

## Applicant Interview Script + Questions (Draft)

The following script is for applicants who applied for awards participating in the SimplerNOFOs pilot. Applicant interviews will be scheduled and held after applicants submit their applications.

Estimated time to complete: 45-60 minutes

**Applicant demographics** Lead facilitator will be responsible for referencing the [interview tracker](#) to capture the following in preparation for the conversation.

- NOFO they applied to:
- First time or experienced applicant:
- Download the corresponding NOFO pdf:  
<https://simplergrants.hhs.gov/simplernofos/pilot/pilot-grant-opportunities-overview#published-simplernofos-pilot-grant-opportunities>

### Welcome

- [Introduce lead and note taker.](#)
- Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today. As we mentioned in our outreach, [\[include\]](#). We would like to speak to you today about your experience applying to the [\[enter name of NOFO\]](#).
- We've allotted for up to 60 minutes. Does that still work for you? **Confirm yes/no with participant**
- [If no] When would be a better time to connect? [\[Open your calendar to find times that work\]](#)
- [If yes] Great, I'll provide some background information and pause for any questions you may have before we begin.

### Background

- HHS has a goal to create Notices of Funding Opportunities (or grant announcements) that are more applicant friendly to reduce the avoidable barriers of applying for a grant with HHS.
- Hearing about your most recent experience with [\[enter name of NOFO\]](#) will help us know how language and design changes to NOFOs at HHS are influencing the applicant experience, essentially helping us to understand what to continue and what might need more consideration.

### Logistics

- We are going to ask you a few questions about your overall experience with the application but would first like to learn a bit about you. Can you start by telling us about your role and the role of your organization?
- Your feedback is important to us so we encourage you to be open and honest.
- Nothing you share will not be tied to your name or organization nor will it impact your current or future application.
- Feel free to skip any questions that you don't feel comfortable answering. If at any point you'd like us to end the conversation, please just let me know.

### **Becoming aware of the opportunity**

- How did you or your organization become aware of the [\[enter NOFO name\]](#)?

### **First impressions**

- [\[First time applicants\]](#) I see you indicated in the survey you completed that this was your first time applying to an HHS grant. Is that correct?
- What were your first impressions of the grant announcement?
  - o [\[Experienced applicants\]](#) How, if all, was your impression different from previous grant opportunities you've reviewed or applied to?

### **Application process**

- To the best of your ability, can you walk me through the steps you and your team took to complete the application?
  - o What steps did you take? (e.g. reviewing, learning about the award, preparing to apply, submitting, etc.)
  - o Who was involved?
- [\[Experienced applicants\]](#) How was this process or experience different you're your experience applying to previous HHS grant announcements?

### **Ease in understanding**

- What stands out to you as sections of the grant announcement that felt easy to understand, follow, or complete? [\[screenshare the table of contents\]](#)
  - o Can you explain what aspects of these sections made them feel straightforward for you?
- What stands out to you as sections of the grant announcement that felt frustrating or challenging? [\[screenshare the table of contents\]](#)
  - o Can you explain what specifically made these sections feel that way?
  - o Would you mind walking me through how you dealt with those challenges? What steps did you take to gain clarity or move forward?
  - o What if anything felt like it was missing from this grant announcement?
  - o What if anything would you modify or change to better communicate the information?

### **Content, Format, and Structure**

- How effective do you think the organization of information (for instance the logic used) in the grant announcement was in terms of:
  - o Helping you find the information you needed?
  - o Clarifying what was required of you as an applicant?
  - o Understanding the obligations if awarded a grant?
  - o Understanding the application submission process?
- How effective do you think the layout, design or presentation of information (this might include visual elements, colors, and more) in the grant announcement was in terms of:
  - o Helping you find the information you needed?
  - o Clarifying what was required of you as an applicant?
  - o Understanding the obligations if awarded a grant?
  - o Understanding the application submission process?

- Are there any standout moments where you felt you could have used more guidance?
- How about moments where you felt the information could have been formatted differently?

**Wrap-up**

- If there were aspects of how this grant opportunity was written or presented that you could change, what would they be and why?
- Based on our questions, and what we're aiming to learn, is there anything that we didn't ask you that you feel like it's important for us to know?

Thank you again for your time. If you have any questions you can email [simplergrants@hhs.gov](mailto:simplergrants@hhs.gov)

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