Guide for incorporating HOPE into your grant proposals

HOPE implementation can transform care for children and youth in a wide variety of settings. Recent experience and research have established the key role of positive childhood experiences. However, this approach may seem novel to funders. This document will help provide the background information needed for successful funding requests. Incorporating the HOPE (Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences) framework into your grant application can strengthen your proposal by emphasizing the importance of positive childhood experiences (PCEs) in developing resilience and optimal health and socioeconomic outcomes. This document is meant to provide sample language and key references that can support your proposal.

General Grant Writing Tips

When preparing your proposal, make sure your aim statement is clear and feasible, you have clearly defined outcomes of interest and measures, and that your objectives align with the funder's priorities.

- Read the grant opportunity announcement carefully to be sure your proposal is responsive to the request.
- Clearly define the problem you plan to address – have data and references!
- Define your outcome measures and measurement tools.
- Lay out the approach you plan to take to successfully carry out the project – sometimes a visual like a timeline chart is helpful. The funder has to be convinced that your project is feasible and impactful!

Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs)

PCEs play a critical role in shaping long-term health and socioeconomic success. Research has demonstrated that supportive relationships, safe, stable and equitable environments, and opportunities for engagement and emotional growth contribute to the development of resilience and improved adolescent and adult outcomes.[1-4]

Exposure to PCEs has also been associated with increased educational attainment and income.5 PCEs are associated with a lower risk of chronic physical and mental health conditions, as well as health risk behaviors, including substance use, in adulthood.

An analysis of Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey data from four states found that PCEs were associated with a lower risk of some of the leading causes of morbidity and mortality in the US, such as heart disease, cancer, COPD, and diabetes, as well as other chronic conditions. Based on the reductions in these chronic conditions, the annual economic value of PCEs was estimated at $215.9 billion in these four states.[6] There is also evidence that PCEs may mitigate some of the negative impacts of adverse childhood experiences.[3,8,9]

Using the HOPE framework to Support Children and Families

The HOPE (Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences) framework is a strengths-based, research-informed approach that focuses on how PCEs contribute to healthy development and long-term well-being.[10,11] Central to the framework are the four Building Blocks of HOPE, which represent key areas of a child's life that, when supported, foster resilience and thriving.

These Building Blocks include relationships with adults and peers that are safe, stable, and nurturing; environments to live, learn, and play that are physically and emotionally safe; opportunities for social and civic engagement that give children a sense of belonging and purpose; and opportunities for social and emotional growth. By intentionally promoting these key foundational experiences, the HOPE framework shifts the focus from preventing harm to actively building health, helping children and families flourish even in the face of adversity.

Project Description

- State the problem you are trying to address and outcomes you hope to achieve by incorporating HOPE and PCEs. (background/significance)
  - Some common problems that HOPE might be used to address include:
    - Reduce substance use
    - Promote equitable access to the HOPE Building Blocks
    - Improve family retention and engagement in care
    - Increase referral follow-through
    - Improve staff retention/job satisfaction

- In one sentence, state goal(s)/objective(s) of the project – here are a few examples:
  - To promote equitable, strengths-based services by embedding the HOPE framework into all aspects of program design and delivery.
  - To enhance child and family well-being by centering PCEs in our work.
  - To build community resilience and improve outcomes by intentionally integrating the four Building Blocks of HOPE into service delivery and organizational practices.
  - To shift organizational culture toward one that recognizes the importance of and fosters positive experiences.
  - To support systems-level change by embedding HOPE-informed practices into organizational procedures and policies

- Give a detailed description of the project plan and how you will achieve your goals/objectives (Approach). Be sure to touch on all the elements listed below:
  - Overall strategy – what you will do and why. Describe how this aligns with the funder's objectives.
  - Methods - Step by step breakdown of project activities. Describe data collection and analysis plans.
  - Project timeline
  - Describe any relevant preliminary activity or data
  - Describe any potential pitfalls and how you will address them.

- Possible HOPE activities to include in your proposal*
  - Train the Facilitator: This three-part virtual program certifies participants to provide the Introduction to HOPE workshop tailored specifically to their community and sector.
  - HOPE Champion: This three-month, virtual, project-based learning program certifies participants to deliver technical assistance around implementation of the HOPE framework.
  - Organizational Certification: This program transitions organizations from talking about broad concepts of health equity and trauma-informed care to implementing specific actions to achieve goals of adopting the HOPE framework and publicly declaring their intentions and accomplishments

*Please visit our website for the most up-to-date offerings and pricing information)

  - Online Learning Modules: The HOPE National Resource Center would love to work with your organization to create customized online learning modules that introduce the basics of the HOPE framework, relate it back to models and frameworks your team is already using, and review what implementation looks like specifically for your staff. This fully personalized option makes training staff on the HOPE framework more sustainable over time and can integrate with existing onboarding processes.
  - Community of Practice: Staff from the HOPE National Resource Center will facilitate monthly 90-minute calls with a cohort of individuals who want to dive deep on HOPE implementation. The group will come together each month to talk through a component of the implementation, share lessons learned and barriers faced, and plan tangible steps for the next month.

Incorporating the HOPE framework into your proposal can help strengthen your application by demonstrating your commitment to fostering resilience and promoting equitable access to PCEs. Be sure that your narrative is clear and focused, evidence-based, and aligned with the funders' priorities.

Need help? Additional assistance from the HOPE team is available. Please reach out to us at tufts.mc.hope@tuftsmedicine.org.

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