



DRS Tip Sheet

Handling Competition

Do's and Don'ts

Several factors have contributed to increased competition for Head Start grant funds such as:

- Funding shifts in which early care and education programs have become more integrated,
- A push to provide full-day, full-year services that meet the needs of working parents, without additional funds to support operational costs,
- Interest among new types of providers in offering comprehensive services and lack of expansion opportunities,
- Per-child funding disparities between Head Start and State Prek programs that make Head Start a desirable funding source, and
- Low child care subsidy rates.

As a result, more programs in DRS have to deal with competition. Since Head Start programs are community based, your proposal will need to describe many aspects of community partnerships. It also must include data from a variety of sources. Both of these elements can be impacted as a result of tense relationships between agencies competing for funds. Knowing how to handle competition is vital to every organization interested in applying for Head Start funds and important in ensuring a high quality grant application. The following offers a few strategies for handling competition.



QUALITY PROGRAMS

Highlight the quality of your program and the ways in which your program exceeds the HS Program Performance Standards throughout the proposal.

COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES

If you are a multi-service agency such as a Community Action Agency describe additional programs and services you offer. Also note any special grants or projects your program has in place.

PROPRIETARY INFORMATION

Protect your data. Internal data and your community assessment play a key role in the development of your application. Keep sharing information in your community to a minimum until your application is submitted. You may need to take your community assessment off your website during the DRS process to ensure it is not used by a competitor writing for your grant funds.

STUDY

List out the strengths and weaknesses of your program and make sure to spend extra time determining any areas of weakness, such as providing part-day services when your competitor can provide full-day programs. You may need to consider changes to your program design in your application.

GIVE OHS A REASON

Start your application early. By giving yourself a longer period of time to develop the proposal, you can ensure you have a high quality application that gives OHS and the grant reviewers a reason to select you as a grantee.

GENERATE SUPPORT

Include letters of support in your grant application from key members of your community with authority such as a mayor, state legislative representative, and others who can give your program credibility.

Competition Don'ts

- ✓ Don't badmouth the competitor in your application or in the community.
- ✓ Don't panic! Stay focused on your program. Most businesses must handle competition and you can too.
- ✓ Don't forget to monitor your program and staff to ensure you are able to maintain high quality services and avoid any licensing issues or noncompliances.

Heartland Solutions is your partner in grant writing and supports all levels of proposal development. Call us to learn about our services and discuss your needs today at 530-526-9161 or email us at andrea@heartlandgrants.org