



UNDERSERVED AND CULTURALLY SPECIFIC POPULATIONS

KANSAS GOVERNOR'S GRANTS PROGRAM
GRANT WRITING TIPS

Defining Underserved and Culturally Specific Populations

Underserved Populations. Different grants and funders may define underserved populations differently. However, most KGGP grants request that the applicant agency defines underserved populations in the service area, using local data. It is important to remember to only address how identified underserved populations are being served by the applicant, but also to identify what underserved populations in the service area are not seeking services and assess what outreach or other approaches can be taken to inform those populations.

Underserved populations often fall into one or more of the following categories:

- Ethnic, racial or cultural groups that are not part of the dominant group;
- People with disabilities;
- People who live in rural areas and/or are geographically isolated;
- People who have limited English proficiency;
- Refugees and immigrants, particularly people who are undocumented;
- People dealing with substance use disorder;
- Victims of human trafficking;
- People who are transgender or gender non-conforming; or
- People who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, or other sexual orientations.

Examples of why specific populations might continue to be underserved include but are not limited to:

- An existing need has not been identified by the community or service provider;
- Services have not been designed for the underserved population(s);
- Barriers exist for the underserved population(s) that don't exist for the majority population. Availability does not equal access;
- Fear or other lack of trust in the service provider;
- No awareness of services due to lack of effective outreach; or
- Little effort or culturally insensitive attempts to build relationships with underserved populations.

Underserved populations may be unique from agency to agency. For example, an agency situated in an urban environment that also serves some rural counties may determine rural populations are underserved based on the lack of engagement from those counties. However, an agency geographically located in a rural area serving a large number of rural counties would not list rural populations as underserved since all of their services are delivered to that population. Instead, the agency could use data to show that specific counties are underserved due to proximity or that a specific immigrant population in their service area is underserved because services have not yet been designed for them.

Culturally Specific Services are those directed towards racial and ethnic minority groups, such as “American Indians (including Alaska Natives, Eskimos, and Aleuts); Asian Americans; Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders; Blacks; and Hispanics,” as defined by section 1707(g) of the Federal Public Health Services Act. Please note that “underserved” and “culturally specific” are NOT interchangeable, though culturally specific populations are often also considered underserved.

Writing the Underserved Populations section

Not all grants will ask for this information, but for those that do, common expectations for this section include:

- Defining the populations that the agency or community identify as underserved. Consider whether any underserved populations have been omitted for the reasons mentioned above.
- Supporting the defined populations with data. The [Kansas Implementation Plan](#) has data regarding underserved populations in Kansas, agencies should consider using the Plan as a resource.
- Explaining the agency's and/or community's plan for outreach and serving the underserved populations described in this section. This section should recognize any efforts that are already underway (if applicable) and demonstrate an understanding of the complexities involved in serving populations that have not been successfully reached in the past. For example, building bridges with an underserved population may require training for the service providers, recognition of and countering biases of the service providers, identifying and connecting with leaders, building relationships from scratch, and fundamentally changing available services to meet the needs of the underserved population.

[Underserved and Culturally Specific Populations Video](#)