SETTING THE STANDARDS FOR THE GRANTS PROFESSION:

IDENTIFICATION AND VALIDATION OF THE COMPETENCIES AND SKILLS

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Between 2000 and 2006, the American Association of Grant Professionals (AAGP), its affiliate the Grant Professionals Certification Institute (GPCI) and the University of South Florida, Institute for Instructional Research and Practice (Institute) undertook a series of activities designed to identify and validate a slate of professional competencies and skills for the field of grantsmanship. The validated competencies and skills will serve as content for a grants-related professional certification test and establish professional standards for the field. This paper chronicles the activities conducted to date by the three entities to identify and validate this slate of competencies and skills for the Grant Professionals Certification Examination.

The development of a professional certification for the grants field can be traced to the establishment of AAGP in 1997. In that year, its founders identified two inter-related issues facing the field: 1) the need for ethical practices and 2) a need for a mechanism to promote and uphold those ethical practices. The mechanism would come to be defined as "certification." From its inception, AAGP recognized the enormity of the task. It stood firm in its belief that certification should reflect only the highest testing standards and be devoid of any potential conflicts of interest. AAGP committed its efforts and resources to the assurance that all aspects of the certification process would be conducted within the psychometric parameters established by the National Organization for Competency Assurance's affiliate, the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA). To ensure this standard, a three-way partnership of the following entities was established to develop the field's first professional certification examination, the Grant Professionals Certification Examination.

- *American Association of Grant Professionals* (AAGP): As the premier association representing grants professionals throughout the country and abroad, AAGP served as the impetus for the credentialing initiative and as a major stakeholder group within the field of grantsmanship. Established in 1997, AAGP is a 501(c)(6) nonprofit membership associations, dedicated to building and supporting an international community of grant professionals committed to serving the greater public good by practicing the highest ethical and professional standards (www.grantprofessionals.org/about/mission.php).

- *Grant Professionals Certification Institute* (GPCI): Established in 2002, GPCI, an affiliate 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization of AAGP, has complete oversight of the development and implementation of the certification program. GPCI was established, in part, to meet "absence of conflict of interest" criteria and to ensure administrative independence from AAGP as recommended by NCCA.

- *University of South Florida, Institute for Instructional Research and Practice* (Institute): Established by the Florida Legislature as a research entity in 1984, the Institute conducts

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independent, valid and reliable research studies and projects addressing specific issues, including various types of certification and licensure. Employing best practices, statisticians (psychometricians) and statistical associates analyze both quantitative and qualitative data to enable experts to integrate theory and reach consensus on high-stakes social, educational, and professional projects. Besides aligning the Grant Professionals Certification Examination project with NCCA standards, the Institute employs guidelines of the American Psychological Association for its psychometric processes. The Institute was selected to serve as the psychometric arm of the project after an extensive nationwide RFP process.

The successful development of a professional examination must demonstrate validity, reliability, and defensibility. A certification examination must be legally defensible against examinee challenge. It must also be free of bias, whether of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, or theory. AAGP, GPCI, and the Institute are conducting their efforts within this framework.

1999-2002: The Early Years and the Work of AAGP:

Determining the Need for Certification

In 1999, at the AAGP First Annual Conference in Chicago, the AAGP Board of Directors established a formal committee to investigate the concept of credentialing. Responding to the charge, the newly established committee brainstormed, investigated and planned for a possible credentialing initiative. Throughout 2000, professional conversations, or "chatter," dominated the CharityChannel, an Internet-based public discussion forum. An informal e-mail survey was distributed to the AAGP membership to solicit their opinions regarding the need for certification and ongoing dialogue ensued. By the end of the year, the committee had moved certification from an anecdotal concept to a data-driven initiative.

The data compiled in 2000 was shared in two workshops at the Second Annual AAGP National Conference in Berkeley, California. There, participants openly discussed the need for credentialing and at the annual membership meeting passed a resolution mandating continuation of the discovery process. By 2001, the informal surveys and discussions of 1999 and 2000 were replaced by formal surveys, with the inaugural tool being distributed at the Third Annual AAGP National Conference in Orlando. This survey focused on the questions of: "Who are we? What do we do? Is professional certification what we really want?" The survey became the first of several formal mechanisms employed to identify "competencies and skills." Fifty of the 125 registrants completed and returned the survey. Greater than 90 percent of the respondents indicated a belief in the need for a national credentialing program. The Credentialing Committee

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concluded the conference with a second workshop, and the membership affirmed its commitment to credentialing with a resolution to continue the work of certification.

In 2002, the Credentialing Committee turned its efforts to determining if AAGP was in a position to launch a national credentialing program. To this end, the committee drafted a detailed AAGP Credentialing Business Plan (Mandley et al., 2002). The Plan's primary purpose was to determine if a national credentialing program was financially feasible. The Plan also laid the logistic groundwork for program development.

At the Fourth Annual AAGP National Conference in Portland, Oregon, the AAGP Board of Directors voted unanimously to accept the Business Plan and directed the Credentialing Committee to continue its research into the psychometric and financial aspects of the task. The Credentialing Committee also presented an update of its accomplishments to the membership.

With the results from AAGP' initial discovery and due diligence activities between 1999 and 2003 in hand, AAGP adopted the following tenets.

- The field of grantsmanship is rapidly emerging into a profession that has the potential for misuse and government regulation.
- Certification is one benchmark for distinguishing grant development as a profession.
- At this time, no other certification tool addresses the functions and processes associated with grant development, writing and administration.
- There exists a critical mass of certification candidates throughout the country.
- Grant professionals are poised and ready to embrace certification.
- Over time, employers and educational institutions will promulgate the necessity of certification for every individual earning a livelihood as a grant professional.
- The membership and the Board of Directors of AAGP have the expertise and resources to develop, implement and sustain a self-supporting certification program.
- A credential attests that a person has minimum basic competence to practice in the field of grant development, based upon a valid set of standards set by the field, and demonstrated via a valid and reliable examination. Moreover, the certificate will not be tied to any particular course of study or training offered by AAGP or any other professional or training organization.

With belief in these tenets, along with other supporting information, AAGP moved forward to:

- Develop and administer a psychometrically sound testing (certification) tool that demonstrates an individual's ability to provide quality grant-related services within an ethical framework.
- Form an independent nonprofit organization to oversee, administer and revise the Certification tool and program and continually monitor the test's validity and reliability (GPCI).

- Ensure the upholding of ethical practices by its certificate holders by making available a formal grievance procedure.

- Design and maintain the certification program so that it becomes self-supporting after an initial investment.

- Expand the certification program to include activities that generate program revenue, including but not limited to developing educational resources to aid in the preparation for certification, and outreach programs that promulgate the importance of certification to stakeholders (e.g., nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, grant makers, individuals in the grant profession, administrators, etc.).

- Engender positive relations with other grant-oriented organizations and individuals within the philanthropic sector.

Furthermore, AAGP and GPCI recognized that:

- Initial development activities must include early education of all stakeholders in the profession.

- Initial activities must be adequately funded.

- The plan and its activities must be fully endorsed by the Board of Directors and the membership.

- The plan must encourages positive "buy-in" from other ancillary professional organizations, agencies and funding community (AFP, Council on Foundations, Grantmakers for Effective Organizations, Grantsmanship Center, etc.).

- The resultant program must clearly demonstrate administrative independence from AAGP.

- The resultant program must demonstrate its ability to be fully self-supporting.

- The resultant program must demonstrate its efforts to promote constant growth and renewal of professional competencies through a certification maintenance program.

With approval from the AAGP Board of Directors and the membership, the next steps in the certification process, stakeholder education and test development, began in earnest.

2002-2005: The Middle Years – GPCI and the Institute Join Forces with AAGP: Identifying Competencies and Skills

By 2003, the committee had moved its efforts away from discovery and into program development. The committee formed the Grant Professionals Certification Institute (GPCI), AAGP' 501(c)(3) affiliate nonprofit, charged with oversight of the certification program. GPCI made its debut at the Fifth Annual AAGP National Conference in Kansas City, with a dedicated booth, brochure, buttons and balloons. For the first time, the Credentialing Committee presented a technical, rather than informational workshop.

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In 2004, the Credentialing Committee, working with AAGP' Professional Growth and Development Committee, synthesized the data into a slate of "Commonly Identified Competencies and Skills." After additional information was obtained from an informal survey on AAGP' online forum, the exercise was repeated in early 2005 with a second group of AAGP Professional Growth and Development members. In the summer of 2005, the Credentialing Committee refined the data into a new document entitled "Grant Professional Core Competencies and Skills." The "Finalized Core Competencies" were approved by the Credentialing and Professional Growth and Development Committees for public distribution and placed on the AAGP website for review and comment.

Over the five-year period beginning in 2000, AAGP, GPCI, and the Institute would identify, compile, and informally validate a broad-based slate of competencies and skills to form a foundation for the arduous task of validating the competencies and skills psychometrically. In early 2004, AAGP and GPCI entered into partnership with the Institute for Instructional Research and Practice (the Institute) at the University of South Florida to oversee the examination development process. Table 1 and 2 chronicles these activities.

Table 1: Chronology of the Identification of Competencies and Skills Used by Grant Professionals

- 2000. Documented conversations with approximately ten experts in the field. Informal electronic survey by Credentialing Committee, 2000, responses: 18.

- 2001. Survey of Grant Professionals distributed at 2001 National AAGP Conference in Orlando; 125 attendees, responses: 50. Purpose: determine perceived need and begin the formal process of identifying competencies and skills.

- 2003. In Article entitled "Identifying Professional Competencies" by Deanna Nurnberg published in the Journal of the AAGP, Spring 2003.

- 2003. Slate of competencies and skills derived from previous surveys presented in a workshop of 25 participants, Fifth Annual AAGP National Conference, Kansas City, Kansas.

- 2004. Sixteen content experts convened in Boston to review and identify core competencies in a two-day workshop facilitated by the Institute. Content experts also began determining eligibility criteria needed to sit for the examination.

- 2004. Revised slate of competencies and skills derived from previous surveys and additional presentations presented in a workshop of 15 participants, Sixth Annual AAGP National Conference, Boston.

- 2004. AAGP Professional Growth and Development Committee began an independent two-year review of tasks associated with grantsmanship.

- 2005. Slate of competencies drafted utilizing all previous data obtained via formal and informal surveys, literature reviews, workshop presentations and Professional Growth and Development two-year review.

- 2005. Eligibility criteria presented to GPCI and AAGP Boards of Directors for feedback and initial approval.

- 2006. Under the stewardship of the Institute, standardized validation of the competencies and skills completed. Within strict psychometric parameters, the Institute conducted internal and external validations of the competencies and skills.

Table 2: Chronology of Activities Conducted for the Internal and External Validation of the Competencies and Skills Used by Grant Professionals

2005-2006: The Current Test Development Activities

- Competencies written within psychometric testing parameters in Austin, Texas and presented to the Institute.

- Examinee eligibility criteria and examination parameters presented to the Institute.

- In Tampa, twelve content experts conduct the first list of competencies and skills for testing purposes.

- External validation conducted via an electronic survey sent to 1,300 stakeholders. External validation results reviewed and validated by ten content experts in two meetings.

Test Development Summary

During two decades of wide-ranging projects, Institute staff have refined the following process for test development: 1) assemble numerous and diverse subject matter experts; 2) conduct primary and secondary data analyses and literature reviews; 3) evaluate assessment and screening tools and program effectiveness; 4) develop programs for the field; 5) conduct and analyze external validations of work products; and 6) provide deliverables, both written and multimedia, keyed to a variety of stakeholders, including theorists, legislators, practitioners, consumer/clients, and candidates for certification and licensure. This same process is being employed for the GPCI certification initiative.

The flow chart in Table 3 outlines a general process used in certification and licensure examinations for standardization. The test development process itself may be described as reiterative—or recursive since it is initially a process of task analysis and written composition. The first step is usually to conduct a task analysis by surveying content experts. After the initial psychometric analysis of the survey results, content experts are trained by Institute staff and then

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meet in committees or teams to accomplish the necessary tasks. Before each meeting, content experts preview documents appropriate to their task. A draft or work product is created by one team of content experts. Then, to ensure accuracy of the work product, a second team validates the work product. For continuity between the work product's creation and validation, some members of the initial team also serve as validation team members.

Validation, which requires thorough participant training, review, and revision of documents, may be superficial or profound, depending on the quality of the first draft. During task analysis and external validation of competencies and skills, the opinions of a wide range of content experts are surveyed, statistically analyzed, and the results brought to bear on development teams' work products.

After examination items (questions) are written, psychometric analysis assumes a dominant role: pilot testing, passing-score setting, and post-administration performance analysis require statistical performance analysis. For score setting, the eponymously named Angoffing process[1] is used: after taking a test form, content experts rank items according to their difficulty. Then using the Statistical Analysis Program, a psychometrician will analyze the data to assist experts in setting the passing score.

Table 3: Validating the Grant Professionals Certification Examination
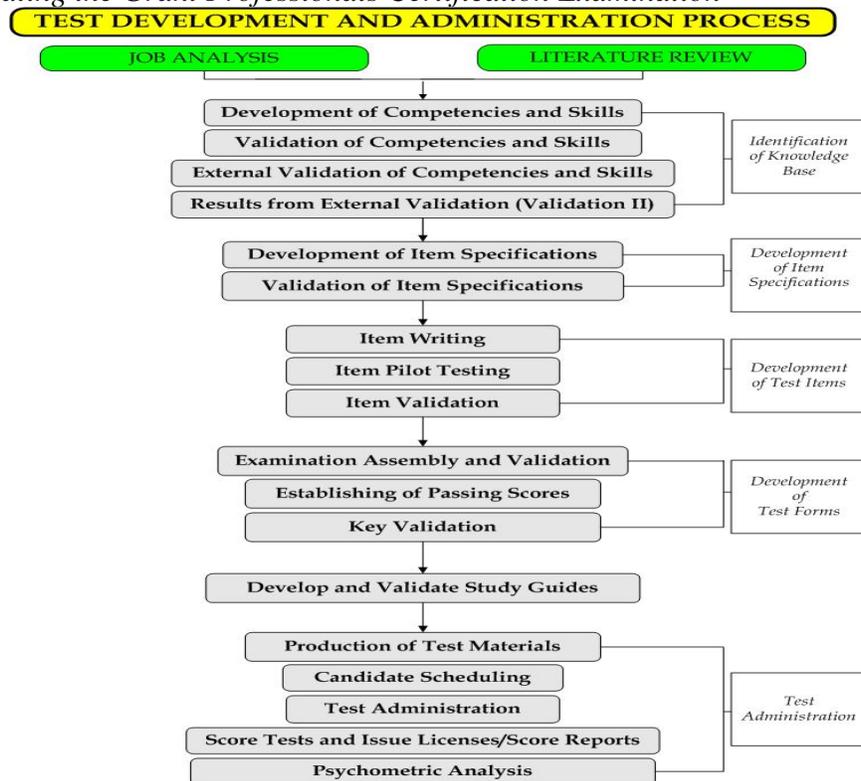
[1] Angoff WH. Scales, norms, and equivalent scores. *Educational Measurement*. 2nd ed. Washington, DC:

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Examination

Before the Institute could begin test development for the Grant Professionals Certification Examination, certain decisions regarding the examination had to be made. What kind of examination? A certification for entry level or professional excellence? Generalist? Specialist? Who would be an eligible candidate for testing? What criteria would determine eligibility? Approximately fifteen individuals representing a wide array stakeholder groups came together over a number of meetings to determine the examination's parameters and minimum eligibility requirements needed for certification. The group concluded that for purposes of setting examination benchmarks: 1) the test would consist of 150 multiple choice items and a writing sample, administered in two sittings, and 2) eligibility would be generalist in nature and require meeting four primary criteria. Table 4 describes the initial eligibility requirements set for this credentialing initiative.

Table 4 : Minimum Eligibility Requirements for the Grants Professional Credential (GPC)

- The GPC examination is designed as a "generalist" test. A "generalist" is defined in broad terms as a person who is experienced and competent in the fundamentals of grantsmanship. The "generalist" designation represents the minimum standards required to successfully develop, prepare and manage a grant activity. Generalists may (and often do) possess proficiency at the mastery or distinguished level. This examination, though, does not provide data to distinguish a generalist from a master grants professional.

- Successful candidates will require minimum knowledge and skills related to all aspects of grant development and management, including but not limited to such areas as grant pre-production planning, grant construction, public sector funding, private sector funding, ethics, management and grant accountability.

- In order to successfully pass the GPC examination, GPCI believes that the candidate must possess a slate of prerequisite qualifications. These qualifications described as criteria in the chart below, represent four professional areas: 1) Education, 2) Experience, 3) Professional Development and 4) Community Involvement. Test eligibility is based on a point system that reflects these four professional areas.

- The *minimum* number of points needed for eligibility is 120 points: 40 *possible* for education; 70 for experience; 40 for professional development; and 20 for community service. This point system requires a successful candidate to have specific experience or activity in three of the four categories. Only the "experience" category has a minimum required threshold.

With the eligibility determined, GPCI and the Institute began the task of identifying subject matter or content experts. It was determined that approximately 75 experts, representing all facets of grantsmanship, would be required and that all participants in the validation process

would be "grandfathered-in." Experts will be nominated by other professionals in the field and meet most, if not all, of the following eligibility criteria for participation in a validation session:

- Fully supportive of the credentialing process;
- Willing to sign a nondisclosure affidavit before participating in secure test development activities;
- Willing to sign a statement pledging adherence to the AAGP Code of Professional Conduct in daily work;
- Possessing at least five years of "master level" competency in one or more areas of the grants field (e.g., author, teacher, funder, administrator, director, etc.);
- If a grant professional, demonstrating successful experiences in no less than five different funding sources and/or programs;
- Demonstrating leadership: influential among peers; active in efforts to improve the profession through leadership in professional associations or networks, affecting widely used policy, rules or law;
- Possessing the ability to work industriously and cooperatively in a task group;
- Possessing the ability to concede to, or agree to disagree with a task group;
- Attaining a Bachelor's or graduate degree (recommended);
- Having served as a grant reviewer (compensated or volunteer) for a nonprofit or governmental organization within the past 5 years (recommended); and
- Showing evidence of commitment to the field, such as pro bono work.

Once the project had been framed in this way, examination development could begin. For the Grant Professionals Certification Examination, the Institute accepted the task analyses previously conducted by AAGP. The analyses were aggregated into a single draft document by a pair of seasoned grant professionals, each with different specialties in the grants field, one from California, the other from Florida, but working in Austin. Institute staff then performed a technical edit: the content remained unchanged, but wording was revised to facilitate multiple-choice examination development. For instance, the skill "Serve in a facilitative leadership role" requires on-the-job performance, but "Identify facilitative methods of leadership" may be tested with multiple choice items.

Concurrently, an experienced grants professional, instructor, and author conducted a literature search designed to: 1) summarize the main tenets of the subject area, current and historical; 2) outline current, widely accepted practice in the field; and 3) explore emerging trends (as opposed to passing fads) likely to prevail for the next five years.

The inaugural development team of twelve content experts met for two days in April 2006, at the Institute's secure facility. For selecting teams, standard practice is to vary demographic composition and specialty area. The inaugural team, who traveled from all over the

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United States, included school district grants office directors, consultants, authors, an educational research consultant, president of a family resource center's grants section, and a policy expert on juvenile justice.

After orientation and training, this team reviewed the task analysis drafted in Austin, now edited into a list of competencies and skills. A competency is a broad area of knowledge in a discipline or profession. A skill is the behavior that demonstrates that competency. To illustrate:

- Competency 4 (of 9): Knowledge of how to craft, construct, and submit an effective grant application.
- Skill 1 (of 12): Interpret grant application request for proposal (RFP) guidelines and requirements to ensure high quality responses.

First, the author of the literature review presented a summary of findings. The team then engaged in open discussion. With an understanding of the literature review, the group next broke into "task teams" to revise the draft competencies and skills. Each task team added to, deleted from, and painstakingly worded and reworded a specific series of competencies and their respective skills. Subsequently, each task team's work was reviewed by the larger team; conflicting ideas were resolved, consensus reached, and a second competencies-and-skills draft document approved. In addition, the team decided how to weight the competencies, that is, each competency was assigned a specific percentage of the examination according to its relative importance. This is the "blueprint."
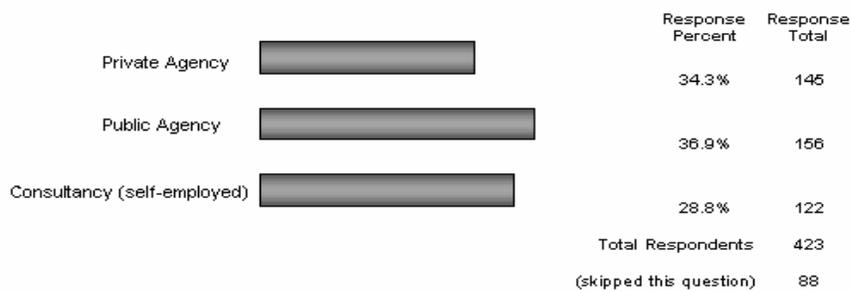
The inaugural team's work was next subjected to external validation by grant professionals. The Institute designed a four-part survey for this task. Part 1 ranked skills on a Likert-type scale according to frequency and criticality. Part 2 assigned blueprint percentages to each competency, ranking them as "too high," "appropriate," or "too low." Part 3 provided an open-ended section for comments and Part 4 solicited demographic information.

The approximately 1,300 grant professionals surveyed included members of AAGP, grant professionals not associated with AAGP, and other stakeholders with knowledge of the field and likely impacted by certification. Appropriate permission to survey these populations was obtained by GPCI. The survey attracted a 40% response rate. And with only two exceptions, in Part 1 the respondents validated the inaugural team's competencies and skills. In Part 2, respondents suggested adjusting the blueprint. Competency 4, stated above, illustrates one example where respondents sought a higher weighting. In Part 3, respondents requested expanding or adding skills in budget preparation, ethical practice, and the use of technology.

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In general, respondents found the survey rather long; this was reflected not only in comments but also in the number of respondents who began but did not complete the survey. Even so, the items in Parts 2 and 4 were answered at approximately a 30% rate and above. There were 153 responses to the open-ended Part 3, many of them extensive and detailed, not only commenting on the credentialing process but critiquing the survey itself. A small handful of respondents, who exited the survey Web site and then thought of more to say, emailed further comments to the survey administrator. Sample survey demographics are reported in Table 5.
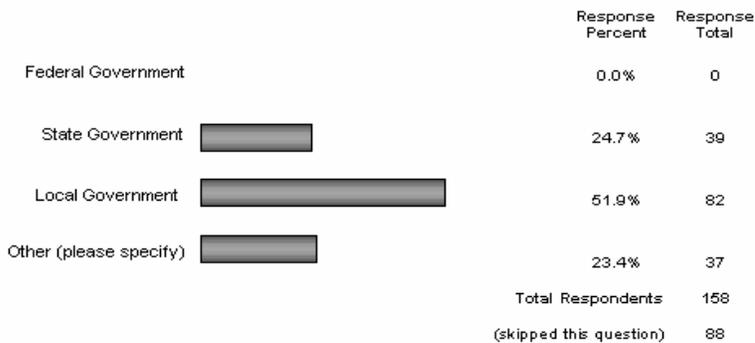
Table 5

1. In which grant sector are you employed?

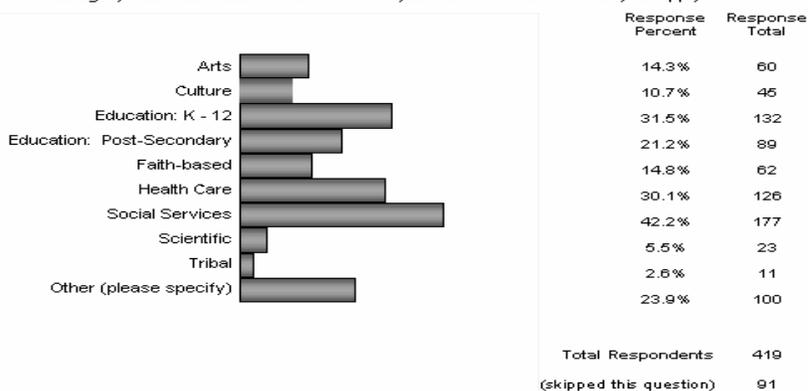|	Response Percent	Response Total
Private Agency	34.3%	145
Public Agency	36.9%	156
Consultancy (self-employed)	28.8%	122
Total Respondents		423
(skipped this question)		88

2. If you are employed in the public sector, do you work at the federal, state, or local level?
   (If you are not employed by a government agency, please skip to the next question.)

	Response Percent	Response Total
Federal Government	0.0%	0
State Government	24.7%	39
Local Government	51.9%	82
Other (please specify)	23.4%	37
Total Respondents		158
(skipped this question)		88

3. Which category best describes the field in which you work? Indicate as many as apply.

	Response Percent	Response Total
Arts	14.3%	60
Culture	10.7%	45
Education: K - 12	31.5%	132
Education: Post-Secondary	21.2%	89
Faith-based	14.8%	62
Health Care	30.1%	126
Social Services	42.2%	177
Scientific	5.5%	23
Tribal	2.6%	11
Other (please specify)	23.9%	100
Total Respondents		419
(skipped this question)		91

7. What is your gender?

	Response Percent	Response Total
Female	84.1%	349
Male	15.9%	66
Total Respondents		415
(skipped this question)		96

8. What do you consider to be your racial / ethnic origin?

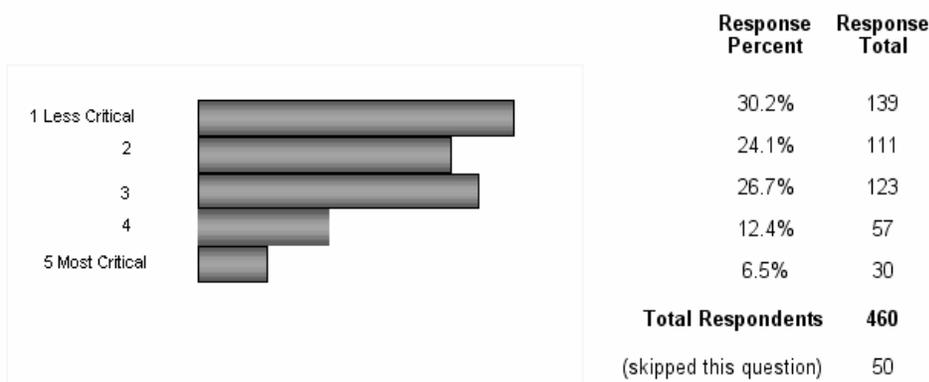|	Response Percent	Response Total
African	4.8%	20
Asian	0.5%	2
European	74.0%	307
Hispanic/Latino (not European or African)	1.9%	8
Native American	1.4%	6
Pacific Islander	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)	17.3%	72
Total Respondents		415
(skipped this question)		96
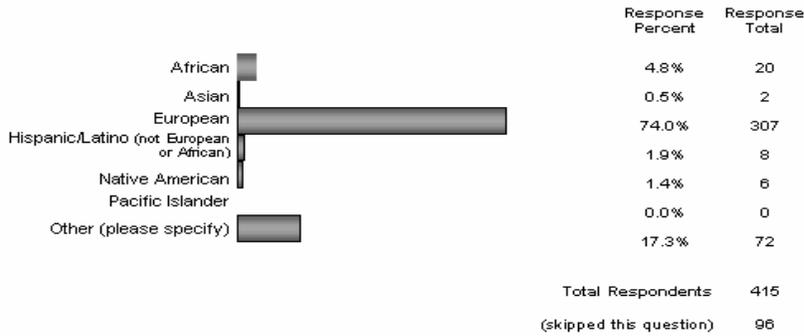
Following the external validation, a team was convened at the Institute's facilities, with a range of specialists. Four inaugural team members preserved historical perspective, and three new experts contributed significantly to revisions informed by the survey results. The validation team focused their attention on those survey items outside acceptable statistical parameters. One is illustrated in Table 6. Overall the team concurred with the survey respondents and removed two skills.

Table 6

19. How often do you identify major issues in tax exemption as they relate to the grants field?

	Response Percent	Response Total
1 Very Seldom	52.6%	244
2	22.4%	104
3	16.4%	76
4	5.2%	24
5 Very Often	3.4%	16
Total Respondents		**464**
(skipped this question)		46
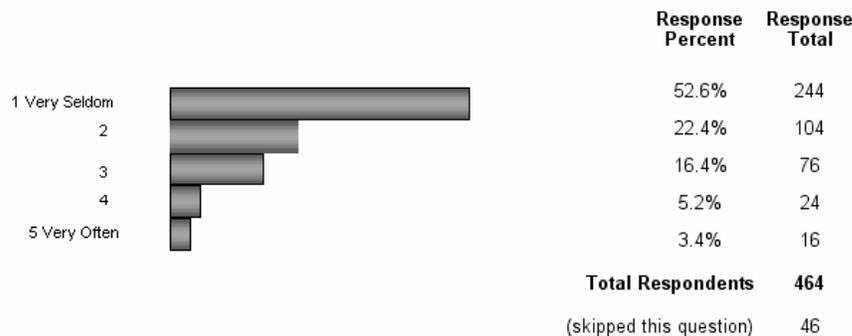
20. How critical is identifying major issues in tax exemption as they relate to the grants field?

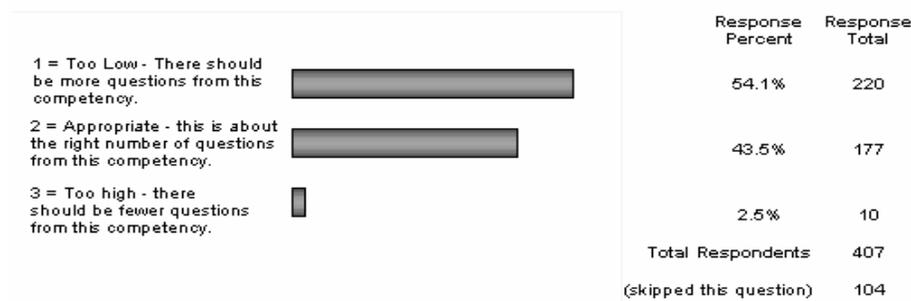|	Response Percent	Response Total
1 Less Critical	30.2%	139
2	24.1%	111
3	26.7%	123
4	12.4%	57
5 Most Critical	6.5%	30
Total Respondents		**460**
(skipped this question)		50

The team further reviewed survey respondents' open-ended comments, to address significant issues, among them "interpreting data to demonstrate a need," "covert leadership," and the effect of the professional's ethnicity, gender, or other status on the grant process. In budget preparation, respondents frequently called for added skills. In the ethical area, calls for skills were insightful rather than frequent: for example, "Grant writers have the power to censor opportunities while researching grant prospects based on their own judgments and should be knowledgeable enough to recognize when that's appropriate and when it's not." Skills were expanded or created as the team judged appropriate. Although several respondents called for skills on using specific technologies, the team agreed that this area is subject to immediate, constant change and therefore difficult to test without constant (and expensive) updating.

The validation team then considered the draft blueprint compared to survey results and agreed that Competency 4 needed more weight and adjusted the blueprint accordingly. See Table 7.

Table 7

4. Knowledge of how to draft, construct , and submit an effective grant application - 12%

	Response Percent	Response Total
1 = Too Low - There should be more questions from this competency.	54.1%	220
2 = Appropriate - this is about the right number of questions from this competency.	43.5%	177
3 = Too high - there should be fewer questions from this competency.	2.5%	10
Total Respondents		407
(skipped this question)		104

Again, the team reached consensus on the content and wording of the competencies and skills, and on the blueprint. Institute staff again edited the competency-skill-blueprint document, and several issues emerged for discussion. Four team members participated in the conference

call, three inaugural team members and one who attended both the inaugural and validation meetings. Issues resolved during this meeting involved, for example, use of the term *environmental data* and creation of a skill to address a respondent's comment: "the ability to recognize inappropriate expenditures in a proposed budget." After another technical edit, the competencies and skills were finalized for examination development. Table 8 lists the competencies and skills; Table 9 illustrates the blueprint.

Table 8: Validated Competencies and Skills, IIRP, 2006

Specific competency

01.   Knowledge of how to research, identify, and match funding resources to meet specific needs
   - Identify major trends in public funding and public policy.
   - Identify major trends in private grant funding.
   - Identify methods of locating funding sources.
   - Identify techniques to learn about specific funders.
   - Identify methods for maintaining, tracking, and updating information on   potential funders.
   - Identify effects of applicants' organizational cultures, values, decision-making processes, and norms on the pursuit of grant opportunities.
   - Identify fundable programs and projects for specific organizations.
   - Determine best matches between funders and specific programs.
   - Interpret grant application request for proposal (RFP) guidelines and requirements to accurately assess funder's intent.

02.   Knowledge of organizational development as it pertains to grant seeking
   - Identify methods for coordinating organizations' grants development with various available funding streams.
   - Assess organizations' capacity for grant seeking.
   - Assess organizations' readiness to obtain funding for and implement specific projects.
   - Identify methods for assisting organizations to implement practices that advance grant readiness.
   - Identify values, purposes, and goals of fund-seeking entities' overall strategic plans in the grants process.
   - Identify methods of conducting mission-focused planning and needs assessments with applicant organizations.
   - Identify strategies and procedures for obtaining internal institutional support and approval of decision-makers for grant-seeking activities.
   - Identify appropriate methods of working with local, state, and federal agencies and stakeholders to support grant seeking.
   - Identify practices of grant seeking that are outside the boundaries of applicable laws and regulations.

03.   Knowledge of strategies for effective program and project design and development

- Identify methods of soliciting and incorporating meaningful substantive input and contributions by stakeholders, including client groups, beginning with the development of a new concept or program.
- Identify methods of building partnerships and facilitating collaborations among applicants.
- Identify strategies for educating grant applicants about financial and programmatic accountability to comply with funder's requirements.
- Identify structures, values, and applications of logic models as they relate to elements of project design.
- Identify appropriate definitions of and interrelationships among elements of project design (e.g., project goals, objectives, activities, evaluation).
- Identify design and development decisions that are data-based (e.g., descriptive, qualitative, environmental, statistical).
- Identify existing community resources that aid in developing programs and projects.
- Identify effects of accurate and defensible evaluation designs in program and project success and sustainability.

04. Knowledge of how to craft, construct, and submit an effective grant application.
- Interpret grant application request for proposal (RFP) guidelines and requirements (e.g., abstracts and summaries, problem statements and needs assessments, introductions of organizations and capability statements, references and past performance requirements, timelines, narrative formats, budget formats, standard forms and assurances, scoring rubrics) to ensure high quality responses.
- Identify elements of standard grant proposal applications (e.g., needs assessments and statements, project objectives, project designs and methods, project narratives, activities, action plans, timelines, project evaluations, budgets, dissemination plans, future funding or sustainability statements, appendices, attachments).
- Identify work strategies for submitting high-quality proposals on time.
- Identify accurate and appropriate data sources to support proposal narratives.
- Identify appropriate, sequential, consistent, and logical presentations of grant-narrative elements and ideas among or within proposal components.
- Identify proposal-writing approaches, styles, tones, and formats appropriate for proposing organizations and various audiences.
- Identify appropriate and accurate uses of visuals to highlight information.
- Identify effective practices for developing realistic, accurate line-item and narrative budgets and for expressing the relationship between line-items and project activities in the budget narrative.
- Identify sources of in-kind matches for project budgets.
- Identify factors that limit how budgets should be written (e.g., matching requirements, supplanting issues, indirect costs, prevailing rates, performance-based fees, client fees, collective bargaining, allowable versus non-allowable costs).
- Identify evaluation models and components appropriate to grant applications.
- Identify methods for submitting proposals electronically.

05. Knowledge of post-award grant management practices sufficient to inform effective grant design and development

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- Identify standard elements of regulatory compliance.
- Identify effective practices for key functions of grant management.
- Differentiate roles and responsibilities of project and management staff and other key principals affiliated with grant projects.
- Identify methods of establishing transitions to post-award implementation that fulfill project applications (e.g., document transfer, accuracy in post-award fiscal and activity reporting).

06.   Knowledge of nationally recognized standards of ethical practice by grants professionals
- Identify characteristics of business relationships that result in conflicts of interest or give the appearance of conflicts of interest.
- Identify circumstances that mislead stakeholders, have an appearance of impropriety, profit stakeholders other than the intended beneficiaries, and appear self-serving.
- Identify effects of choices that foster or suppress cultural diversity and pluralistic values.
- Distinguish between truthful and untruthful, and accurate and inaccurate representations in grant development, including research and writing.
- Identify issues, effects, and countermeasures pertinent to grant Professionals' individual heritages, backgrounds, knowledge and experiences as they may affect the grant development process.
- Identify funding sources that may present conflicts of interest for specific grant seekers and applicants.
- Identify issues and practices pertinent to communicating information that may be considered privileged, proprietary, and confidential.
- Identify unethical and illegal expenditures in a budget.
- Distinguish between ethical and unethical methods of payment for the grant-development process.
- Distinguish between ethical and unethical commitment, performance, and reporting of activities funded by a grant.

07.   Knowledge of practices and services that raise the level of professionalism of Grant Professionals
- Identify advantages of participating in continuing education and various grant review processes.
- Identify advantages of participating in professional organizations that offer grant Professionals growth opportunities and advance the profession.
- Identify how grants Professionals' networks (e.g., mailing list servers, community alliances) enhance individuals' professional growth and advance the profession.
- Identify strategies that grant Professionals use in building social capital to benefit their communities and society at large.

08.   Knowledge of methods and strategies that cultivate and maintain relationships between fund-seeking and recipient organizations and funders
- Identify characteristics of mutually beneficial relationships between fund seekers and funders.
- Identify strategies to determine funder-relation approaches that suit fund-seeking entities' missions, cultures, and values.

- Identify methods to help fund-seeking organizations create effective collaborations with other organizations appropriate to funders' missions and goals.
- Identify methods of relationship cultivation, communication, recognition, and stewardship that might appeal to specific funders.

09.   Ability to write a convincing case for funding
- Follow guidelines.
- Use conventions of standard written English.
- Organize ideas appropriately.
- Convey ideas clearly.
- Make a persuasive argument.

Table 9: Examination Blueprint – Analysis of Weighting, IIRP, 2006

Performance Items account for 20% of the test, and measure the candidate's ability to write a convincing case for funding from a prompt. The other portion of the test consists of 150 multiple-choice questions that account for 80% of the total score. The scoring of the test is broken down into eight competencies with the following weightings:

Competency	Percent
• Knowledge of how to research, identify, and match funding resources to meet specific needs	15
• Knowledge of organizational development as it pertains to grant seeking	10
• Knowledge of strategies for effective program and project design and development	20
• Knowledge of how to craft, construct, and submit an effective grant application	25
• Knowledge of post-award grant management practices sufficient to inform effective grant design and development	7
• Knowledge of nationally recognized standards of ethical practice by grant professionals	10
• Knowledge of practices and services that raise the level of professionalism of grant professional.	5
• Knowledge of methods and strategies that cultivate and maintain relationships between fund-seeking and recipient organizations and funders	8
Total of Multiple Choice Section only	100%

Summary

In the summer of 2006, the competencies and skills for a grant professional certification were validated using standard psychometric protocols. These "comps and skills" represent the first step toward the development and adoption of industry-wide standards for the grants community. In upcoming months, GPCI and the Institute will conduct the remaining test development activities. It is anticipated that the examination tool will be readily available to the grants community in early 2007.

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