

Call for Proposals

Arizona State University School of Public Affairs & Center for Nonprofit Leadership and Management PAF 541/NLM 598 Program Evaluation

August 1, 2005

I. INTRODUCTION

The School of Public Affairs and the Center for Nonprofit Leadership and Management is soliciting proposals from nonprofit and governmental agencies to participate in a graduate-level program evaluation course. Chosen agencies will take part in evaluation of an activity of their agency. Possible evaluation activities include problem definition/needs assessment, assessment of program outcomes, and determination of program impacts. Between four and six organizations will be chosen to participate in the semester-long course, each with the potential of receiving up to \$500 in matched funds to offset costs associated with the evaluation. The project period is approximately 12 weeks during January to May of 2006. Proposals will be selected on the basis of evaluation need, project feasibility and potential access to necessary data.

II. BACKGROUND

Program evaluation is the use of social science research methods to investigate the effectiveness of programs providing social intervention. Program evaluation serves many important functions. It supplies information to policymakers and program administrators who face decisions about which programs to fund, scale back, expand, modify, or eliminate. Evaluation is an accountability tool: when individuals or agencies decide to fund a program, they have a right to ask what their funds bought. Evaluation is also a vehicle for improving public and nonprofit services. By finding out what efforts succeed and fail—and how new ideas and approaches fare against existing practices—policymakers and administrators can improve new policy and program designs, and devote resources to programs that work and fix programs that are inefficient or marginally effective.

The evaluation course, PAF 541/NLM 598, is offered annually during the Spring semester and is designed to provide students with the tools to answer the most fundamental question within the field of program evaluation: “Do social programs work?” Trained as both users and producers of evaluation research, students gain experience by engaging in real-world evaluation research. The course involves assembling students in consulting teams and partnering with local nonprofit and government agencies to conduct evaluations of their policies and programs. The combination of real-world experience with course readings, lectures and discussions aims to educate course participants in both the theoretical and practical realms of program evaluation.

The course, now entering its fourth year, has completed 15 evaluations for a variety of agencies. Agency purposes included anti-poverty, child welfare, education, civic engagement, environmental preservation, and cultural affairs, among others. The evaluations are conducted

solely by students in the course with professor supervision and oversight. The evaluation project serves as the vast majority of students' overall grade in the course, and a professional, client-ready product is expected. This Call for Proposals is an attempt to reach out more broadly to organizations that may not know of this resource but would like assistance designing and executing program evaluation. Another purpose of soliciting proposals from local agencies is to improve the likelihood not only that the evaluation projects can be completed in the semester's time-frame but also that the evaluation results will be of use to the agencies.

III. ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION CRITERIA

Eligible applicants must be from nonprofit or government agencies whose activities take place in the greater Phoenix, Arizona, metropolitan area. The applicant agency can represent any purpose or service. Applicants must be able to demonstrate the dedication of the agency to improving its activities through program evaluation. Generally, it is expected that applicants will have limited experience with or resources for evaluation and therefore would benefit from working with a team to refine evaluation questions and conduct evaluation research.

Proposed projects must be completed within the time frame of the course (12 weeks). Projects will be judged in part on whether they are feasible in this regard. Proposals that appear too complex for this time frame will not be selected. Especially complex evaluation projects may be more appropriately proposed as an evaluation design rather than a complete evaluation. Successful projects will have identified relevant data and other evaluation resources, and the agency will communicate clearly about how the proposed evaluation might benefit their programs and activities. Proposals for strategic planning are not appropriate for this Call.

IV. APPLICATION PROCESS

Proposal narrative can be up to six pages in length (not including the cover page and appendices) and must include cover page and narrative, as described below, and may also include supplemental information as appropriate in an appendix. Proposals must be typed and use a 12-point font and standard 1-inch margins and may be single- or double-spaced.

The deadline for receipt of proposals is 5:00PM on October 31, 2005. No applications will be accepted after this time. Please send or deliver proposals to:

Dr. Laura R. Peck, Assistant Professor
Arizona State University, School of Public Affairs
P.O. Box 870603
Tempe, AZ 85287-0603

- 1. Cover Page:** The purpose of this page is to provide basic identification information regarding the agency and proposed project. (Use or reproduce the template provided).
- 2. Proposal Narrative:** The narrative must include:

- a. *Agency Description:* Provide a description of the agency, including type of agency, scope of work (vision, mission, objectives), population served, and structure and organization of the agency.
- b. *Evaluation Project:* Describe what question(s) the agency seeks to answer through evaluation. Some questions to consider in developing the project might be:
 - To what extent do program operations align with program theory? In other words, how does the program in practice match the program as designed? To what extent is the program meeting its goals?
 - What outcomes is the program achieving? Or, how much of Y are we actually getting?
 - What kinds of impacts is the program having and on whom? That is, above and beyond what would have happened anyway, is our program having an effect?
 - What are the costs associated with Z activity and/or achieving the program impacts?
 - What is the ideal evaluation design for the program?Detail how the knowledge generated from the evaluation project is expected change the agency's programs or activities.
- c. *Available Resources for the Evaluation:* Describe how the agency will be able to support the evaluation. For example, identify who the agency's primary contact person will be and the extent to which this person will be able to assist with the evaluation. Identify other staff or agency partners who would be involved and the extent to which they can cooperate with the evaluation's demands. Please also describe any materials (e.g., administrative data, surveys, logic models, investment funds) the agency may already have available to assist with the evaluation.

3. Appendices: Agencies may attach documents to assist in selection of the proposed project. Relevant documents might include: detailed information regarding administrative data that would be available to the evaluation team; results from prior research or evaluation activity that demonstrate interest in using evaluation to improve program performance; letters of support from agency partners; or .

Proposals that do not include all of the required components will not be considered. Any questions about the evaluation course or the selection process should be submitted in writing no later than 5:00PM on September 30, 2005, to Lindsey.Gorzalski@asu.edu.

All applicants, whether their project is accepted or rejected, will be notified by December 15, 2005.

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**Arizona State University
School of Public Affairs & Center for Nonprofit Leadership and Management
PAF 541/NLM 598 Program Evaluation**

COVER PAGE

Name of Applicant Agency: _____

Address of Applicant Agency: _____

Agency Contact Person (name and position): _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Brief summary of evaluation project (<500 words):