Concept Paper Review Guidelines and Suggested Format

Center for Outcomes and Effectiveness Research

The purpose of the concept paper review is to enhance dialog between staff and the research community on potential grant applications related to the programs and mission of the Center for Outcomes and Effectiveness Research, Agency for Healthcare Quality and Research. Information shared in the concept paper review is understood to be preliminary and will require further development should the investigator pursue the proposed line of inquiry.

A suggested outline of the concept paper content follows. Overall, papers should be 6 to 10 pages (double-spaced) in length, with the individual pages numbered. It is necessary to formulate a total proposed budget and to indicate the number of years for the proposed project.

Significance of the Problem

Outcomes and effectiveness studies focus on effectiveness of health care interventions (the effects observed in typical practice settings) rather than efficacy (the effects observed under the ideal circumstances of a clinical trial). The emphasis is on conditions that are costly and for which there is substantial evidence of variation in practice. Discuss, in a few paragraphs, the issues which form the basis of the problem.

Place the problems in the context of the health care delivery system and identify how research could enhance practice, service delivery, or health care policy. A brief description of how the proposed study would add to previous work in the area of inquiry should also be included.

What Is the Conceptual Framework or Theoretical Basis for the Study and for Use in Data Analysis?

Methodology/Approaches

The overall study design is important. Define the subjects or target population. Because grant applications will be scored specifically on the inclusion of women and minority subjects in the study population, their inclusion should be addressed in the concept paper as well. If interventions are proposed, describe their content
and how they will be implemented. Sources and types of data need to be
described. The project sample size and duration of the proposed project should
be stated explicitly. Consider the following:

- What information will be needed to answer the questions.
- How will it be obtained if the source of data is reliable and the data are
  available.
- If additional or new instruments will be needed.

Here a brief description of the setting (e.g., primary care practice) may be
warranted to clarify the sources of data.

**Evaluation and Analysis**

How will you determine whether the original questions have been answered?
What is the potential contribution of both positive and negative findings to the
field of inquiry? What is the potential policy and/or practice relevance of the
study? Is the proposal a part of a planned series of studies? If so, what are the
other parts of the series?

**Selected References**

Include a bibliography of references cited in the concept paper.