by-step instruction which guides those doing the work to consistently apply the same approach each time the action is repeated, while a *process* is defined as a documented series of activities which states what needs to be done and, where relevant, in what order to achieve the objective or output (ARSO, 2018). The GFGP defines *policies* as written principles and guidelines, ap-



Figure 3: The GFGP four tiers

proved by top management or the governing board, to guide an organization's decisions and actions (ARSO, 2018). Organizations with very basic procedures are classified at the bronze tier while those who have codified these procedures into processes qualify for the silver tier (processes can be documented as a series of procedures). The requirements for the gold tier are policies complete with approval at top management and/or at board level. Contemporary policies that reflect global best practices qualify an organization to be at the platinum tier. The four tiers are cumulative, such that an organization has to fulfill all the requirements under the lower tier(s) plus additional ones for its standard. For example, an organization has to fulfill all the requirements under bronze and silver plus additional ones in order to be rated at the gold tier.

After organizations undertake the pre-certification assessment, they can be audited to confirm the assessments and later be certified as bronze, silver, gold, or platinum. The audit is performed by licensed audit firms. This does not prevent an organization from using the standard as a benchmark for establishing gaps in systems and processes, even without going through certification. Certification by a third party, however, gives the GFGP better credibility as an accountability standard.

The GFGP standard covers more than 318 clauses dispatched into four practice areas: 1) financial management, 2) human resources, 3) procurement, and 4) governance. Though the last area, governance, contains the requirements for managing accountability including board and other regulatory oversight, the GFGP as a whole covers the governance framework. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defined governance as the process through which organizations are directed, controlled, and held accountable (OECD, 2015). We briefly review the four areas covered by the GFGP.

Financial Management

The GFGP standard has a set of requirements for the management of finances at each tier (bronze, silver, gold, and platinum). The financial management area has ten elements, as listed below.

1. Planning and budgeting
2. Income management
3. Expenditure management
4. Cash, bank, and treasury management
5. Travel expenses
6. Financial management systems
7. Financial reporting
8. Property, plant, and equipment management
9. Inventory management
10. Sub-grantee management

The GFGP details the requirements for each of the elements. Without going into the details in the standard, we outline some of the distinguishing features of the different tiers in Table 1.

It is important to note that financial management is the most elaborate of the four areas (financial management, human resources, procurement, and governance). This is expected given that the standard is meant to help in the management of donor funds.

Table 1. Key Delineating Financial Management Features

Feature	Bronze	Silver	Gold	Platinum
<i>Guiding documents</i>	Procedures	Processes	Policies	Policies
<i>Financial accounting system</i>	Manual or electronic cashbook	Simple financial management system (even Excel spreadsheets are acceptable)	Financial management system that supports segregation of duties and provides an audit trail	Procedure for review and improvement of financial management system
<i>Segregation of duties</i>	Not required	Segregation of some roles	Required in all areas	Required in all areas
<i>Handling of sub-grants</i>	Not allowed	Not allowed	Allowed	Allowed
<i>Internal audit function</i>	Not required	Not required	Required but can be outsourced	Internal audit function that reports to an audit committee of the Board

Note. Information generated from Good Financial Grant Practice Requirements, African Standard ARS 1651(E) First Edition (ARSO, 2018).

Human Resources Management

The HR management area has two elements:

1. Human resource management and payroll
2. Staff development

HR management in the GFGP is conceptualized at a relatively high level for all four tiers of bronze, silver, gold, and platinum, perhaps as a result of the need for open and transparent recruitment systems for donor-funded organizations. At all the tiers, there is the requirement for a documented open recruitment system, which should include reference checks. Timesheets are required for those working in multiple projects. Table 2 reviews the key delineating features for the four tiers of the standard.

Table 2. Key Delineating Human Resources Management Features

Feature	Bronze	Silver	Gold	Platinum
<i>Anti-fraud and Anti-bribery</i>	Not a requirement	Processes for preventing, detecting, and responding to allegations of corruption, fraud, and bribery	Policies for preventing, detecting, and responding to allegations of corruption, fraud, and bribery	Same as gold tier
<i>Salary matters</i>	No requirements	Processes for establishing and reviewing an approved salary structure	Policies include segregation of duties in the payroll system and an audit log that can highlight who has accessed the system	Remuneration policy includes how organization benchmarks its pay to the market
<i>Staff development</i>	Training aligned to the objectives and terms of the grant and includes an attendance list	Organization should prepare training needs assessment and staff development plans	Staff development policy including performance reviews and evaluation of training programs	Same as gold tier

Note. Information generated from Good Financial Grant Practice Requirements, African Standard ARS 1651(E) First Edition (ARSO, 2018).

Procurement

Procurement has two elements:

1. Planning
2. Contract management

Table 3 presents the key delineating features for the four tiers of the standard.

Table 3. Key Delineating Features on Procurement

Feature	Bronze	Silver	Gold	Platinum
<i>Purchase of goods and services</i>	Procedures to check market prices for goods and services purchased	Processes on transparent competition that states how frequent the market is tested for goods and services procured on a recurring basis	Procurement policy indicating the different procurement methods and that is clear on transparency, segregation of duties and declaration of conflict of interest	Same as gold
<i>Tender committee</i>	Not a requirement	Not a requirement, but segregation of duties, including clarity on approvals, is required	Tender committee which has oversight over procurement	Same as gold
<i>Contract management</i>	Secure storage for vendor and supplier contracts	Contract management process for review of current contracts including checks on performance against approved contracts	Policy on contract management including risk assessment of key suppliers	Same as gold

Note. Information generated from Good Financial Grant Practice Requirements, African Standard ARS 1651(E) First Edition (ARSO, 2018).

Governance

Governance has four elements:

1. General or routine procedures
2. Grant management and compliance
3. Audit
4. Risk management

Table 4 (on the next page) presents the key delineating features of the four elements under governance.

GFGP Certification

The GFGP Certification protocol provides requirements for ensuring that GFGP audit and certification activities are conducted by competent auditors. This check is in place to ensure that the GFGP certificate obtained by an organization reflects ample evidence that GFGP standard requirements are embedded in day-to-day operations.

The development of the GFGP Certification Governance Committee kicked off with a series of Technical Working Group meetings which were hosted by the Wellcome Trust in the United Kingdom, with contributions received from over 40 grantees, grantors, and accounting and audit firms.

In May 2019, the GFGP Certification Governance Committee began prequalifying audit firms for GFGP certification. This completes the loop as organizations can now be certified at the various tiers of the GFGP standard.

GFGP Benefits

The benefits for the various groups affected by the activities of NGOs can be analyzed using the stakeholder theory advanced by Freeman (Freeman et al., 2010). While the GFGP tool was developed mainly for upward accountability to funders, it can also be applied to the general governance of NGOs and can assist these entities in creating better value for society at large, rather than only the NGOs' stakeholders.

GFGP Benefits for Funders

The pre-certification assessment to GFGP is being used by an increasing number of global funders as a due diligence tool (see Table 5). The GFGP assessment process identifies gaps within an institution that should be addressed in readiness for certification. Funders are likely to make their award decisions based on the outcome of the assessment before the GFGP certification is finalized and will usually request that the grantee completes the certification process in the first few months of the grant. Grants can also be issued on the condition that the grantee completes the full GFGP assessment process.

Table 4. Key Delineating Features on Governance

Feature	Bronze	Silver	Gold	Platinum
Governing body	Top management could play role of overall oversight though governance board is encouraged	Governing board shall have terms of reference specifying the method of appointment, qualifications, and roles and responsibilities separate from management	Governing board should include a committee which is responsible for oversight and which receives reports from the internal audit function	Governing board should include an internal audit committee
Vision, mission, values, strategies, goals, and objectives	Organizational procedures shall be communicated to all staff	Organization shall have an organogram which shall show the delegation of authority and which shall be communicated to all staff	Organization shall have documented vision, mission, and set goals that are articulated and communicated to staff members and key stakeholders	Organization shall have a business continuity plan and a strategic plan that includes values and both documents have to be reviewed and approved by the governing board
Handling of grants	Organization shall demonstrate compliance with each grantor's requirements	Organization shall have a grant application process including approval criteria	Organization shall have policies setting controls in the governance of grants processes	Organization shall have internal assurance processes on grant management at least once a year
Audit	Organization shall appoint independent qualified professionals to undertake grant audits as required by grant conditions	Organization shall have processes that stipulate review of all financial reports by top management at least twice a year	Internal audit assists the governing body in fulfilling its oversight responsibilities for the financial reporting process	Organization shall establish organization-wide internal audit plan consistent with organization's goals

Note. Information generated from Good Financial Grant Practice Requirements, African Standard ARS 1651(E) First Edition (ARSO, 2018).

The GFGP assessment provides a baseline in terms of identifying organizational systems, processes, and gaps therein. Grantees can thus clearly see the gaps they need to address in order to become certified. When requested by the funder, a GFGP Certification Body or audit firm will confirm full compliance to the standard or identify gaps that need to be addressed within a given period of time, such as six months. In the case of full compliance, the certificate will be issued immediately. In the case of partial compliance, the certificate will be issued after the issues identified have been addressed. For the funder, the certification will establish a good base for monitoring organizational governance systems.

The funder may prefer to have the grantee certified at a higher GFGP tier than the one in which they have qualified. The funder, in such a case, may require the grantee to work towards the next tier of certification within a defined period. The GFGP, in this case, sets the benchmarks to be attained and helps focus the organization to a particular target instead of a moving target where different assessments keep pushing the organization to piecemeal changes.

Most funders are keen to build the capacity of their grantees for various reasons, such as increasing sustainability for long-term impact (Backer, 2000). The GFGP will help establish a good criterion for an organization's capacity development by aiding them in strengthening systems to comply with a given standard or upgrade to a higher-tier standard.

The GFGP has defined important criteria that funders should consider for awarding certain grants. It is possible for a funder to determine their funding thresholds and align them to the GFGP to mitigate their risk exposure. For example, a funder may determine that they require a minimum of gold certification for grants above \$1 million and silver for grants that are more than \$500,000 but less than \$1 million. The GFGP has already set the criterion for sub-awards: only organizations at the gold and/or platinum tiers should handle sub-awards.

Finally, the GFGP certification can replace costly system audits required by funders and can also limit the extent of project audits to mainly the financials. The funder can use the GFGP assessments and only commission an audit for project-specific expenditures. Additionally, the GFGP establishes a clear standard and assurance system on which the expenditures are based.

GFGP Benefits to Regulatory Authorities

NGO regulation is weak in many developing countries (Hopper et al., 2017). Few regulatory authorities in developing countries have prescribed reporting frameworks, such as the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). The regulators are therefore faced with reports that are difficult to compare because NGOs use many different standards. The GFGP is well-aligned to IFRS and countries that adopt the standard and

make it a requirement for their NGOs will receive more credible financial reports.

Organizations that are well-managed comply with legislation and regulatory requirements. The GFGP improves management practice and increases compliance among NGOs, which greatly benefits the regulatory authorities and the populations they serve. By spending less time on judicial governance (enforcing compliance), regulatory authorities can focus their energies on supporting organizations to be more successful.

GFGP Benefits to Grantees

One of the key aims of the GFGP is to standardize grantee assessments and to avoid expensive, time-consuming duplications for grantees to conduct. Grantees who have completed the GFGP assessment and certifications can give funders access to their online documents for review. Alternatively, the funder can choose to rely on the certificate that has been issued by a GFGP Certification Body. As more funders accept the GFGP as a common tool for assessment of grantees, both parties will see significant time savings. This will, over time, reduce organizations' overhead costs and help grantees to channel resources to more productive activities.

Accounting standards are usually absolute and do not allow for compliance at different tiers. The GFGP tiers of bronze, silver, gold, and platinum offer reasonable yardsticks for organizations in their development process and can guide the setting of development goals. The GFGP is more than a tool simply to satisfy donor requirements: it is an organizational development tool that will help the organization plan its development path.

Organizations at gold and platinum tiers will normally be managing sub-awardees. Getting the sub-awardees on the GFGP standard will provide a level of assurance on the partners' systems and will establish a benchmark for capacity building.

Similar to the International Standards Organization (ISO) standards, the GFGP standard will serve the organization's marketing function in attracting funding (Gugerty, 2010). The organization will be able to use its certification to attract funders who are looking for organizations that are well managed. GFGP certified organizations will thus be more competitive.

The GFGP has been drawn from best practices. Even where funders do not recognize the GFGP, the discipline of meeting the standards' requirement will prepare the organization to better meet any funder requirements. As such, organizations that are GFGP certified will find it easier to navigate funders' systems and requirements.

The GFGP supports internal accountability of organization to staff. The GFGP includes requirements for systems and processes that promote transparency and integrity, including open recruitment, avoidance of

conflict of interest, whistle blowing protection, and anti-fraud and anti-bribery policies, all of which create a healthy work environment for staff.

GFGP Benefits to the Public and Project Beneficiaries

The governance framework determines whom the organization is there to serve and how the purposes and priorities of the organization should be decided. In addition to those investing in the organization, many other people are affected by the organization and have a “stake” in how it behaves. The GFGP requires organizations to have procedures, processes, and policies that meet the requirements of various stakeholders.

Transparency and accountability which are emphasized throughout the standard will make organizations a good employer, a good buyer, and a good project implementer. Some of the policies allow for the stakeholders, including the beneficiaries of the NGOs’ programs, to report malpractices (e.g., the whistle blowing policy).

NGOs often have to invest significant funds into the management of donor funds. In some cases, this involves engaging several intermediaries. The funds spent on oversight over grants sometimes are more than what is used in project implementation. The standardization through the GFGP will allow more resources to go into direct project implementation, thereby providing more benefits to the target communities.

NGOs’ failures affect communities in diverse ways. Some will fail to obtain payments for goods and services provided and others will fail to receive services they were expecting, while still others will lose livelihoods. Ideally, the GFGP provides substantial safeguards against failure arising from poor governance.

A Look at the Future for the GFGP

The GFGP will draw its power from widespread use in the same way that international accounting standards are used across the globe. The standard should be widely recognized as a signal of credibility that helps to build trust with potential funders and in so doing boosts an organization’s funding (Crack, 2018). Though the GFGP was approved as an African standard, there are ongoing efforts to make it global, in which case the African National Standards Bodies will submit the New Work Item proposal for GFGP to the International Organization for Standardization for progression to become an ISO standard (AAS, 2019).

Good progress has been made on the GFGP pre-certification assessment portal, which is currently being used by 250+ organizations from five continents, with the majority being in Africa (see Table 5).

As more stakeholders come on board and the funding landscape and NGOs’ experiences continue changing, the GFGP governance council has made provisions for the review of the standard. Potential improvements could include establishing linkages to program implementation. The

success of the GFGP will be its widespread adoption across the globe and continuous improvement in line with current realities.

Table 5. Registered Users of the GFGP Pre-Certification Portal

Continent	Number of Countries	Number of Users
Africa	30	197
Asia	6	20
Europe	3	30
North America	2	9
South America	2	3
Five Continents	43	259

Note. Data obtained from the AAS (African Academy of Sciences (AAS), 2019).

References

- African Academy of Sciences (AAS). (2019). *The global grant community (GGC)*. <https://www.aasciences.africa/ggc>
- African Organization for Standardization (ARSO). (2018). *Good Financial Grant Practice-Requirements: ARS 1651:2018(E)*. ICS 03.060. Nairobi, Kenya: ARSO.
- Backer, T.E. (2000). *Strengthening non-profits: Capacity-building and philanthropy*. Human Interaction Research Institute Encino, CA.
- Cochrane, G., Robin, E., Marjanovic, S., Diepeveen, S., Hanlin, R., Kryl, D., Retter, L., Yaqub, O., & Chataway, J. (2014). *The African Institutions Initiative: Insights from the first four years*. RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR707.html
- Crack, A.M. (2018). The regulation of international NGOs: Assessing the effectiveness of the INGO accountability charter. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 29(2), 419-429. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-017-9866-9>
- Freeman, R.E., Harrison, J.S., Wicks, A.C., Parmar, B.L., & Colle, S. (2010). *Stakeholder theory: The state of the art*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Gugerty, M.K. (2010). The emergence of nonprofit self-regulation in Africa. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 39(6), 1087-1112. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764010372972>
- Hopper, T., Lassou, P., & Soobaroyen, T. (2017). Globalisation, accounting and developing countries. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 43, 125-148. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpa.2016.06.003>
- Lloyd, R., & de las Casas, L. (2006). *NGO self-regulation: Enforcing and balancing accountability*. One World Trust. https://www.oneworldtrust.org/uploads/1/0/8/9/108989709/cso_self_regulation_-_the_global_picture_owt_119-2009.pdf
- Najam, A. (1996). NGO accountability: A conceptual framework. *Development Policy Review*, 14(4), 339-354.
- OECD. (2015). *G20/OECD principles of corporate governance 2015*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264236882-en>
- USAID. (2016, April 20). *Five years of USAID Forward*. <https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/fact-sheets/usaids-forward-five-years-and-counting>
- Warren, S. & Lloyd, R. (2009). *Civil society self-regulation: The global picture*. One World Trust. https://www.oneworldtrust.org/uploads/1/0/8/9/108989709/cso_self_regulation_-_the_global_picture_owt_119-2009.pdf

Biographical Information

Dr. Joseph Gichuru Wang'ombe is a management and organization specialist with 20 years of experience in project management, finance, human resources, administration, and grants. He has been with the African Population and Health Research Center for close to 17 years serving in different positions and currently as the Deputy Executive Director. Joseph holds an MPhil and a Doctor of Business Administration degree Maastricht School of Management, Netherlands. He also holds an MBA from the University of Nairobi, B.ed(Hons), CPA (K) and CPS (K). He can be reached at jgichuru@aphrc.org.

Vincent Nkundimana is the Good Financial Grant Practice (GFGP) Program Officer at The African Academy of Sciences. He had previously spent more than four years at the International Organization for

Standardization. Vincent holds a Master of Public Policy from the KDI School of Public Policy and Management and an MBA from Kabale University. He can be reached at v.nkundimana@aasciences.ac.ke.

Hannah Ngugi has over 14 years' experience in finance and administration. She was the finance officer for the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) before joining the African Academy of Sciences as the Head of Finance and Grants Management. Hannah has a degree in business administration (IBA, Finance) from the United States International University and is a Certified Public Accountant (CPA). She can be reached at H.Ngugi@aasciences.africa.

Maintaining GPC Validity, Reliability, and Legal Defensibility Through Analysis of the Grant Profession

Amanda Day, GPC

Grant Consultant and National Trainer, Atlanta, GA

Johna Rodgers, GPC

Johna Rodgers Consulting, LLC, Bowling Green, KY

GPCI Competency 06: Knowledge of nationally recognized standards of ethical practice by grant developers

Abstract

In 2006, the Grant Professionals Certification Institute (GPCI) completed the first-ever study of the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the grant profession. The process, known as “job analysis,” was conducted in partnership with the American Association of Grant Professionals (now Grant Professionals Association) and the University of South Florida’s Institute for Instructional Research and Practice (IIRP). It stands as a critical step in the development of the first competency-based exam and credential in the grants field. However, job analysis is not a one-time event; it is the foundation of any professional credential at a point in time. To remain valid and reliable, that foundation must be reviewed periodically to ensure the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to do the job are unchanged. This paper reviews development of the GPCI Competencies and Skills, defines the function of job analysis in credentialing, details the second job analysis and exam blueprint (2016–17), and points to areas of future study or concern.

Introduction

A credential—any credential established to identify an individual as a professional in a specific job or vocation—is based on the discrete skills and competencies needed to perform the work with a pre-determined level of proficiency. Simply put, one cannot decide what a proficiency

looks like without first understanding the job itself, including the potentially dozens of skills and depth of knowledge needed to meet that proficient level. Raymond and Neustel in their *Handbook of Test Development* (2006) term these indicators the knowledge, skills, and abilities of a given job or occupation.

However, those same skills and competencies do not remain fixed; they may change over time and, therefore, require periodic review. That review process, called “job analysis,” examines the prior bank of knowledge of the profession or job as compared to the current, real-world skills required. And, in the real world, those skills often change; new skills may be necessary, longstanding skills/techniques may be eliminated, and some skills may be modified. One needs to only look at the fields of nursing, human resources, or automobile repair to see the impact in the last ten years alone of technology on the skills and knowledge needed to be proficient.

Accordingly, the amount of time between updating a job analysis varies from credential to credential, depending on the subject matter and the speed at which relevant information in the field of study changes. The literature is clear on this difference. For dynamic occupations, reviews are needed every three to five years. More stable positions should be reviewed every five years. What does not differ is the importance of the analysis itself. As noted by Carroll (2017), job analysis “...allows a credentialing program to confidently assert that the content of the examination aligns with the necessary knowledge, skills, or competencies required of a job” (p. 14).

In 2016, the Grant Professional Certification Institute (GPCI) began a nearly two-year job analysis study related to the Grant Professional Certified (GPC) credential, the industry’s only psychometrically valid and reliable credentialing process. This study was critical because the analysis provides the foundation for continuing defensibility of the GPCI Competencies and Skills and the aligned exam blueprint (weighted) from which the GPC Exam items were and are developed. That is, the sound structure of the job analysis enables and informs strong item development that will limit legal liability (Knapp, 2000; Rouse, 2014). While other factors, including strong governance and sound psychometric principles, are important in the legal defense of the exam (Rouse, 2014), the development of items from a strong job analysis is key (Chinn & Hertz, 2010). This most recent analysis is only the second such review of the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the grant profession.

A Brief History of Job Analysis in the Grant Profession (1997–2006)

The story of the founding of the Grant Professionals Association is legend. A handful of people began in 1997 to discuss various issues

in the field—for example, the lack of standards by which they could/should work, misunderstandings of employers related to the complexity of grant proposals, concern for ethics within the field, and the need for professionalization of the field (Stinson & Renninger, 2006). The list of factors narrowed to two primary concerns, as noted by Annarino and Blymiller (2006): ethical practices and “...a need for a mechanism to promote and uphold those ethical practices.” (p. 40) That “mechanism” would become the GPC Exam, which was first administered in November 2007.

The first step in developing the credential, however, would be formation of the American Association of Grant Professionals (AAGP), a 501(c)(6) association that later would become the Grant Professionals Association. By 1998, the AAGP Board of Directors would hold its inaugural meeting and its first conference (in Chicago) a year later. It was there that the Board established the Credentialing Committee to investigate and map the steps toward a certification. Annarino and Blymiller (2006) outlined the various conversations, gatherings, and surveys that led to two key interrelated events:

- The creation of a formal business plan (Mandley et al., 2002, as cited in Annarino & Blymiller, 2006, p. 42) to determine whether the process was realistic given the financial constraints of the still-small association. The report would be approved by the AAGP Board in 2004.
- The creation of GPCI, a 501(c)(3) organization, for the express purpose of creating, administering, and defending the Grant Professionals Certification Examination (GPC Exam). GPCI would be a freestanding affiliate of the larger AAGP and would later assume the work of AAGP’s Credentialing Committee.

Armed with five years of information, the partners were ready to establish an initial outline from which the knowledge, skills, and abilities could be validated psychometrically (Annarino, 2006; Table 1). These would later be titled the GPCI Competencies and Skills. Slates of skills were created, iteratively considered and improved, and tested with groups of content experts nationally. By 2006, IIRP completed the standardization and validation of the Competencies and Skills, using both internal and external validation processes. Exam development and administration processes were developed from 2006 to 2007, and the initial GPC Exam was administered at the 2007 AAGP National Conference in Arlington, VA.

Table 1, modified from Annarino et al. (2006), demonstrates both the information sought/received and the subsequent growth of the AAGP membership and interest in credentialing. To be clear, the early work of AAGP, GPCI, and IIRP represents the first such study in the United States of this distinct field.

Table 1. Chronology of the Identification of Competencies and Skills Used by Grant Professionals

2000	Documented conversations with approximately ten experts in the field. Informal electronic survey by Credentialing Committee, 18 responses.
2001	Survey of Grant Professionals distributed at 3rd Annual AAGP Conference in Orlando; 125 attendees, responses: 50. Purpose: determine perceived need and begin the formal process of identifying competencies and skills.
2003	Article entitled "Identifying Professional Competencies" by Deanna Nurnberg published in the Journal of the AAGP, Spring 2003.
2003	Slate of competencies and skills derived from previous surveys presented to 25 workshop participants, 5th Annual AAGP Conference, Kansas City, KS.
2004	Sixteen content experts convened in Boston to review and identify core competencies in a two-day workshop facilitated by IIRP. Content experts also began determining eligibility criteria needed to sit for the examination.
2004	Revised slate of competencies and skills derived from previous surveys and additional presentations presented in a workshop of 15 participants, 6th Annual AAGP National Conference, Boston.
2004	AAGP Professional Growth and Development Committee began an independent two-year review of tasks associated with grantsmanship.
2005	Slate of competencies drafted utilizing all previous data obtained via formal and informal surveys, literature reviews, workshop presentations, and Professional Growth and Development two-year review.
2005	Eligibility criteria presented to GPCI & AAGP Boards for feedback, initial approval.
2006	Under the stewardship of IIRP, standardized validation of the competencies and skills completed. Within strict psychometric parameters, IIRP conducted internal and external validations of the competencies and skills.

A Literature Review

Certifications and credentials abound across a variety of industries. They are used to assure the general public that the practitioner has a certain level of knowledge and skill in the field in which they practice (Raymond & Neustel, 2006). This helps an employer or client know with whom to contract or hire.

To provide that assurance, the credential must remain valid, reliable, and legally defensible. If the exam is challenged by someone who has not passed the exam, "...the examination can be defended on the grounds that it was developed based on widely accepted principles and requirements of assessment" (Koby & Melby, 2013; p. 174). Koby and Melby continue, "An examination is valid when you are testing what you want to test. An examination is reliable when the candidate gets the same score, within a reasonable range of variation, regardless of who grades the examination" (p. 176). A job analysis allows for all three; it can withstand the challenge, it ensures the exam tests what needs to be tested, and it is scored consistently.

A job analysis is also referred to as a job task analysis as it describes the essential function of the process: to determine what tasks are necessary in a given field. This analysis is, in a very real sense, how we address legal defensibility. That is, by aligning the credential to specific job analyses, we ensure the credential may be defended in a court of law.

Tasks are those activities in the job that are performance or behaviorally based and can be assessed through a scoring system (Wilkerson & Lang, 2004). These tasks are related to the knowledge, skills, and abilities for a practitioner in each field of study. Once a credentialing body determines the list of essential tasks, the organization must assess what scales will be used to rate each task (i.e., which tasks are more important than other tasks). Examples of task scales include task responsibility, need of said skill at entry into the profession, level of responsibility of individuals carrying out said task, type of responsibility, where or when the skill was learned, time spent performing said skill, task frequency, task difficulty, task criticality, and overall importance (Raymond & Neustel, 2006). Individuals involved in the job analysis determine what scales are best suited to assess the needed tasks in the field.

Many job analyses are conducted by a psychometrician, an individual skilled in the administration, creation, and assessment of tests. The key is to "select a job analyst who is familiar with different job analysis methods that ultimately affect the level of specificity in the tasks and knowledge best suited for the credentialing organization's purpose" (Chinn & Hertz, 2010; p. 3). The psychometrician uses Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) from the profession or field to determine the content of the tasks to be measured during the job analysis. This list is created

through the use of focus groups, observations, or interviews of the SMEs (Chinn & Hertz, 2010).

Once tasks have been assigned, a survey is designed. This is where the test scales, or rating factors, come into play. A survey can rate one, two, or more factors, depending on the subject covered and factors considered vital to the overall understanding of what to test. To create a useful tool, points are assigned to each scale; each scale is well-defined and “meaningful for the profession being studied” (Raymond & Neustel, 2006; p. 190). For example, when rating task frequency, the associated scale may look like this: never, daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, or yearly. Level of responsibility ratings may include these phrases: performs independently, performs in conjunction with fellow staff members, reviews the work of another, or does not perform.

The survey includes both the tasks and the rating factors and should be taken by a wide variety of individuals in the field. A “representative sample of practitioners in the profession” ensures survey validity (Koby & Melby, 2013; p. 179). Said practitioners will rate each task, and these data will be analyzed by the psychometrician and SMEs.

There are a variety of methods to rate the survey results in order to determine testing content for a credential. Raymond and Neustel (2006) warn against letting one or two individuals (SMEs) dictate the weight of test specifications. Instead, they recommend the approach of a holistic judgment by a panel of SMEs. “Experts are first oriented to the exercise and are then asked to express their individual judgments. They receive feedback, provide additional judgments, and then reach consensus” (Raymond & Neustel, 2006; p. 213). This is one of many means to rate and weight the skills assessed on a credentialing exam.

By weighting the skills, the credentialing body will have a content outline or blueprint for the exam. Weighting helps determine the number of exam questions centered on each skill and, ultimately, helps prepare those wanting to take the credentialing exam. With a content outline, examinees understand what areas of the exam are most important and can make decisions regarding their own understanding and preparation for the exam. But a credential is more than a mastery of a content outline. Chinn and Hertz (2010) explain, “Persons seeking a license must apply their training and education to actual tasks of the job and be able to perform those tasks in a manner that protects the public health, safety, and welfare” (p. 8).

A job analysis is a useful tool, and one of the many elements used by GPCI to ensure the Grant Professional Certified (GPC) exam and credential are valid, reliable, and legally defensible. The initial job analysis was completed in 2007, but the content will only meet those three criteria for so many years. No matter how an examination is developed, it must be “periodically reviewed to confirm its validity as the profession in question evolves” (Koby & Melby, 2013; p. 180).

2016–2017 GPC Job Analysis Process

The original GPC job analysis was completed in 2007. At that time, the GPCI's contracted psychometrician, Walter Chason, recommended updating the job analysis by 2017 to ensure the exam's relevance and testing of actual skills necessary in the grant profession. Mr. Chason specializes in evaluation and psychometric processes associated with assessment development (Chason, 2017). He was a member of the initial University of South Florida IIRP team that helped develop the GPC Exam. According to Chinn and Hertz (2010), "It should be noted that the success of the job analysis is somewhat dependent upon the skill of the psychometrician to research the parameters of the job and use content experts to validate the work product" (p. 6).

Review of GPC Competencies and Skills

GPCI created a Job Analysis Task Force in 2015 to aid Mr. Chason in the job analysis process. As with the initial 2007 process, GPCI was tasked with finding SMEs in the field, both with and without the GPC credential. They were tasked with reviewing the original list of nine competencies and 65 skills that comprise the blueprint of the GPC exam. Chason (2017) recommended the SMEs review the competencies and skills while answering the following questions (p. 4):

- Are the competencies still relevant; do they encompass all essential tasks?
- What tasks can remain as is?
- What tasks should be revised?
- What new tasks should be added?
- What tasks should be deleted?

After individually assessing the initial Competencies and Skills, the SMEs came together via conference calls to discuss recommendations. Because the grant profession is relatively stable and does not have drastic changes in operations as compared to medical or computer science fields, limited changes were recommended. Consensus was reached. The resulting 2017 list of Competencies and Skills included the original nine competencies and 67 skills.

Survey Development and Administration

The Job Analysis Task Force, supported by GPCI's psychometrician, had extensive discussions on survey content, to ensure the "... format, distribution, and rating system for the content outline skills" (Chason, 2017; p. 4). With 67 skills to consider, a key concern was survey fatigue; that is, would survey participants run out of steam and fail to complete the survey because of the effort/time involved?

To make the process as simple as possible, the Job Analysis Task Force included one skill assessment per page and two rating scales for each skill (frequency of use and criticality of error). Prior research indicated frequency and criticality as the two most important scales for reliable results (Raymond & Neustel, 2006). As most job analysis surveys are long, it is important to use the least number of scales possible to reduce survey fatigue. Therefore, the importance scale, while considered, was not included in the GPC survey (Raymond & Neustel, 2006).

The Task Force then created response levels for each scale (Table 2). Discussion centered around the possibility of some tasks not being conducted by certain grant professionals depending on their duties and/or area of expertise in the field. While the option of “not responsible” was added for the frequency scale, those tasks listed as “not responsible” were not included in the data assessment to avoid contamination of the frequency of use data collected.

Table 2. Scales and Applicable Response Options

Criticality of Error	Frequency of Use
Use the scale below to rate the criticality of each task to the well-being of clients, staff, or your employer. In other words, if the task is performed incorrectly (or not at all), what would be the risk of an adverse consequence such as an audit by the funder, lost funding, or litigation.	Use the scale below to indicate how often you personally perform each activity. If you are not responsible for an activity, simply select “Not responsible” and proceed to the next activity. Please check only one box for each activity.
No risk or adverse consequences (1) Slight risk of adverse consequences (2) Moderate rise of adverse consequences (3) Very high rise of adverse consequences (4)	Not responsible (0) Never perform (1) About once a year or less (2) About once a month (3) About once a week (4) About once a day (5) Several times a day (6)

In addition to assessing the 67 skills, the survey collected demographic data for each survey taker, including information about the individual’s certifications in the field, skill level, time in the field, and other specifics. Survey takers self-selected whether they were grant professionals, grant funders, or simply a member of the nonprofit community. The latter included individuals who may not consider themselves a grant

professional even though part of their work involves grant seeking and/or funding.

Prior to release to the grant profession at large, the survey was reviewed by the 12 members of the GPCI Board of Directors—individuals who were not involved in the survey creation. Chason (2017) charged this group to (p. 7):

- Confirm the directions were clear and the rating scale was easy to use;
- Evaluate whether the survey content was accurate and unambiguous; and,
- Determine whether important tasks were missing in the draft survey instrument.

The edited survey was broadly marketed to grant professionals via the GPCI *eNews*, GPA *Grant News Weekly*, Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn, and direct email to nonprofits, fundraising organizations, etc. Responses were collected from September to October 2016. The survey return rate was 18.7% (352 respondents) based on 4,879 surveys sent and 1,884 survey emails opened—a significant return rate (Chason, 2017).

Survey Analysis

The Job Analysis Task Force sought 12 people to work with the psychometrician to analyze the survey results. Chason (2017) recommended selecting individuals that were representative of the diversity of the profession with respect to education/training, type of work setting, geographic location, gender, and ethnic diversity (p. 2).

A face-to-face meeting was held November 6-7, 2016. The Job Analysis Task Force and SMEs discussed the survey results and tweaked the competencies and skills as necessary. The criticality of error and frequency of use was calculated for each task by the psychometrician. Chason shared these results with the committee, tasking them to pay particular attention to the lowest ranking skills (bottom 15%). In addition to looking at the skills ranked highest to lowest, the Task Force and SMEs assessed skills by competency to ensure all necessary skills are covered in each competency listing.

Once the committee set the skills list, they created the GPC exam blueprint by weighting each competency. Percentages were assigned to each competency, with higher percentages going to those competencies considered more essential to the profession. In brief, the psychometrician facilitated the work of task force members as they considered each of the eight competencies and the number of exam questions that should be associated with each. As noted by Chason (2017), "...The SMEs each provided their weighting of each competency, with a total score of 100. [The psychometrician] calculated the mean percentage for each competency" (p. 11). This process was repeated three times; discussions were held after each iteration.

The group mean remained consistent between rounds and was ultimately forwarded to the GPCI Board of Directors. The Board approved the revised blueprint at the November 2016 board meeting. The GPCI Board of Directors used the new content outline to determine what new questions were necessary to update the GPC exam (test items). Work was completed in 2017, with the updated test released in November 2017.

Conclusion and Potential Areas for Future Research

The job analysis process is critical to not only designing a practice-based credential examination; it is also the only path to validation of the credential itself (Carroll, 2017) and enables the credentialing organization to fend off legal challenges. But that validation and defensibility are in jeopardy if an organization does not account for changes in the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for a specific job or vocation. That is the whole purpose of the job analysis—to see and address those changes. Without a strong job analysis, credentialing bodies like GPCI could not validate or defend exam results. As noted by Chinn and Hertz (2010) citing Henderson and Smith (2009), “Whenever high-stakes examinations were challenged, job analysis was upheld as evidence of content validation” (p. 1).

In 2006, GPCI and its partners worked with volunteers throughout the country to complete the initial study. The process was repeated from 2015 to 2017 utilizing a consulting psychometrician and an even larger and more demographically representative assemblage of volunteers from within (grant professionals) and outside of (employers, trainers, nonprofit executives, other stakeholders) the grant profession.

As intended, the second job analysis determined some changes to the GPCI Competencies and Skills were warranted. However, the blueprint of weighted values for the exam, which is developed from those Competencies and Skills, remained substantively unchanged; that is, findings were addressed by developing new test items (exam questions) and flagging or discarding questionable items—not through changes to the weight of any of the core areas the Competencies and Skills (blueprint).

While this tends to confirm GPCI’s decision to conduct the Job Analysis at the 10-year mark—demonstrating the stability of the knowledge, skills, and abilities within the grant profession—it is unclear whether this represents best practice within the testing industry. For example, the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP), which closely mirrors GPA and its membership, supports certification for its fundraising and development members, some of whom may also work in the grants field. But even though the structure is similar, fundraising is a different skill set than grant proposal writing and management which requires a different evaluative assessment. The fundraising credential is the Certificate of Fundraising Executives (CRFE). However, CFRE’s job analysis timeframe was, most recently, six years (2009 to 2015).

The National Grant Management Association (NGMA) offers the Certified Grants Management Specialist (CGMS) credential. It speaks to the knowledge, skills, and abilities of grant managers. Like the GPC, the CGMS is a relatively new credential, awarded first in 2012. An updated job analysis has not yet been performed.

The research on how often a job analysis should be performed is limited. As noted previously, rapidly changing fields tend to perform the analysis every three to five years. That implies professions with fewer changes may extend the timeframe. However, there appears to be no absolute. Rather, the individual credentialing organizations must make a decision on the frequency of the job analysis based on their own knowledge of the field. To that end, we propose the following recommendations related to ongoing job analysis.

- *Explicitly monitor changes in the field.* At this writing, GPCI remains a volunteer-driven nonprofit with no paid staff and, therefore, no one assigned specifically to monitor changes in the field. An ad hoc group assigned to monitor changes in the profession would enable the organization to better determine when to begin the job analysis process.
- *Create systemic processes and timeframes for job analysis.* Administering the job analysis process requires hundreds of hours of work for an untold number of individuals. However, it need not surprise organizations when it is time (yet again) to conduct the review. A detailed review of how larger organizations keep the job analysis process front-and-center would be beneficial. For example, organizations with a three- to five-year review may constantly be in the review process; as one job analysis ends, the next is beginning. This type of process may be beneficial for smaller organizations. To reduce the manhours needed each time, a detailed listing or protocol for each activity and an associated timeline will ensure accurate completion of the job analysis. It will also ensure no crucial elements are overlooked. The GPCI should also consider assignment of a board member or standing committee member the responsibility of monitoring and preparing for the job analysis. Duties could include developing an overall timeline across multiple years that is addressed annually, much as a strategic plan is monitored over multiple years.
- *Determine mechanisms to establish the job analysis process as an ongoing norm.* Small nonprofits struggle with the financial resources required for the job analysis. Additional research is needed to determine how to embed the process into ongoing work of the credentialing organization and how to make those processes affordable, particularly to small nonprofits. Funding should never limit the needed job analysis review.

In summary, the job analysis process for the GPC is a critical foundation for the GPC exam—just as other nationally-recognized credentials are supported by their individual job analyses. GPCI strives to establish and maintain a professionally managed credentialing process “based on rigorous standards and ongoing research to meet real-world demands of grant professionals” (GPCI, 2019); therefore, continual analysis to ensure timely job analysis processes is crucial.

References

- Annarino, P. & Blymiller, H. (2006). Setting the standards for the grants profession: identification and validation of the competencies and skills. *The American Association of Grant Professionals Monograph: A Series of Papers on the Topic of Professionalism in the Grants Field*, 39-57. https://cdn.ymaws.com/grantprofessionals.org/resource/resmgr/publications/journal/monograph_-_a_series_of_pape.pdf
- Carroll, S. (2017) Job analysis beyond the basics. *ICE Digest Q4 2017*, 14-17. http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/smithbucklin/ice_digest_2017q4/index.php#/14
- Chason, W. (2017). *Grant professional certified job analysis summary: A report to the Grant Professionals Certification Institute*. Tampa, FL: Grant Professionals Certification Institute.
- Chinn, R.N. & Hertz, N.R. (2010). *Job analysis: A guide for credentialing organizations*. Lexington, KY: Council on Licensure, Enforcement and Regulation (CLEAR).
- GPCI | Grant Professionals Certification Institute. (n.d.). <http://www.grantcredential.org/>
- Henderson, J.P. & Smith, D. (2009). Job/practice analysis. In L. Anderson, J. Knapp, & C. Wild (Eds.), *Certification: The ICE handbook* (pp. 123-148). Institute for Credentialing Excellence.
- Knapp, J.E. (2000). Designing certification and accreditation programs. From *The Association Educator's Toolkit*. Washington, DC: American Society of Association Executives.
- Koby, G.S. & Melby, A.K. (2013). Certification and job task analysis (JTA): Establishing validity of translator certification examinations. *Translation & Interpreting*, 5(1), 174-210.
- Raymond, M.R. (2002). A practical guide to practice analysis for credentialing examinations. *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice*, 21(3), 25-37.

- Raymond, M. & Neustel, S. (2006). Determining the content of credentialing examinations. In S.M. Downing & T.M. Haladyna (Eds.), *Handbook of test development*, (pp. 181-224). Routledge.
- Rouse, E.W. (2014). Test drivers of candidate pass rates: A predictive model for professional certification exams. (Publication No. 3643848) [Doctoral dissertation, Northcentral University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. <https://search.proquest.com/openview/d8c5cc7b9dc760bcadfca86f95b5132c/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&am;cbl=18750&am;diss=y>
- Stinson, K. & Renninger, P. (2007). Occupational regulation of grant professionals. *Journal of the American Association of Grant Professionals*, 5(1), 21-28. <https://cdn.ymaws.com/grantprofessionals.org/resource/resmgr/publications/journal/journalspring07fullsizefinal.pdf>
- Wilkerson, J.R. & Lang, W.S. (2004). A standards-driven, task-based assessment approach for teacher credentialing with potential for college accreditation. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 9(12), 1-24.

Biographical Information

Amanda Day, GPC is a national trainer and former municipal grants administrator turned consultant with 19 years' experience. She is the co-host of Fundraising HayDay, a podcast about grants and such. Amanda serves as the President of the Grant Professionals Association and chair of the Southern Regional Grants Conference, hosted by the Georgia Grant Professionals Association. She previously served on the Board of Directors for the Grant Professionals Certification Institute, including two years as President. Amanda holds a bachelor's degree in communications and psychology from Southwest Baptist University. She serves as a peer reviewer for federal grant programs, has secured over \$20 million in grant funding, and ensures compliance for grant funding. Amanda can be reached at amandadaygpc@gmail.com.

Johna Rodgers, GPC is a grant professional, national trainer, keynoter, and problem solver with nearly 30 years' experience in the corporate and non-profit proposal worlds. A specialist in federal grants, she has secured more than \$162 million for schools and educational groups. In 2013, she joined Grant Writing USA as a

national trainer for grant writing and management, and she is an Approved Trainer through GPA. In 2015, she traded in regular full-time work in grants and opened Johna Rodgers Consulting, LLC, a full-service proposal development and training company. She serves on the GPA Board of Directors; is a past board member of the Grant Professional Certification Institute; and was the designer of GPCI's initial exam administration protocols (2006–2011). Johna holds a bachelor's degree in business management from Mississippi State University. She is the recipient of a number of national awards, including the 2015 GPA President's Award for Professionalism in the Field. Johna can be reached at johnarodgersgpc@gmail.com.

GPC Strategy Papers Volume 7, Issue 1

Virtual Study Group for the GPC Exam: Results and Recommendations

Katherine F.H. Heart, GPC, MEd

Heart Resources, LLC

JulieAnna Carsen, GPC, BS

JVG Synergy, LLC

Abstract

This strategy paper describes the start-up, implementation, and results of an independent, volunteer-led study group for the Grant Professional Certified (GPC) exam that was conducted nationally in a virtual learning environment. This paper also describes participant feedback, resources, and recommendations from which to offer future virtual study groups for the GPC.

Introduction

Since the implementation of the Grant Professional Certified (GPC) credential in 2008, grant professionals have developed resources on how to prepare for the exam. The Grant Professionals Certification Institute (GPCI) is the nationally recognized authority on grantsmanship competencies and manages professional certification of the GPC credential. GPCI provides eligibility guidelines, exam procedures, verification of GPC attainment, and a certification maintenance program. The GPCI website publishes study materials including field-driven articles, a literature review, recommended resources, and study guides. This paper describes the process and outcome of the first nationwide virtual study group for the GPC, coordinated by volunteers and unaffiliated with GPCI, and discusses the effectiveness of this method to assist candidates who are qualified and preparing to take the GPC exam within the year.¹

¹Volunteer facilitators had no prior or concurrent role with GPC exam development or GPCI. Study group materials were drawn from existing study guides or developed by the volunteer study group facilitator. The study group was conducted in compliance with GPCI standards and materials did not violate the non-disclosure agreement that all GPCs sign before sitting for the exam.

Start-Up and Planning

The first virtual study group for the GPC was organized as a spontaneous voluntary study group in response to a Grant Professionals Association (GPA) member requesting “other members to study for the GPC exam” in *GrantZone* (Pacheco, 2018). Thirty-six members replied to the post within one week. Some individuals cited their reasons.

- Wanted a “virtual” or “remote” or “online” study group for the GPC (7)
- Does not have a GPA Chapter or unsure when chapter will hold a study group (2)
- Meet other grant professionals across the country (1)
- Keep us (me) accountable and on track (1)
- Plan to sit for the exam this year (1)

The authors volunteered to coordinate the group and established self-defined roles of Study Group Facilitator and Technology Coordinator. A retired grant professional with the GPC credential volunteered to co-facilitate specific sessions and other group members volunteered for tasks as needed.

Some early career professionals in the group had insufficient experience to meet the GPC eligibility requirements which led the Study Group Facilitator to recommend the free webinars and educational resources available on the GPA website. The GPA Executive Director posted information and links to the GPCI website. The Study Group Facilitator questioned the feasibility of leading in-depth discussions with a large group and posted a preference for individuals planning to take the exam by the end of 2018. Within two weeks, twenty GPA members from 17 states confirmed their interest in joining the group by submitting email addresses to the Technology Coordinator.

Implementation

Weekly meetings were scheduled on Fridays at 2:00-3:00 pm EST from February 2 to April 13, 2018, based on facilitator availability. Table 1 on the next page summarizes the study group meeting schedule and the grant competencies that were discussed each week.

For the first meeting, the Technology Coordinator purchased and tested a professional Zoom (<https://zoom.us>) web conference account and created a Google Doc to share the meeting schedule and notes among the group. The Technology Coordinator sent an email to interested members explaining how to download and use the Zoom software and access the Google Doc. The Technology Coordinator led the first meeting in which participants discussed virtual meeting options and communicating through Facebook or Twitter. Participants agreed that Zoom would satisfy the group’s logistical needs.

Table 1. 2018 GPC Virtual Study Group Meeting Schedule

Meeting	Date	Virtual Study Group Structure and Content
1	2/2	Technology Coordinator hosted a web conference to establish a meeting schedule and platform and created a shared Google Doc.
2	2/9	Group Facilitator held introductory session to meet attendees, answered questions about the GPC eligibility and exam process, and discussed readiness issues (costs and benefits, time for study). Posted Scenario #1 Funder Research.
3	2/16	Group Facilitator and group discussed Funder Research. Posted Scenario #2 Organizational Development.
4	2/23	Group Facilitator and group discussed Organizational Development. Posted Scenario #3 Good Project Design.
5	3/2	Group Facilitator and group discussed Good Project Design. Posted Scenario #4 Grant Proposal Development.
6	3/9	Group Facilitator and group discussed Grant Proposal Development. Posted Scenario #5 Post-Award Grant Management.
7	3/16	Group Facilitator and group discussed Post-Award Grant Management. Posted Scenario #6 Ethical Practices and Scenario #7 Professional Practices.
8	3/23	Group Facilitator and Co-Facilitator discussed Ethical and Professional Practices. Posted Scenario #8 Funder Relations.
Off	3/30	Group Facilitator not available.
9	4/6	Group Facilitator and group discussed Funder Relations. Posted Scenario #9 Writing Prompt (Optional Writing Exercise) due 4/9 at 5:00 pm. Confidential written feedback provided.
10	4/13	Group Facilitator and group discussed strategies for Writing Exam and test taking from Chapter 9 and 10 in <i>Prepare for the GPC Exam</i> .

At the second meeting, the Group Facilitator introduced the content to be addressed in the group sessions and answered general questions regarding the GPC exam. An informal poll showed only a few individuals had submitted an eligibility packet to GPCI or received formal acceptance to take the GPC exam. Most attendees were deciding whether to pursue GPC credentialing. As an informal group with different levels of understanding, the Study Group Facilitator suggested members take the online Eligibility Survey to assess individual qualifications to sit for the GPC exam.

The meeting evolved into a discussion of the anticipated challenges of the GPC exam. Participants were primarily concerned with the cost of the exam and the newly revised deadline from six months to three months between notification of eligibility and expected exam completion. The Study Group Facilitator answered questions regarding the effort, cost, and benefits of earning the GPC from personal experience. The *GPA Salary Survey* was mentioned as a source of information about salary levels reported by grant professionals with and without the GPC. The study group included professionals with various years and levels of grantsmanship experience and several members who needed more experience to qualify for the GPC exam. Everyone was welcome to continue attending the weekly sessions.

The remaining virtual meetings focused exclusively on GPC exam preparation with the Technology Coordinator managing the virtual platform and Study Group Facilitator leading discussions focused on the grant competencies. Before each meeting, the Technology Coordinator scheduled calendar reminders, managed web conference meetings, archived video recordings, and updated the Google Doc with notes and study materials to discuss the following week. Meetings were recorded by video, archived and linked to the shared Google Doc for independent study. The Study Group Facilitator posted a disclaimer to the shared document explaining that participants were not guaranteed to pass the exam and all scenarios discussed during the study group were hypothetical. Participants were encouraged to prepare during the week prior to the scheduled sessions any questions and challenges related to each competency and scenario.

Each session followed the same format: (1) review the specific grant competency and skills; (2) pose a question to start discussion; (3) read through the scenario and exam questions inviting participants to share their grant experiences and discuss which answer they would choose and why; and (4) if time allowed, discuss related questions from *Prepare for the GPC Exam* (Annarino, Blitch, Hays deMuga & Mitchell, 2016).

Participants had the option of submitting a writing sample based on a writing prompt provided by the Study Group Facilitator, followed by confidential scoring and feedback on strengths and suggestions for improvement. During the final meeting, group members discussed their experience with the writing exercise and test-taking strategies.

Results

The Study Group Facilitator developed a survey with questions on attendance, satisfaction, and feedback for improvement based on surveys conducted as a GPA Approved Trainer using SurveyMonkey (<https://www.surveymonkey.com>). Everyone on the sign-up list received an email explaining the request for anonymous feedback immediately after the group ended and one week later. The Study Group Facilitator checked the list of verified GPCs in mid-December 2018 to determine the number of group members earning the credential. The following summary of the overall group results showed strong initial interest in attending the virtual study group with one-third achieving the GPC. Six out of seven (85%) of those with higher participation rates achieved the GPC.

- 20 GPA members from 17 states signed up to receive notifications
- 14 (70%) participated in at least one discussion session
- 7 (35%) participated in half or more of the 9 sessions
- 6 (30%) participants passed the GPC exam by December 2018
- 6 out of 7 (85%) of regular attendees passed the GPC exam by December 2018

Eight participants completed the survey. Feedback focused on a) uncertainty about time/cost commitment and readiness for the GPC exam, and b) time zone changes that made the live sessions less convenient. Some participants offered feedback in letters and emails such as the following comment.

“The Virtual Study Group was helpful in preparing for the exam. I found the opportunity to write a timed exercise to be good preparation for the written exam. I believe my performance was enhanced by the opportunity to participate in the study group. It is worthwhile for those who commit to attending regularly.”

After the survey results were captured, the Group Facilitator and Technology Coordinator archived the materials created during the meetings and discussed the strengths and difficulties of providing a nationwide virtual study group. Logistics and planning presented the most significant challenges. After reviewing attendance data and survey feedback, it was apparent that the change from Standard Time to Daylight Savings Time (DST) before Session #7 resulted in a decline in participation. The Technology Coordinator was based in Arizona (where DST is not observed) and would have been unable to facilitate meetings after the change in DST. The remaining meetings had to be rescheduled an hour later for all other participants and raised concerns on how to

best serve a national study group across multiple time zones. This issue should be considered during the planning stage of future virtual study groups.

Recommendations

During the formation of future groups, a Technology Coordinator can assess technology needs and manage virtual meetings. A Study Group Facilitator can encourage learning about the GPC process, offer scenarios and guide discussions on the grant competencies. Holding an orientation session to answer questions and explore concerns about testing requirements enables individuals to assess readiness to start an application and invest time participating in the study group. Candidates should be aware of the requirement to test within three months after receiving an eligibility decision. Scheduling and participation levels can be improved by forming study groups within the same time zones or GPA regions. Virtual meeting platforms such as Zoom are affordable and available. The archived *Virtual GPC Study Group* (2018) is available for group or independent study and the *GPC Exam Prep GrantZone* can assist interested individuals and facilitators to form and support virtual groups.

Conclusion

The first independent virtual study group for the GPC was carried out by GPA members interested in a virtual study group option and led by volunteer coordinators. Due to low participation in the post-survey, causes for non-attendance could not be fully explored. Six out of seven regular group attendees achieved the GPC by the end of 2018 and expressed satisfaction with the live online discussions with colleagues from across the nation. This paper provides a framework and encouraging results from which to offer future virtual study groups for the GPC.

References

- Annarino, P., Blich, D., Hays deMuga, K. & Mitchell, L. (2016). *Prepare for the GPC exam*, Charity Channel Press.
- Email communication (June 26, 2018) to Katherine F.H. Heart, GPC, MEd.
- Grant Professionals Association (2018). *GPA salary and benefits salary results*.
- Heart, K.. Early results of a virtual GPC study group. *GPCI eNews*, April 1, 2018.

Pacheco, T. (January 27, 2018). <https://grantzone.grantprofessionals.org>.

Video Conferencing, Web Conferencing, Webinars, Screen Sharing (2019). <https://zoom.us>.

Virtual GPC Study Group (2018). <https://www.grantcredential.org/why-certify/articles-other-public-documents>.

Biographical Information

Katherine F.H. Heart, GPC, MEd is the President of Heart Resources, LLC at www.heartresources.net and the author of *Grantpreneur™-Getting Started in a Grant Career and Business* (2016). She is a GPA Approved Trainer who facilitated the virtual study group for the GPC after conducting a study group for GPA-Western PA Chapter.

JulieAnna Carsen, GPC, BS is a Senior Grant Support Specialist for the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University and founder of JVG Synergy LLC. She earned the GPC credential after participating in the virtual study group.

GPA Strategy Papers Volume 7, Issue 2

Nonconventional Tips from a Veteran Grant Professional

Joshua Einhorn, EdD

California State University, Northridge, CA

Abstract

Many books and articles describe conventional tips on best practices in grant writing. This strategy paper draws on the author's 13 years of experience as a grants officer, as well as his experience in teaching grant proposal writing at a Master's level, to provide nonconventional tips. While these can benefit grant professionals in a variety of fields, they are especially useful for those professionals working in the field of higher education. Applying these tips can strengthen an author's case for their proposal to receive funding and differentiate their proposals from others in the very competitive field of higher education grants.

Introduction

Securing grant awards from an external funder is extremely competitive. Only 5% of submissions to private and corporate foundations and only 1% of submissions to federal agencies are funded (Karsh & Fox, 2003). To secure a competitive advantage and improve the rates of funded submissions, the author developed a list of nonconventional tips honed over a 13-year tenure as a grant professional.

Tip #1: Use Your Intuition

In a graduation commencement speech at Stanford University, Steve Jobs shared the following sage advice: "Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your... intuition" (Jobs, 2005). In grant writing, intuition starts with the idea in the first place. Intuition actually comes into play at all stages of the grant writing process. While logic and experience are key, one's intuition is often the final arbiter when deciding:

- Which idea should I pursue?
- Which intervention should I advocate?
- Which funder should I approach?
- Which statistic should I use?
- Which testimonial will pull at the heartstrings of a reviewer?
- Which key personnel should I invite to partner on my project?
- What budget will the reviewers deem reasonable and not excessive?

Concrete examples from the author's professional experience of how intuition manifests include:

"I have four possible ideas to submit for funding, but I think creating an afterschool robotics club will most excite the reviewers."

"I have identified ten funders, all of whom sponsor afterschool robotics clubs. I am going to apply just to these three."

"Of all my testimonials, the one from a single mom trying to provide her son opportunities is the most heartfelt."

The author experienced an actual case of the benefit of heeding one's intuition. He was seeking funds to sponsor a family literacy project for a high-needs community. One funder, Oprah's Angel Network, with prime foci of literacy and disadvantaged communities, at first seemed an ideal target. Further delving, however, uncovered that their preferred catchment area was Chicago, and the university on whose behalf the author was applying was located in Los Angeles. Even more ominous, the funder's website flatly and explicitly stated that "no unsolicited proposals are accepted." Despite these admonitions, the author had a strong, intuitive feeling to still apply. The author followed this intuitive feeling and submitted a proposal. Eight months later the author received a surprise phone call from the program officer informing him that the project would be fully funded. The program officer shared that she was about to throw away the unopened submission (as per their policy), but then noticed the submission was from the university her two godchildren currently attend. She opened the submission, deemed it excellent, waived the proscriptions, and approved the application for funding.

Intuition cannot be forced and arrives in its own time frame. If one is experiencing writer's block, the author recommends stopping or taking a break from the writing or grant development process. Do not try to push

through or force inspiration. Thomas Edison once said that ideas come from “space” (Raghunathan, 2016). One can find this space by taking a break from writing and taking a walk, or returning to a submission the following day. This gives time for moments of inspiration to arise. One returns to the proposal with a fresh perspective and solutions to issues which seemed insoluble the day before (e.g., How can I distill the need statement to fit into the allotted word count? How can I improve the project design? Which evaluation tool should I use?). Lastly, sometimes a grant professional can overthink or second guess elements of a submission, switching out less compelling statistics or inserting an extraneous argument. Intuition allows one to sense when a proposal is complete and ready for submission.

Tip #2: Do Not Underestimate the Importance of Blank Space

Most grant professionals want to provide as much information as possible, believing that the larger the quantity of information, the better one can persuade a reviewer to fund an application. So, they often choose the smallest font allowable, push the margins to the minimum allowable, and excise spacing between headings and content. Proposal reviewers look down and see an unending block of text squeezed onto all edges of the page. At a physical level, they have difficulty even reading the text as they must squint and often lose their place. At an emotional level, they may be filled with dread looking at the seemingly unending block of text. They may become annoyed and frustrated. At a practical level, they may wonder why the submitter did not spend the requisite time editing their submission so that it was succinct and readable—and score the submission poorly as a result.

Better practices are to format text on a page so that it is visually appealing and maximally readable, using margins, indenting, and line spacing with a goal of harmony and spaciousness. A grant professional wants to ease the reading of a proposal as much as possible since proposal reviewers are often “tired, rushed, distracted, sleepy, and probably bored” (Reeds, 2002, p.37).

Grant professionals should format their submissions so the text appears uncrowded on the page, with sufficient blank space (i.e., the unfilled space around words, paragraphs, or sections). This can be accomplished through:

A legible font: Choose a 12-point font even if guidelines allow for 10- or 11-point font.

A sufficient margin: A ½-inch margin makes a Letter of Inquiry look crowded; a 1-inch margin all-around allows space to give the mind an opportunity to “breathe.”

Ample use of line spacing:

- consider double spacing or 1.5 spacing even if single spacing is allowed;
- consider adding a line of blank space between a heading and text in the section which follows; and
- consider doubling the blank space between sections (two lines of blank space if single spaced; four lines of blank space if double spaced), thereby setting the sections apart easily in the eyes of the reviewer.

Blank space also serves an important and practical function—it can set off information you want to highlight. In almost all online submissions, formatting such as underlining, italics, and bolding is not permissible. So one can highlight a particular sentence by including a line of blank space above and below the sentence—even for a sentence in the middle of a paragraph. This blank space alerts the reader that there is a pause, and provides for a moment of reflection to ponder an important point offset by space.

The following is an initial version of a needs assessment the author drafted for an online submission:

Teacher attrition is highest in the critical first years of teaching, especially for male teachers of color. Moreover, male teachers of color tend to leave the field of education at higher rates than other teacher groups. Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) hires 3,000 new teachers each year. The attrition rate of new teachers overall at LAUSD is 8%. The attrition rate of new male teachers of color at LAUSD is 25%. In our meetings over the past months designing this intervention, LAUSD requested that project leaders first train special education induction mentors since attrition rates are even higher in the first years of teaching for LAUSD special education teachers who are males of color—40%!

The revised, final version below was submitted:

Teacher attrition is highest in the critical first years of teaching, especially for male teachers of color. Moreover, male teachers of color tend to leave the field of education at disparately higher rates than other teacher groups.

LAUSD hires 3,000 new teachers each year.

The attrition rate of new teachers overall at LAUSD is 8%.

The attrition rate of new male teachers of color at LAUSD is 25%.

In our meetings over the past months designing this intervention, LAUSD requested that project leaders first train special education induction mentors since attrition rates are even higher in the first years of teaching for LAUSD special education teachers who are males of color—40%!

The need builds as the reader proceeds to the startling final statistic of a 40% attrition rate. The block of text – formerly one paragraph of dense statistics – is now in essence five paragraphs, with the reader absorbing each statistic discretely before moving on. This strategy is highly implementable since online submissions generally do not have space constraints, but do have word count constraints.

Tip #3: Use Punctuation to Maximum Effect

Punctuation, properly used to maximum effect, can be a great ally to a grant professional. Punctuation can help a proposal reviewer by alerting them of the flow of a sentence, paragraph, or idea. Punctuation can assist when trying to squeeze information into a circumscribed number of words or characters. Lastly, punctuation can help draw attention to an important factoid or statistic which might otherwise be buried or lost in a block of text or a long narrative. Examples of each best practice in the use of punctuation follow.

Punctuation can help with sentence flow

Sometimes punctuation can be used correctly, but a reviewer can still be confused as to where to start and stop when reading a sentence:

Dr. Boris Ricks, Professor, Department of Political Science, California State University Northridge, and also a mentor for M3, the Minority Male Mentoring Project, has agreed to serve on the Advisory Board.

While the above represents a correct use of punctuation it is a phenomenon the author deems “comma overload,” in which a reviewer is exhausted just muddling through a sentence and also confused as to where to pause when reading. A revised version below employs the use of punctuation (parentheses, semi-colon, colon) to help the reader navigate this sentence more successfully:

Dr. Boris Ricks (Professor, Department of Political Science, California State University Northridge; mentor for Minority Male Mentoring Project: M3) has agreed to serve on the Advisory Board.

Punctuation can help in deleting excess verbiage

The author was tasked with answering an online prompt in no more than 35 words. His initial draft, a listing of outputs in Y1, was 47 words in length:

In Year One the project team will develop and pilot a one-hour workshop. Also, in Year One the project team will partner with the Media Production Studio to develop a five-minute instructional video. Lastly, in Year One the team will disseminate best practices at a national conference.

A second draft, with a judicious use of punctuation (colon; check marks), excised 12 words to total 35 words:

In Y1, the project team will:

- *develop and pilot a one-hour workshop;*
- *partner with the Media Production Studio to develop a five-minute instructional video; and*
- *disseminate best practices at a national conference.*

Punctuation can help to focus the reviewers' attention

As referenced previously, the author worked on a project which sought to address the high attrition rates of special education teachers who are new to the teaching profession and who are males of color. The key statistic was the dramatic attrition rate of 40%. Project leaders posited that our proposed intervention would decrease the attrition rate significantly. The original description buried the alarming 40% statistic in a sea of verbiage:

In our meetings over the past months designing this intervention, LAUSD requested that project leaders first train special education induction mentors since the 40% attrition rate for LAUSD special education teachers who are males of color is high.

Placing the percentage at the end of the sentence, and also setting off the “40%” with punctuation (i.e., double dash, and an exclamation point) brings the reader’s attention to this startling statistic in this finalized version of the submission:

In our meetings over the past months designing this intervention, LAUSD requested that project leaders first train special education induction mentors since attrition rates are even higher in the first years of teaching for LAUSD special education teachers who are males of color—40%!

In an age of social media and with an absence of handwritten missives, punctuation has become a lost art (Lukeman, 2005). While there are punctuation rules to be followed (Casagrande, 2014), punctuation, when used effectively, can bolster a submission.

Conclusion

Renowned author Saul Bellow said that for a writer “the fact is a wire through which one sends a current” (Garner, 2019). In formulating a needs statement (or any section of a proposal for that matter) a grant professional chooses among a multitude of “heated wires.” Logic, experience and intuition assist a grant professional in choosing which wires to include to “electrify” the reviewer. Effectively using punctuation and blank space also increases a proposal’s readability for reviewers. Since securing grant awards from an external funder is extremely competitive, savvy grant professionals would be well-served by using these tactics to develop and submit proposals which are succinct, inspiration-filled, well-reasoned, and well-presented on the page.

References

- Casagrande, J. (2014). *The best punctuation book, period: A comprehensive guide for every writer, editor, student, and businessperson*. New York: Ten Speed Press.
- Garner, D. (2019, April 20). The Mueller report: A thorny, patriotic addition to a curious American bookshelf. *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/20/books/review-mueller-report.html>
- Jobs, S. (2005, June 14). ‘You’ve got to find what you love,’ Jobs says. *Stanford News*, p.1. <https://news.stanford.edu/2005/06/14/jobs-061505/>
- Karsh, E. & Fox, A. (2003). *The only grant-writing book you’ll ever need*. New York: Basic Books.
- Lukeman, N. (2005). *The art of punctuation*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Raghunathan, R. (2016). *If you’re so smart, why aren’t you happy?* New York: Penguin Random House.
- Reeds, K. (2002). *The Zen of proposal writing: An expert’s stress-free path to winning proposals*. Three Rivers Press. New York.

Biographical Information

Joshua Einhorn, EdD has served as Grants Officer at California State University Northridge since 2007, as part of a team raising over \$13 million. He also served as President of the Southern California Chapter of the Grant Professionals Association from 2009-2010. Lastly, he has taught Master's-level courses in grant writing for the past three years. He can be reached at joshua.einhorn@csun.edu.

**Please note that this article was submitted and accepted prior to Joshua Einhorn taking on the role of Strategy Paper editor.*

GPA Strategy Papers Volume 7, Issue 3

Key Strategies for Compliance with the Procurement Standards under the Uniform Guidance: 2 CFR 200 of the Code of Federal Regulations

Theresa Harris, EdD, CPCM

University of San Diego, San Diego, CA

Abstract

Effective July 1, 2018 grant seeking organizations interested in obtaining federal government grants or currently working on federal grants must comply with a standard set of guidelines known as the Uniform Guidance.

The Procurement Standards under the Uniform Guidance offer grant professionals and procurement staff a comprehensive set of principles for the purchase and management of property, supplies and services, and include guidelines for conducting price analyses and vendor selection based on the method of procurement used. This paper provides an overview of the Procurement Standards and discusses strategies for grant managers to effectively conduct post-award oversight and monitoring of grant awards issued under the Uniform Guidance.

Introduction

The federal government provides substantial support to nonprofit organizations, including many colleges and universities, in the form of research and development grants and contracts as well as financial aid to undergraduates through the Federal Pell Grant Program. In 2017 for example, higher education funding as a share of federal expenditure totaled \$3.9 trillion dollars according to Pew research (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2019).

As part of the oversight of federal funding for grant seeking organizations, the federal government has established requirements through regulations, guidance or statutes that nonprofit organizations

must comply with when applying for, receiving, and reporting on the results of federal grants. Such requirements seek to ensure transparency while helping to prevent waste, fraud and abuse in nonprofit organizations. Grant professionals must fully understand these rules and regulations to effectively perform their jobs.

Complying with the Procurement Standards under 2 CFR 200

Organizations seeking federal government grants must now comply with a standard set of rules and requirements known as the Uniform Guidance. The Uniform Guidance supersedes and streamlines the requirements from several grant circulars into one set of guidelines that all grant seeking organizations need to follow, including Subparts A through F as summarized:

- A - Definitions;
- B - Purpose and Applicability;
- C - Administrative Requirement for Federal Agencies;
- D - Procurement, Internal Control and Subrecipient Monitoring;
- E - Cost Principles; and
- F - Single Audit Requirements.

This paper offers a review of the Procurement Standards under the Uniform Guidance and discusses strategies for grant seeking organizations to achieve compliance with the standards. The paper also takes into account proposed revisions to the Uniform Guidance as of January 2020.

Overview of 2 CFR 200 – Uniform Guidance

What is the Uniform Guidance and to whom does it apply? In December 2013, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) published 2 CFR 200, Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards, also known as the Uniform Guidance.

The Uniform Guidance applies to all nonfederal entities that are recipients of federal funds. Nonfederal entities are described under 2 CFR 200 Subpart 69 as State or Local Government, tribal governments, institutions of higher education, or nonprofit organizations that are prime or subrecipients of a federal award in the form of a grant or contract.

Although the OMB published the Uniform Guidance in December 2013, given the significance and complexity of the guidelines, adoption of the procurement standards was deferred through 2016 and then extended for one additional year through December 2017. This grace period allowed organizations ample time to make the changes necessary to implement the new requirements.

Implementation of the General Procurement Standards

The implementation of 2 CFR 200 Subpart 318, the Procurement Standards, started with fiscal years beginning after December 2017. This meant that, for example, if the nonfederal entity's fiscal year ended on December 31, 2017 the effective date of the Uniform Guidance for that entity would have been January 1, 2018.

Table 1. Example of Implementation Timeline for the Procurement Standards

Fiscal Year End for Nonfederal Entities	Due Date for Implementation of Procurement Standards
December 31, 2017	January 1, 2018
April 30, 2017	May 1, 2018
June 30, 2017	July 1, 2018

Most organizations, by now, have already implemented the General Procurement Standards including a revision of procurement and accounting practices, and policies and procedures. Here are key areas of compliance for institutions of higher education and other qualified nonprofit or research institutions.

Key Areas of Compliance under the Uniform Guidance

1. Nonfederal Entities Must Have Documented Procurement Procedures that Conform to the Uniform Guidance

In the Uniform Guidance, 2 CFR 200.318 outlines the general procurement standards that nonfederal entities *must* follow if they are recipients of federal funds. Nonfederal entities must use their own documented procurement procedures, which not only reflect state and local regulations, but must also conform to applicable federal laws identified under the procurement standards. Nonfederal entities are also required to have written rules of conduct covering conflicts of interest that govern the actions of employees engaged in any part of the procurement process.

The following Subparts under 2 CFR 200 are also of importance to nonprofits and other grant seeking organizations:

- Maintain records to detail the history of procurement (200.318)
- Maintain oversight over contractors and subrecipients to ensure they perform in accordance with terms and conditions and specifications of contract (200.318)

- Construction projects may only use time and material contracts when no other alternative is feasible and must consider value engineering as a cost saving mechanism (200.318)
- Contracts must be awarded only to those contractors deemed responsible with the ability to perform successfully under the terms of the proposed procurement (200.318).
- Procurement must be conducted in an environment that provides for full and open competition (200.319).
- Prequalification lists, when used, must include sufficiently qualified sources to maintain full and open competition (200.319).
- Solicitations must outline the method of procurement to be followed, and must contain clear and accurate description of the technical requirements for the goods or services, as well as document the criteria used for evaluating proposals and determining awards (200.320)
- Affirmative steps must be taken to ensure participation from women and small minority-owned businesses (200.321)
- Avoid acquisition of unnecessary or duplicative items. Consider procurement of recovered materials (200.322)
- Cost and price analyses must be conducted on each procurement action above the simplified acquisition threshold (200.323)
- Bonding requirements (200.325).

2. Procurement must be Conducted Utilizing One of the Five (5) Procurement Methodologies Under the Uniform Guidance

The Uniform Guidance identifies five allowable procurement methods (2 CFR 200.320) that grant seeking organizations must follow (see Table 2):

- Micro-purchases
- Small purchases
- Sealed bid
- Competitive proposal
- Noncompetitive proposal or sole source.

Strategies for Nonprofit Organizations to Ensure Compliance with the Procurement Standards

Should nonprofit organizations adopt application of the Uniform Guidance to all procurement or should they adopt the guidelines only for projects utilizing federal funds? There is no right or wrong answer as to what will work best for any one organization but there are several factors that must be considered before deciding on any one approach.

Table 2. Allowable Procurement Methods Under the Uniform Guidance

Methodology	Dollar Threshold	Requirements
Micro-purchase	Not to exceed the micro-purchase threshold of \$10,000	No bid or quote required if price is deemed fair and reasonable. Reasonableness may be determined utilizing published pricing, catalog pricing, or other historical pricing.
Small purchase	Greater than \$10,000 and not exceeding the simplified acquisition threshold of \$250,000	Quotes must be obtained from an adequate number of sources (at least two), and the process must be documented.
Sealed bid	Greater than the simplified acquisition threshold of \$250,001	A complete, adequate and realistic specification of the requirements must be available, and the procurement must lend itself to a firm fixed price contract. Selection can be made, mainly on the basis of price, to the most responsive and responsible bidder.
Competitive proposal	Greater than the simplified acquisition threshold of \$250,001	Must be publicly advertised and the solicitation must identify the evaluation factors and their importance relative to the award. Proposals must be solicited from an adequate number of qualified sources and there must be a written method for conducting the technical evaluations. Contracts may only be awarded to responsible bidders that are most advantageous, price and other factors considered.
Noncompetitive proposal (Sole Source)	Greater than the micro-purchase threshold of \$10,000	Used only when a single source is available, during public exigency or emergency, or when after solicitation of a number of sources competition is deemed inadequate. Justification of the use of noncompetitive proposal must be documented, along with price reasonableness.

First, there are merits to adopting the Uniform Guidance to all procurement actions within the organization. This would create one set of rules that would simplify and standardize the procurement process. One set of rules also lowers the risks associated with projects utilizing mixed funding if funds are transferred between accounts.

On the other hand, for some, adopting the Uniform Guidance for all procurement actions would be extremely onerous and could strain resources and add to the administrative burden of faculty, staff and administrators, and may even end up doing more harm than good. In such cases, the guidelines should be adopted only for projects that are federally funded. If there are merely a handful of projects or departments within an organization that receive federal funding, adoption of the guidelines on a project basis may be the best approach. This way the vast majority of projects would be exempt from the more stringent guidelines should those projects allow for greater flexibility.

Notwithstanding these viewpoints, each organization will need to review its own set of circumstances and decide on the best approach for its particular set of conditions. Each organization should also consider these key points:

1. If you cannot separately track federal dollars from start to finish it may be best to consider adoption of the Uniform Guidance as best practice for all procurement actions.
2. You may consider using an e-procurement system for high volume, low dollar value items such as those within the small purchase threshold. This will help to centralize these purchases and give procurement and grant professionals some visibility so there is oversight over the process.
3. Each procurement action should be documented and good records kept for auditing purposes.
4. Organizations must keep abreast of changes to the Uniform Guidance and make changes to policies and procedures as needed to remain compliant.

Conclusion

Complying with the Uniform Guidance is not easy but noncompliance is not an option for nonprofit organizations and other grant seeking institutions that rely on federal funds. Adoption of the guidelines as best practice throughout the organization may be the best approach to manage compliance challenges. This does not mean that procurement needs to be centralized, but rather that everyone involved in the procurement process must follow the same set of guidelines to the extent possible. If this is not feasible, then consider an approach where all purchases over certain threshold, such as the small purchase threshold of \$10,000 or a higher formal competitive threshold, are centralized.

For some organizations neither of these options is feasible. In such a case, efforts should be made to ensure that the organization develops a standard set of rules and that everyone follows the same set of rules for procurement. Those rules should adopt applicable sections of state and federal laws including applicable sections of the Uniform Guidance. The organization should offer training to all employees involved in the procurement process, no matter how minor the involvement or role.

It would also be prudent to conduct periodic review of the organization's policies and procedures to make sure they are current and reflect the Uniform Guidance, which may change from time to time. For example, on January 22, 2020 the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) released a proposed notice titled *Guidance for Grants and Agreements* with the objective of, among others, to clarify areas of misinterpretation in current requirements. Although the period for public review and comments has since passed, nonprofit organizations must remain alert for periodic changes that may affect their operations.

References

- Federal Register. Guidance for grants and agreements. Retrieved on February 20, 2020 from <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/01/22/2019-28524/guidance-for-grants-and-agreements>
- Government Publishing Office. Code of Federal Regulations. *2 CFR 200 - Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards*. Retrieved on January 15, 2020 from <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CFR-2014-title2-vol1/CFR-2014-title2-vol1-part200>
- National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for FY 2018, Pub. L. No. 115-91. Retrieved on January 20, 2020 from <https://www.congress.gov/115/plaws/publ91/PLAW-115publ91.pdf>
- Office of Management and Budget. *Memorandum for Chief Financial Officers and Heads of Small Executive Agencies*. Retrieved from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/M-18-18.pdf>
- The Pew Charitable Trusts. (2019). Two decades of change in Federal and State higher education funding. Retrieved on January 15, 2020 from <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/issue-briefs/2019/10/two-decades-of-change-in-federal-and-state-higher-education-funding>

Biographical Information

Dr. Theresa Harris currently serves as Director, Procurement Services at the University of San Diego (USD). In this capacity, she is responsible for providing strategic direction and working in close collaboration with university constituents to implement strategies that lower third party risks, reduce cost, maximize value, and promote diversity and inclusion within the supply chain.

Dr. Harris started her career as a Procurement Specialist at the United Nations Development Program over 19 years ago. She also served as President to the National Contract Management Association, San Diego Chapter (NCMA), and holds a Doctorate in Organizational Leadership from Pepperdine University. She can be reached at theresaharris@sandiego.edu.