

Embedding Equity in Third-Party Technical Assistance Contracts

This resource is to support state agency staff in developing and implementing third-party technical assistance contracts. It includes helpful tips and considerations to advance equity through developing a scope of work and contract management.

Key Considerations for Your Scope of Work

The first step in developing your RFP is to craft your scope of work (SOW). The SOW is a critical place to embed equity into your TA program as it describes the tasks and deliverables that the TA providers will complete and create throughout the contract. The SOW needs to clearly communicate the TA program's intention and intended outcomes. The list below outlines key considerations for different sections of a SOW.

Describing Your Program's Background, Purpose, and Goals

- Include legislative mandates or reference relevant state equity priorities if applicable
- Explicitly state the audience for the TA Program and desired equity outcomes
 - Consider prioritizing TA for a subset of applicants who fit certain criteria that demonstrate that they have the most need based on program goals. This could include disadvantaged communities, low-income communities, and tribes. It could also include program-specific criteria like non-profit housing developers, small businesses, or communities facing specific climate vulnerabilities.

Clearly Outline the Qualifications Expected of the TA Providers

- Include both a set of minimum qualifications and desired qualifications. The minimum qualifications describe the essential knowledge and skills needed to execute the responsibilities effectively. Desired qualifications highlight what knowledge and skills could be beneficial in addition to the minimum qualifications and can also help broaden the applicant pool.
- If the TA recipients include tribes or tribal-serving organizations, it is important to distinguish specific knowledge and skills to provide tribes support effectively.

Detailing the TA Provider's Tasks and Deliverables

Outreach and Education

- Build equity into outreach and education related activities by asking bidders to develop a robust outreach and engagement plan, tailored to the audiences the TA program seeks to benefit.
- Ask bidders to incorporate language access by making ADA compliant documents and materials, offering live closed captioning during webinars, and providing translation and interpretation services.

TA Delivery

Application TA

- Outline the timeline for application technical assistance and the number of technical assistance recipients
- Determine an intake and/or priority process



- Detail the types of application services the TA provider will conduct.
- Determine how the TA is provided (virtually, in-person, both)

Implementation TA

- Outline the timeline for implementation technical assistance and the number of technical assistance recipients
- Detail the types of implementation services the TA provider will conduct while also allowing for bidders to offer additional services
- Determine how the TA is provided (virtually, in-person, both)

Capacity Building

- Outline the timeline for implementation technical assistance and the number of technical assistance recipients
- When developing a capacity building program or if the TA has a capacity building element, it'll be important to consider the following when developing activities:
 - What skills will this build for the recipient?
 - What knowledge will the recipient gain?
 - Can this help the recipients build partnerships?
 - How can we demonstrate the TA provider's materials are being used?
- Determine how the TA is provided (virtually, in-person, both)

Evaluation TA

Measuring progress is often baked into all funding programs, so providing evaluation TA has great potential for capacity building and transferability. Evaluation TA can help recipients iteratively collect data and assess their work.

- Develop templates for reporting and evaluation components of the grant
- Offer support understanding and identifying metrics
- Host focus groups or one-on-one interviews

Develop Actionable Resources

- Determine if and how any templates or resources provided can be adapted or used again in another context.
- Prepare accessible and public-facing final reports that describe the accomplishments, opportunities for refinement, and lessons learned that can be useful across programs and agencies who implement TA.

Key Considerations for Contract Management

Your contract management approach is a great opportunity to embed equity into your technical assistance programs. Through regular check-ins, you can daylight gaps or challenges that you might be able to address in the moment or future iterations of the program.

Establish Transparent Communication and Foster a Culture of Collaborative Learning

- Be clear about the intention of TA – being responsive to community needs and priorities. Sometimes things shift, and it's important to be proactive and flexible
- Host regular check-in meetings with the TA Providers to discuss how things are going
 - Standing Agenda Items can include:
 - Common barriers or challenges being experienced across TA recipients
 - Can this be addressed through TA delivery now or in the future?
 - What are program design features can address this?
 - Any unique barriers for specific TA recipient types (e.g., Tribes, CBOs, etc.)
 - Can this be addressed through TA delivery now or in the future?
 - What are program design features can address this?
 - Any challenges the TA providers are having? How can SGC support now or in future TA program design?

Be as Engaged as Possible and as Appropriate in the TA Process to ensure TA is Going Smoothly and to Build Trust between Priority Equity Communities and the State. Ways to do this include:

- Participate in the first few TA sessions
- Co-facilitate peer learning sessions or communities of practice with the TA provider
- Organize and host site visits with your TA providers to meet TA recipients in person

Incorporate Evaluation and Feedback from TA Recipients

- Iteratively evaluate your processes and approaches
- Seek honest feedback from TA recipients to identify ways to refine TA through check-in meetings and surveys

Ensure TA Providers are Properly Documenting Lessons Learned and Translating them into Accessible, Public-facing Reports

- Establish a shared drive with a central place to capture lessons learned (running meeting notes document, easy access to survey responses, TA tracker, etc.)
- Discuss any public deliverables and the intended use and audience before the TA provider starts developing them. This allows agency staff to weigh in on the design and framing
- Build in time for iterative review before final deliverables are submitted or released for publication
- Provide supportive resources or tools on how to make ADA compliant reports

Timely Review and Approval of TA Provider Invoices

- It is important to review an invoice shortly upon receiving to ensure there are no errors or missing information. The sooner you notice any errors, the sooner you will be able to return the invoice to the TA provider for corrections and approve the payment.