Tips for How to Write an NCAA CHOICES Grant Proposal

The misuse of alcohol by college students is of great concern to the NCAA. In an effort to educate students about the risks involved with the misuse of alcohol, the NCAA has, through the support of the NCAA Foundation and the Anheuser-Busch Foundation, developed NCAA CHOICES, a grant program designed to support alcohol education.

The NCAA CHOICES Grant Program provides funding for NCAA member schools and conferences to integrate athletics departments into campus-wide efforts to reduce alcohol abuse. NCAA CHOICES projects must partner athletics with other campus departments in the development and implementation of effective alcohol education projects.

This document contains recommendations to help you and your institution write an effective NCAA CHOICES grant proposal.

1. Understand your partners.

Athletics departments often have unique cultural identities. What are the unique issues, concerns or logistical issues you should keep in mind as you work to partner with others on campus or in your own athletics department?

- Athletes are known to work hard and play hard, which can be leveraged for prevention programming.
- Athletes’ schedules pose challenges to participation in prevention programming and may require some creative scheduling.
- In some cases, athletics facilities are located at a distance from the main campus, which can present challenges to coordinating prevention programming.
- Team and/or coaches’ rules are paramount; for effective engagement, work with coaches to find the prevention approach that works best for his or her team.
- Because athletes for the most part operate in a team environment, it is important to understand and address the role team plays in individual behaviors.
- Many teams and athletics programs have well-established cultural expectations and traditions; consider how (and if) these can be integrated into programming.
- Use the athletics competition mentality to engage athletes in your prevention programs by integrating team efforts and celebrating achievements.
Even while athletics can often feel like a silo, there is an entire prevention community that can assist with prevention issues. This prevention community can include groups such as student health services, dean of students, health and recreation departments and counseling services.

2. **Find common ground.**

When working with other groups or departments, it’s important to start at square one: defining things that everyone can agree on or wants. Some ideas can include:

- Collegial relationships.
- Leadership opportunities.
- Performance opportunities.
- Academic success.
- Bright futures.
- A positive institutional reputation.

3. **Top ten reasons to partner with athletics.**

Why should outside groups partner with athletics on issues such as alcohol prevention? There are many unique reasons to consider this kind of strategic partnership, but here are our top reasons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Fun.</th>
<th>2. Excitement.</th>
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<td>3. Crowds.</td>
<td>4. Community interest.</td>
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<td>7. Student involvement.</td>
<td>8. Faculty and administrator environment.</td>
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<td>9. Scoreboards and programs.</td>
<td>10. Gyms or fields have lots of space for event.</td>
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4. **How to partner with athletics and identify challenges.**

By partnering with athletics, it is important to recognize that while student-athletes have the same needs as other students, student-athletes also have some unique needs. Here are some things to keep in mind as you begin your partnership:

- Assess current connections, needs and interests.
- Identify key personnel in athletics and campus prevention; Get key feedback on existing, potential collaborations.
Define environmental or organizational challenges or opportunities.
Bring your plan to all constituents for comment and buy-in.
Maximize your partnership through high-profile opportunities.

Once you have determined your partnership, your next step should be to identify and address the challenges you may face.

- Student-athletes have very limited free time.
- Getting the support of coaching staff is critical.
- Get buy-in from all areas of athletics departments.
- Create SMART objectives – specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound.
- Understand what staff is available, including a contingency plan for staff turnover.
- Identify and work with other campus prevention efforts or agendas.

By completing this work, you’ve already put yourself on the path to success. Collaborative efforts expand impact. High-profile activities can increase the visibility of campus-wide prevention efforts, while student involvement in the development of a program can increase acceptance. Peer mentors should be used to reduce personnel demands and increase referral of peers.

5. Seven lessons learned from past CHOICES winners.

After speaking with past CHOICES grant winners, these were the top seven lessons they wanted to share with future applicants and winners:

1. Engage campus stakeholders in earliest discussions.
2. Involve all interested departments in planning and implementation and identify each one’s role.
3. Include students and student-athletes every step of the way.
4. Rely on evidence-based approaches and promising practices.
5. Design targeted and achievable goals and objectives.
6. Promote a comprehensive campus program.
7. Be flexible and resilient, adjusting when necessary.

6. A research-based approach to prevention.

Effective programs are built upon a strong evidence base. Athletics programs, coaches and student-athletes understand the value of learning from the experience of others and measuring success. A partnership with athletics will be welcomed particularly when the partner presents documented support for proposed strategies. NCAA CHOICES proposals should reflect the current understanding of prevention science, and integrate strategies based in
evidenced-based prevention theory and demonstrated success.

7. **Goal Setting.**

Once you are ready to begin setting your goals, make sure to keep these questions in mind.

- What are your campus and community needs?
- What are you trying to change?
- How can research-based programs and activities contribute to this change?
- How will you know changes have been made?

As you develop your goals, the ABCDE method can be a helpful tool to use.

- **Audience** – Who is the target population you are trying to reach?
- **Behavior** – What is the behavior you want to change?
- **Condition** – Under what condition will it happen? And when?
- **Degree** – By how much will it change?
- **Evidence** – How will you measure your changes?

### Goal Statement Example

**By April 2017, as a result of a social norms marketing campaign, student-athletes will experience five percent fewer negative consequences of drinking as measured by pre- and post-tests using the Core Campus Survey of Alcohol and Other Drug Norms and the Core Alcohol and Other Drug Survey.**

**Audience:** Student-athletes.
**Behavior:** Reduce negative consequences of drinking.
**Condition:** After implementing a social norms marketing campaign.
**Degree:** Five percent reduction in negative consequences.
**Evidence:** Pre- and post-test using Core surveys.

8. **Objective Setting.**

Objectives describe the intermediate steps needed to accomplish project goals.

They are also what you do to achieve your goal. These can be included in your process and intermediate outcomes and should fit the ABCDE model.

Remember that objectives should be SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound).
9. **IMPACT resource for evaluation.**

As you work to evaluate your project, use the IMPACT resource on the CHOICES web page to guide your evaluation.

- Identify your desired results (goals, outcomes).
- Measure the ways your strategies will meet your goals.
- Plan your quantitative and qualitative approaches to achieve your goals.
- Act and implement your evaluation strategies from start to finish.
- Collaborate and work with others skilled in assessment.
- Transition by reviewing, revising and institutionalizing your results.

10. **Successful CHOICES proposals.**

While many proposals are submitted each year, only a few are selected to receive grant funding. Here are some key items to help make your proposal a successful one.

- The proposal demonstrates the integration of athletics.
- Letters of support are included, which identifies collaboration and commitments.
- Unique campus problems and needs are defined.
- Goals are clearly stated and related to the identified needs.
- Objectives are created that seek to reach goals.
- Processes to measure how objectives will be achieved are stated.
  - Includes a process showing the steps to get there, including the how and when.
  - The outcome is identified and can be measured by the change in knowledge, attitude and/or behavior.
- The proposal identifies who will do what and when.
- Individual and organizational protective factors are reinforced.
- A broad-based task force is utilized.
- Students from all walks are integrated.

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**Objective Statement Example**

By April 2017, 50 percent of student-athletes who attend a peer education alcohol program will know campus social norms statistics as measured by pre- and post-tests.

**Audience:** Student-athletes.

**Behavior:** Know social norms statistics.

**Condition:** April 2017, attend peer program.

**Degree:** 50 percent of target population.

**Evidence:** Pre- and post-tests.
- A cultural competency is developed. Campus student groups, their advisors and administrators are all consulted.
- Sharing and reliance among stakeholders is promoted.
- Support is a clear and consistent policy for all.
- Research-based strategies are used.

11. **Additional resources.**

Below are additional resources to help you develop your proposal:

- [Best of CHOICES: 1998-2008](#)
- [CHOICES main page](#)
- [www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov](#)
- [www.coheasap.org](#)
- [www.hsph.harvard.edu/cas](#)
- [www.core.siuc.edu](#)