



Practitioner Networking Workshop: Challenges and Opportunities for Working on State Contracts for Family and Children's Services

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Introductions

- **Workshop Leader:** Joyce Miller, President KeyStone Research Corporation, Erie, PA
- **Participants:**
 - Who are you?
 - What is your current status as a sociologist—e.g., place of work, years in field, etc.?
 - What is your interest area regarding family and children's services?

Workshop Purpose

- Provide overview of challenges and opportunities of working with state agencies that have services for families and children.
- Identify the areas of sociological expertise that can be applied to this area of work.
- Provide tips on maneuvering through the RFP and contracting process.
- Offer recommendations on how to maintain good working relationships and establish sole source contracts.

Areas of Sociological Expertise

- **Brainstorming on ways in which sociologists have expertise in this field:**
 - Research (basic and applied)
 - Program design/development
 - Program administration
 - Process improvement consultation
 - Building capacity in evaluation and process improvement
 - Policy analysis and development
 - ??????



Opportunities for Sociologists

- **State agencies that provide human services:**
 - Departments of Health
 - Departments of Public Welfare
 - Departments of Education
 - Departments of Corrections/Justice/Crime and Delinquency
 - Departments of Aging
 - Departments of Labor & Industry

How to Find Funding

- Many state agencies receive Federal funding for their state operated programs.
- Some states may add their own funding to block grants.
- Check state listings of contract/grant opportunities.
- Find any state opportunities for approved vendor lists.
- Note increase in cross-systems collaboration and public/private partnerships.
- Participate in professional associations/meetings where state reps attend, as part of their professional development.

Challenges

- **RFP process:**
 - The level of sophistication at state level can vary tremendously.
 - Stick to RFP guidelines, and justify if vary from them.
 - Ideal to get sole source contracts, or those that are awarded over a longer term, even if contracts are year by year.
- **Timeline for contracting:**
 - Cash flow problems
 - Meeting timelines
 - Year end expenditures
- **Changes in scope of work:**
 - Need to have long paper trail of amendments for both change of work and/or modifications of budgets.
- **Accountability:**
 - Have many reporting, contract deliverables, and audit requirements.

Client Relationships

- **Client Needs:** Essential to determine client's needs (sometimes clients may not be able to articulate this, or have a misconception as to their needs).
- **Your Capacity & Capability:** Ensure that you are capable of responding to their needs (don't get into situations where you do not have either the capability or capacity to provide excellent services); recognize when there isn't a good fit.
- **Service Delivered:** Go above and beyond in providing your service, but within reason so as not to lose money (this engenders good will and can lead to additional work).
- **Evaluation of Service:** Have client provide evaluation of your services, and learn from what works & what doesn't work.
- **Political Ramifications:** With changes in administrations, relationships can be volatile.

Contact Information

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