editorial guide

Standards and Styles

THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

A panda walks into a café. He orders a sandwich, eats it, then draws a gun and fires two shots in the air. "Why?" asks the confused waiter, as the panda makes toward the exit. The panda produces a badly punctuated wildlife manual and tosses it over his shoulder. "I'm a panda," he says, at the door. "Look it up." The waiter turns to the relevant entry, and, sure enough, finds an explanation. "Panda. Large black-and-white bear-like mammal, native to China. Eats, shoots and leaves."

–Lynne Truss. Eats, Shoots & Leaves (Gotham Books. New York. 2003)

The Annie E. Casey Foundation values transparency, equity and respect for families and children from all walks of life. The writing style used in Casey materials should reflect these values. Writing is most effective when it is straightforward, concise and free of jargon.

This style guide codifies the voice of the Casey Foundation, which must remain constant, regardless of the intended audience. The guidelines reflect decisions the Foundation has made about how to present itself in writing. Style, in the editorial sense, refers to an organizationally accepted set of rules for printed or online text that enhance comprehension for readers. Editorial style includes the consistent use of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, numbers and abbreviations; guidelines for the structure of sentences and paragraphs; and alternatives to overused jargon and Foundation-speak.

Why is that important? People judge by appearances. Clarity and consistency — and accuracy — in how an organization presents itself affect how others perceive it. Attention to detail is critical: Words must be spelled correctly; sentences constructed grammatically with impeccable syntax; common terms used consistently. These principles are as important as having good data. If research findings are communicated poorly, they will not receive the attention they deserve.

In developing this editorial guide, the Foundation's strategic communications unit used the Chicago Manual of Style (16th edition), APA Publication Manual and the Associated Press Stylebook as the primary sources. The editors also consulted Foundation leaders and staff, previously developed Casey Foundation style sheets and guides, and guidelines from our peer foundations and organizations.

Our sincere thanks to everyone who helped make this guide possible. It is, we hope, a cure for the confusion that we all face occasionally when preparing documents for outside readers.

Strategic Communications Team
April 2013

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The Annie E. Casey Foundation

Mission Statement
The primary mission of the Annie E. Casey Foundation is to foster public policies, human-service reforms and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. In pursuit of this goal, the Foundation makes grants that help states, cities and neighborhoods fashion more innovative, cost-effective responses to these needs.

Tagline
Developing solutions to build a brighter future for children, families and communities

Description for Documents and Media Materials
The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private philanthropy that creates a brighter future for the nation's children by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow.

The Work
Casey places a priority on investing in human services and community innovations – an approach that is different from most of our philanthropic peers. We develop and test new solutions, ideas and models that can help address barriers for vulnerable families. We use our resources to collect and disseminate data to facilitate informed decision making. Casey collaborates with public agencies, nonprofit organizations, policymakers and community leaders to transform communities and systems. We provide strategic consulting that helps public schools, juvenile justice agencies and child welfare systems get better results for kids and families. Casey also supports research and understanding of how historical patterns of discrimination continue to make it more difficult for people of color to gain a foothold in mainstream society, and we promote ideas for overcoming these disparities. Taken as a whole, these approaches to philanthropy help increase our positive impact on the populations we care about most; expand our influence with key audiences; and maximize our ability to leverage even more resources for the kids, families and communities at the heart of our mission.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation

- Always spell out in full on first reference.
  - Include the full name when referring to other initiatives: JDAI is an initiative of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- After the initial reference, use **the Casey Foundation, Casey** or **the Foundation**.
- Avoid using AECF, especially for external documents. Never use AECF in a title or as a standalone reference to Casey.
- When used within a sentence, use **the Annie E. Casey Foundation**.
- When used alone or in an address block, use **<u>T</u>he Annie E. Casey Foundation**.
- Use third-person references:
  - The Casey Foundation believes that…(Rather than: We believe that…)

Leadership

- Capitalize a leader's title when it appears before the name:
  - President and CEO Patrick T. McCarthy.
  - Patrick T. McCarthy is the president of the Casey Foundation.
- Use last names after the first reference to a complete name.
  - Patrick McCarthy is the Foundation's president. McCarthy said...
- The Board of Trustees. Use the board and the trustees in second reference.

CASEY UNITS, INITIATIVES AND KEY PRODUCTS

Center for Systems Innovation

- Do not use CSI in external communications.
- **Child Welfare Strategy Group**
- **Evidence-Based Practice Group**
  - **Evidence2Success**

> note Always use UPS. United Parcel Service is no longer the official company name.

- **Juvenile Justice Strategy Group**
  - **Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI)**
  - Spell out in first reference, followed by JDAI in additional references.

Center for Community and Economic Opportunity

- Do not use CCEO in external communications.
- **Civic Sites and Community Change**
  - **Baltimore Civic Site**
  - **Atlanta Civic Site**
- **Community-Change Influence**
- **Family-Centered Community Change**
- **Family Economic Success (FES)**

Capacity Building

note We refer to capacity building in two ways:
1. It is an internal organizing concept that includes those programs and departments that fall outside the two centers but are critical to the Foundation's mission. It should not be referenced outside of the Foundation; it is not a formal program.
2. It is the name of a group within Talent Management and Leadership Development that works on the professional development of staff.

- **External Affairs**
  - National Partnerships
  - KIDS COUNT
  - Policy Reform and Advocacy
  - Strategic Communications

- **Finance and Administration**
  - Business Technology
  - Finance
  - Grants Management
- **Knowledge Support**
  - Research and Evaluation
  - Knowledge Management
- **Talent Management and Leadership Development**
  - Capacity Building
  - Human Resources
  - Leadership Development
    - Children and Family Fellowship Program

Communications Products

- Casey Connection: Intranet site
- E-newsletters
  - Annie E-News: Foundation news
  - JDAI News
  - KIDS COUNT News
  - Network News: Fellowship network news
- Datacenter.kidscount.org: Data Center
- Facebook
- YouTube: Casey site
- www.aecf.org: Casey Foundation website

GRAMMAR, PUNCTUATION AND STYLE

Ampersand (&)

- Do not use in place of "and." Use only when it's part of an official name.

Apostrophe

An apostrophe has two uses:

- Indicates omission of a letter or number:
  - Don't, it's, class of '76, the '90s
- Indicates possession:
  - Casey's, children's, report's
  - Plural nouns ending in "s" use only an apostrophe: Many schools' teachers believe…

Colon

- Introduces a list or a series of ideas:
  - Create the toolkit with these items: fact sheet, DVD, newsletter and business card.
- Used to link two closely related ideas or sentences:
  - Casey's proposal is simple: permanence.
- Capitalize the first word after a colon if it is a followed by a proper noun or a complete sentence:
  - The focus of the proposal is simple: Ensure that all children have a permanent family.
- Place only one space after a colon.

Comma

- Do not use serial commas:
  - The Casey Foundation believes that kids do better when they are in safe, stable and nurturing environments.
- Used to separate an introductory phrase or clause from the main part of the sentence:
  - Pleased with the results, the board recommended increased funding.

- Use before and after the year in month/day/year references:
  - The meeting was held on July 22, 2012, in Ohio.
- Use before and after the second element in an address or location:
  - The meeting was held in New Haven, Connecticut, in March.
- Do not use a comma before Jr., Sr., etc.: Martin Luther King Jr.

Contractions

- Use contractions (don't, can't, etc.) sparingly, mainly to convey author's voice (e.g., a letter from Patrick).

Ellipsis

- Use an ellipsis (…) without spaces to indicate the deletion of one or more words from a quote.

Em dash, En dash

- An **em dash** (—) is the length of the letter "m."
- Use em dashes sparingly to replace commas, semicolons, colons and parentheses to indicate added emphasis or an abrupt change of thought.
  - The proposal — the only one worthy of merit — was voted down.
- Add spaces before and after em dashes.
- An **en dash** (–) is the length of the letter "n."
- An en dash, which is a little longer than a hyphen, is used when referencing periods of time:
  - The conference will be held December 21 – 26, 2013.

Hyphenation

- Do not hyphenate adverbial compounds (usually words ending in "ly") unless comprehension would be affected:
  - It is a fully funded project.

- Hyphens are generally used in compound adjectives anytime comprehension or meaning could be compromised or to link together several connected words:
  - He is a small-state senator. (Rhode Island perhaps?)
  - He is a small state senator. (Under five feet tall?)
  - The data show state-by-state indicators.

For more examples of hyphenation rules, see the Chicago Manual of Style, section 7.85.

Italics

- Italicize titles of books, magazines, movies, newspapers, plays, television and radio shows, and other compositions, as well as court cases.
- Do not italicize Casey program or project titles.

Parentheses

- Use sparingly; they clutter text. If the information is important, make it part if the text. If it is not, consider deleting it or saying it another way.

Period

- Place only one space after a period at the end of a sentence.

Quotation Marks

- Periods and commas should be placed inside quotation marks.
- Colons or semicolons should be placed outside quotation marks.
- Question marks can go inside or outside of quotes, depending on meaning:
  - Have you read "The Path of Most Resistance"?
  - The speaker asked the audience, "Who did you come to see today?"
- Avoid using quotation remarks around words unless being used initially to flag a special set of words or a phrase:
  - The Juvenile Justice Strategy Group focuses on the "deep end" of the juvenile justice system.
  - But not: These "strategic investments" are important.

- Use single quotation marks only when signifying quotations within quotations:
  - "When we say, 'concentrated poverty,' we are referring to communities where poverty rates are at or above 20 percent."

Semicolon

- Represents a stronger break between clauses or greater separation of thought than a comma can convey:
  - He reviewed the grant proposal; it was lacking essential information.
- Joins two independent clauses connected by linking adverbs (however, accordingly, therefore, instead):
  - The meeting date was set; however, the time and location were changed.
- Separates two independent clauses if one or both of them contain internal punctuation:
  - The report includes charts, graphs and photographs; and it will be published next week.
- Separates items in a series that contains commas:
  - The authors of the report are Mike Laracy, from the Casey Foundation; Bill Gates; and Jay Leno, host of The Tonight Show.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

- Avoid introducing acronyms unless they will be frequently repeated and are important for the reader to know. They can clutter and confuse your text.
- Provide full names with acronyms on first reference and then use acronyms alone after that.
  - The Center for American Progress (CAP) is a partner on this project. CAP will be helping to reach policy audiences.
- If second reference closely follows first, and the organization will not be mentioned after that, consider using second-reference shorthand instead, such as "the center" or "the department."
- Certain widely recognized abbreviations and acronyms may be used without spelling them out first: CIA, GOP and GED.

DATES, TIMES AND SEASONS

- In month/day/year style of dates, commas are used before and after the year: The meeting was held on July 22, 2010, in Ohio.
- When stating only month and year, no comma is needed: October 2005.
- Use an "s" without an apostrophe to indicate spans of decades or centuries: the 1990s.
- Always include "a.m." or "p.m." after time reference. Use lowercase and periods.
- Lowercase: winter, spring, summer, fall.

GOVERNMENT

- Capitalize U.S. Congress and Congress when referring to the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. Although Congress sometimes is used as a substitute for the House, it properly is reserved to refer to both the Senate and House.
- **Congressional** is lowercase unless part of a proper name:
  - congressional action
  - The Congressional Quarterly
- **Federal, state** and **government** are usually lowercase, unless part of an official title:
  - The federal government has more power than the state governments.
  - The Federal Communications Commission fined the network for repeatedly allowing profanity to slip through uncensored.

NUMBERS

- Spell out numbers one to nine; use digits for 10 or greater.
- Use numerals when referring to percent figures in narrative text: The total is 8 percent.
- Percent: Use percent in narrative text but the % symbol in tables and charts.

  note Percent and percentage are often misused. As a general rule, percent should be used with a specific number and percentage is used without a number.

- About 90 percent of the population is right-handed.
- A large percentage of the population is right-handed.

- Spell out first through ninth when they indicate sequence in time or location. Use figures starting with 10th. Third grade, the fourth conference, 10th person.

- Always use numerals for ages (with hyphens when used as adjectives):

  - He is 16 years old.

  - He is a 16-year-old boy.

- Use numerals for currency, but large amounts may be expressed as numerals and text:

  - $999,999

  - $2 million

- Use a comma with numerals of four or more digits: 4,675 web visits.

- Avoid beginning a sentence with a numeral, but spell it out if it does appear there.

- Spell out simple fractions: More than three-fourths of the population is over age 30.

- When listing telephone numbers, use periods to separate the numbers: 410.547.6600.

PLACES AND REGIONS

- United States: Do not abbreviate United States when it's a noun. Use U.S. only as an adjective.

  - We all live in the United States.

  - The U.S. population is growing.

- Washington, D.C. (use comma and periods)

- In general, lowercase north, south, west, east, etc. when they indicate a compass direction.

- Capitalize these words when they designate regions: The grantees all lived in the South.

Cities

- Capitalize "city" only when it is part of the proper name or nickname: New York City, Charm City.

  - Subsequent uses of "city" should be lowercase: The mayor of New York City arrived in the city on Friday.

- Lowercase other instances of "city": the city of Seattle.

- Include the state a city is located in, except for the following, which stand alone:
  - New York
  - Los Angeles
  - Chicago, etc. (see link below)

States

- Always spell out state names when they stand alone.
- When a city name precedes a state name, abbreviate the state name, using the Associated Press guidelines as follows:
  - Ala. Ariz. Ark. Calif. Colo. Conn. Del. Fla. Ga. Ill. Ind. Kan. Ky. La. Md. Mass. Mich. Minn. Miss. Mo. Mont. Neb. Nev. N.H. N.J. N.M. N.Y. N.C. N.D. Okla. Ore. Pa. R.I. S.C. S.D. Tenn. Vt. Va. Wash. W.Va. Wis. Wyo.
  - Do not use abbreviations for Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas or Utah.
- Do not use postal code abbreviations (MD, CT, etc.)
- Capitalize widely known sections: Southern California, South Side of Chicago, Lower Manhattan.

For complete AP style guide rules for city and state references, see www.aecf.org/~/media/PDFFiles/style/apstatecitystyle.pdf.

RACE AND ETHNICITY

- For nouns: African American, Asian American, black, Hispanic, Latino, Native American, non-Hispanic white, white (do not use Caucasian)
- For adjectives: African-American man; Asian-American woman; Native-American youth

SENTENCE SPACING

- Only use one space after any punctuation mark that ends a sentence.

TITLES

- Capitalize and spell out formal titles such as President, Director or Mayor when they precede a name: President Patrick McCarthy.
- Titles are lowercase when they follow a name or are used alone: The mayor was not able to attend.

VERTICAL LISTS

Vertical lists are best introduced by a complete sentence, followed by a colon.

- Do not use a colon following a form of the verb to be.
  - *Incorrect:* The items on his list are:
  - *Correct:* The items on his list are as follows:
- Entries should be parallel in construction and consistent in punctuation.
- Entries typically begin with a capital letter and end with a period if one, or more, of the items is a complete sentence.
  - There are several important goals for the project:
    - Ensure that everyone has insurance.
    - Protect the privacy of families.
    - Establish guidelines for future reform.
- If items are numbered, a period follows each numeral.
- If a vertical list completes a sentence, use semicolons to separate the items in the list and a period should follow the final item. Do not begin entries with capital letters.
  - The preferred method for collecting survey data includes:
    - calling community leaders;
    - talking with parents; and
    - handing out paper surveys.

NEWS RELEASES

- Adhere to the *Associated Press Stylebook* for guidance when writing news releases, media advisories or other communications designed for the news media.

BIBLIOGRAPHY/ENDNOTES

The examples of American Psychological Association (APA) styles and formats listed in this guide include many of the most common types of sources used in academic research. For additional examples and more detailed information about APA citation style, see www.aecf.org/~/media/PDFFiles/style/apacitationstyle.pdf or refer to the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association and the APA Style Guide to Electronic References.

General Guidelines

References or data cited in the text of a research paper must be noted as endnotes or in a reference list. This list provides the information necessary to identify and retrieve each source.

- **Order:** Entries should be arranged in alphabetical order by authors' last names. Sources without authors are arranged alphabetically by title within the same list.
- **Authors:** Write out the last name and initials for all authors of a particular work. Use an ampersand (&) instead of the word "and" when listing multiple authors of a single work (e.g. Smith, J. D., & Jones, M.).
- **Titles:** Capitalize only the first word of a title or subtitle, and any proper names that are part of a title.
- **Pagination:** Use the abbreviation p. or pp. to designate page numbers of articles from periodicals that do not use volume numbers, especially newspapers.
- **Underlining vs. Italics:** Use italics instead of underlining for titles of books and journals.

Two additional pieces of information should be included for works accessed online.

- **Internet Address:** A stable Internet address should be included and should direct the reader as close as possible to the actual work. If the work has a digital object identifier (DOI), use this. If there is no DOI or similar handle, use a stable URL. If the URL is not stable, as is often the case with online newspapers and some subscription-based databases, use the home page of the site from which you retrieved the work.

- **Date:** If the work is a finalized version published and dated, as in the case of a journal article, the date within the main body of the citation is enough. However, if the work is not dated and/or is subject to change, as in the case of an online encyclopedia article, include the date that you retrieved the information.

Examples

Journal article, one author, accessed online
Ku, G. (2008). Learning to de-escalate: The effects of regret in escalation of commitment. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 105*(2), 221-232. doi:10.1016/j.obhdp.2007.08.002

Journal article, two authors, accessed online
Sanchez, D., & King-Toler, E. (2007). Addressing disparities consultation and outreach strategies for university settings. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research, 59*(4), 286–295. doi:10.1037/1065-9293.59.4.286

Journal article, more than two authors, accessed online
Van Vugt, M., Hogan, R., & Kaiser, R. B. (2008). Leadership, followership, and evolution: Some lessons from the past. *American Psychologist, 63*(3), 182–196. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.63.3.182

Article from an Internet-only journal
Hirtle, P. B. (2008, July–August). Copyright renewal, copyright restoration, and the difficulty of determining copyright status. *D-Lib Magazine, 14*(7/8). doi:10.1045/july2008-hirtle

Magazine article, in print
Kluger, J. (2008, January 28). Why we love. *Time, 171*(4), 54–60.

Newspaper article, no author, in print
As prices surge, Thailand pitches OPEC-style rice cartel. (2008, May 5). *The Wall Street Journal,* p.A9.

Newspaper article, multiple authors, discontinuous pages, in print
Delaney, K. J., Karnitschnig, M., & Guth, R. A. (2008, May 5). Microsoft ends pursuit of Yahoo, reassesses its online options. *The Wall Street Journal,* pp. A1, A12.

Book, one author, in print
Kidder, T. (1981). *The soul of a new machine.* Boston, MA: Little, Brown & Company.

Book, two authors, in print
Frank, R. H., & Bernanke, B. (2007). Principles of macro-economics (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill/Irwin.

Book, corporate author, author as publisher, accessed online
Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2000). *Tasmanian year book 2000* (No. 1301.6). Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: Author. Retrieved from www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/CA2568710006989.

Edited book
Gibbs, J. T., & Huang, L. N. (Eds.). (2001). Children of color: *Psychological interventions with culturally diverse youth.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Essays or chapters in edited books, one author
Labajo, J. (2003). Body and voice: The construction of gender in flamenco. In T. Magrini (Ed.), *Music and gender: perspectives from the Mediterranean* (pp. 67–86). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Government report, accessed online
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2005). *Medicaid drug price comparisons: Average manufacturer price to published prices* (OIG publication No. OEI-05-05- 00240). Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from www.oig.hhs.gov/oei/reports/oei-05-05-00240.pdf

Government reports, GPO publisher, accessed online
Congressional Budget Office. (2008). *Effects of gasoline prices on driving behavior and vehicle markets: A CBO study* (CBO Publication No. 2883). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/88xx/doc8893/01-14-GasolinePrices.pdf

Technical and/or research reports, accessed online
Deming, D., & Dynarski, S. (2008). *The lengthening of childhood* (NBER Working Paper 14124). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research. Retrieved July 21, 2008, from www.nber.org/papers/w14124

Document available on university program or department site
Victor, N. M. (2008). Gazprom: *Gas giant under strain.* Retrieved from Stanford University, Program on Energy and Sustainable Development website: http://pesd.stanford.edu/publications/gazprom_gas_giant_under_strain

Undated website content, blogs and data

For content that does not easily fit into categories such as journal papers, books and reports, keep in mind the goal of a citation is to give the reader a clear path to the source material. For electronic and online materials, include stable URL or database name. Include the author, title and date published when available. For undated materials, include the date the resource was accessed.

Blog entry

Arrington, M. (2008, August 5). The viral video guy gets $1 million in funding. Message posted to www.techcrunch.com

Professional website

National Renewable Energy Laboratory. (2008). *Biofuels.* Retrieved May 6, 2008, from www.nrel.gov/learning/re_biofuels.html

Data set from a database

Bloomberg L.P. (2008). *Return on capital for Hewitt Packard 12/31/90 to 09/30/08.* Retrieved Dec. 3, 2008, from Bloomberg database. Central Statistics Office of the Republic of Botswana. (2008). *Gross domestic product per capita 06/01/1994 to 06/01/2008* [statistics]. Available from CEIC Data database.

Entire website

When citing an entire website (and not a specific document on that site), no Reference List entry is required if the address for the site is cited in the text of your paper. If a citation is needed, use this form:

The Chicago Manual of Style is a site that provides a digital version of the publication used as a style guide for writers, editors and publishers. (www.chicagomanualofstyle.org).

ON WRITING WELL

Elementary Principles of Composition

- Choose a suitable design and hold to it.
- Make the paragraph the unit of composition.
- Use the active voice.

- Put statements in positive form.

- Use definite, specific, concrete language.

- Omit needless words.

- Avoid a succession of loose sentences.

- Express coordinate ideas in similar form.

- Keep related words together.

- In summaries, keep to one tense.

- Place the emphatic words of a sentence at the end.

From *The Elements of Style,* William Strunk Jr. & E. B. White (Allyn & Bacon, 2000)

Tips for Writing Well

All manuscripts should adhere to the following editorial standards:

Accuracy: Authors must fact-check manuscripts and supply sources for all data.

Clarity/Brevity: Writing should be easy to understand with clearly defined terms. Present findings as concisely as possible without sacrificing accuracy. Today's readers are impatient, and you will hold their attention longer — and convey your message more successfully — by using fewer words. Use opportunities to show, rather than tell, through data charts and creative graphics. Readers are more likely to remember a bold depiction of a trend or finding than a complex paragraph explaining it in words.

Consistency: Write in a consistent voice and tone throughout. Do not shift person, perspective or tense without a purpose for the change. Use parallel construction and maintain a uniform style for punctuation, numbering, subheads and document structure.

- *Poor writing:* You are cordially invited to attend a webinar on grade-level reading, which will be moderated by the staff of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. This learning opportunity is being offered free of charge.

- *Better writing:* Please join the Casey Foundation's free webinar on grade-level reading.

Get to the point. Give the most important information up front. For example, if you are drafting an invitation to an event, mention the date, time and place in the first paragraph.

- *Poor writing:* If you have any questions, the best way to ask them would be by telephone. If you leave a voicemail message, please make sure to mention what would be the best time of day for us to reach you. The number is 410.223.2926.

- *Better writing:* If you have any questions, please call Communications at 410.223.2926. If you leave a voicemail, please mention the best time for a staff member to reach you.

Break up run-on sentences. Keep sentences short.

- *Poor writing:* This past month the Casey Foundation hosted a convening of leaders representing a national coalition of higher education institutions, grant makers, student loan providers, and other stakeholders who are dedicated to increasing student success at community colleges, including four colleges whose initiatives are currently being funded at least in part by the Casey Foundation.

- *Better writing:* The Casey Foundation convened education leaders this past month. The leaders represented a national coalition of higher education institutions, grant makers, student loan providers and other stakeholders dedicated to increasing student success at community colleges.

Objectivity: Findings must be presented as neutrally as possible, backed up by data. Avoid using words like "obviously" and "clearly" when describing findings.

Relevance: The relevance of the findings should be clearly stated and reinforced throughout the manuscript. Readers should not have to guess why information is important.

Tone: Use the active voice — subject + active verb + object — wherever and whenever possible. Sentences written in active voice carry stronger impact and energy. Say "The data highlighted a major barrier to reform" rather than" A major barrier to reform was highlighted by the data."

- *Poor writing:* The decision was made to fund the program.

- *Better writing:* The Casey Foundation decided to fund the program.

Use bullet points to increase clarity and visual appeal:

- *Poor writing:* The policy objectives that we are pursuing at the state level include such initiatives as setting up performance measurements, building data systems that are better than the systems that are currently in operation, creating environments that are amenable to the sharing of best practices, and doing what is needed in order to establish cultures of learning.

- *Better writing:* Our state-level policy objectives include the following:
  - set up performance measurements;
  - build better data systems;
  - create environments for sharing best practices; and
  - establish cultures of learning.

Use concrete language. Whenever possible, use concrete language and illustrative real-world examples. Try not to rely on abstract concepts and technical terminology:

- *Poor writing:* Thirty-three percent of students have not attained a proficient level of literacy comprehension prior to matriculating to the fourth grade.

- *Better writing:* By the end of the school year, one out of every three third graders still cannot read at a third-grade level.

Define all acronyms. Never assume your reader will know what an acronym means, no matter how often you have referred to it in previous communications. The proper name of a program or agency must be spelled out fully on first reference, before its acronym is used.

If you mention a particular program or entity, explain what it is. Unless you are certain that your intended readers already are familiar with a program or entity, do not mention it without briefly explaining what it is and why it is relevant.

Provide full names and titles. When referring to specific people, don't assume your reader knows who they are. Be sure to provide full names and titles.

Keep the tone positive. The Casey Foundation aspires to give people hope for a better future and the knowledge and skills with which to achieve it. Where possible, phrase text in a positive, forward-looking manner.

- *Poor writing:* We want to prevent young black males from dropping out of school and from slipping in their academic careers.

- *Better writing:* We want to boost the graduation rates of young black males and help them be successful in their academic careers.

Be polite. There is an unavoidable "power distance" between foundations and the organizations they support. Please help close that distance by being polite and helpful.

- *Intimidating:* Submit your final report through our online system. Questions should be directed to the Grants Management Office. You must send the final report by the Nov. 1 deadline.

- *Welcoming:* Please submit your final report through our online system. Our Grants Management staff would be happy to answer any questions you might have. The due date for the final report is Nov. 1.

COMMONLY USED TERMS

A

a lot (two words)

accommodate

acknowledgment (no second "e")

administration (lowercase, i.e., Obama administration)

after school: The youth had jobs after school.

after-school: The youth had after-school jobs.

African American (n.) / African-American (adj.)

annual (Do not use first annual. An event cannot be annual until it has been held at least once.)

anyone, any one: Anyone can go. Any one of these will work.

at risk: The youth are at risk.

at-risk: They are at-risk youth.

B

bilateral (no hyphen)

bimonthly (no hyphen)

board (lowercase)

C

cancel, canceled, canceling, cancellation

cannot (one word)

capacity building (n.) / capacity-building (adj.)

child care (n.) / child-care (adj.)

citywide

co-author

community based (n.) / community-based (adj.)

congressional (lowercase)

conscience

consensus

copublish (no hyphen)

cross section (two words)

D

day care (n.) / day-care (adj.)

decision making (n.) / decision-making (adj.)

direct services

District of Columbia (subsequent reference use: the district. See Washington, D.C.)

E

e.g., (Use in place of **for example** with a comma. Since e.g. indicates a partial list, it is redundant to add "etc." at the end of a list introduced by this abbreviation.)

email

F

family strengthening (n.) / family-strengthening (adj.)

follow up (v.): Please follow up with him after the meeting.

follow-up (n., adj.): A follow-up meeting.

foreword (an introductory piece in a report)

full time: He works full time.

full-time: He has a full-time job.

fully funded (no hyphen)

fundraiser, fundraising

G

government (lowercase, no abbreviation)

grant seekers (two words)

grant makers (two words)

grantees

grant making (n): Casey engages in grant making.

grant-making (adj): Casey has a strong grant-making strategy.

H

health care (two words)

highly effective (no hyphen)

I

i.e., (use in place of **that is** or **in other words** with a comma)

Internet (uppercase)

interrelated

intranet (lowercase)

K

L

lessons learned (two words)

locally based organization

long-standing tradition

long term (n.): The grant will run for the long term.

long-term (adj.): The long-term grant will end in 2015.

low income (n.): Too many people have a low income.

low-income (adj.): The low-income population is underserved.

M

midterm

mission-related investment (MRI)

more than, less than (not **over** or **under**)

multicultural (no hyphen)

multiethnic

multilateral

multinational

multiyear

N

national-level initiative

nationwide

nonexpert

nongovernmental

nonpartisan

nonprofit (not nonprofit organization)

O

online

onsite

P

percent (Use **percent** in narrative text but % in tables and charts.)

permanence (n.): Caseworkers achieve family permanence for children and youth in foster care.

permanency (adj.): Private providers are implementing a permanency plan for the state.

place-based initiative

policymaker / policymaking

post-adoption (adj.)

postsecondary

prekindergarten

program-related investment (PRI)

R

S

semiannual

staff (Whether it takes a singular or plural verb depends upon whether staff refers to the group as a unit, like committee or team, or to its members as individuals. The staff is meeting to review safety procedures. The staff are specialists, recruited from all over the world.]

statewide

T

toward (no "s")

trustee(s) (lowercase)

U, V

W

Washington, D.C.

website, Web

well-being

well known (n.) / well-known (adj.)

widespread

worldwide

X, Y, Z

COMMONLY MISUSED WORDS

a/an: Use "a" before words with a pronounced "h" (history, horse, house) or a long "u" (university, eucalyptus, Ukrainian). Use "an" before words with a silent "h" (herb, hour, honor) or short "u" (umbrella, umpire, uncle).

affect/effect: *Affect* is a verb. *Effect* is a noun (for most usages).
- The data affected the outcome of the project.
- The low ranking had a negative effect on the outcome of the project.

compose/comprise: *Compose* means to make up or put together. *Comprise* means to contain, to include all or embrace. It is best used only in the active voice, followed by the direct object.
- The zoo is composed of many animals.
- The United States comprises 50 states.

continuous/continual: *Continuous* indicates duration without interruption. *Continual* indicates duration that continues over a long period of time, but with intervals of interruption.
- The infant screamed continuously for 20 minutes until someone picked her up.
- The project status will be monitored continually to ensure quality control.

criteria/criterion: *Criteria* is the plural form. *Criterion* is singular.

data: *Data* is a plural noun and usually takes a plural verb.

due to/because of: The use of *due to* is best avoided when *because of* is more commonly the intended meaning. *Due to* is used as an adjective and must modify a noun. *Because of* is used as an adverb, modifying a verb.

- The cancellation was due to rain. (caused by, resulting from)
- The event was cancelled because of rain.

farther/further: *Farther* refers to physical distance. *Further* refers to an extension of time or degree.

historic/historical: *Historic* means important. *Historical* refers to any event in the past.

insure/ensure: *Insure* means to establish a contract for insurance of some type. *Ensure* means to guarantee.

lay/lie: *Lay* means to place or deposit something. *Lie* means to recline.
- Please lay the book on the table before you lie down.

lectern/podium: You stand behind a *lectern*. You stand on a *podium* (raised platform).

literally/figuratively: *Literally* means in an exact sense. *Figuratively* means in a metaphorical or comparative sense.

many/much: In general, use *many* for individual items that can be counted. Use *much* for bulk or quantity that is measured.

presently/currently: *Presently* means at this precise moment in time, or in a little while, soon. *Currently* is correct when referring to a condition that is ongoing.

principal/principle: *Principal* as a noun is a chief person or thing; as an adjective, it means first in importance. *Principle* is a noun meaning a fundamental truth, doctrine or law; a guiding rule or code of conduct: method of operation.

regardless: Never use "irregardless," which is not a word.

stationery/stationary: *Stationery* refers to paper or envelopes. (Think that the "e" stands for envelopes!) *Stationary* means not moving, fixed in position.

that/which: *That* is used in restrictive clauses. *Which* is used in nonrestrictive clauses. If you can drop the information set off by commas and not lose the point of the sentence, use which. If taking the clause

out of the sentence changes the meaning drastically, it should be introduced by that. A *which* clause is set in between commas. A *that* clause is not.

- The car that is red belongs to her mother. (focus is on the color of the car)
- The car, which is red, belongs to her mother. (focus is on the car)

who/whom: Use *who* when you are referring to the subject of a sentence. Use *whom* when you are referring to the object of a sentence. Helpful hint: for questions, consider whether the answer would be *he* or *him*. Use who/he and whom/him (*m* in *him* matches m in *whom*).

- Who is going to the meeting? (he is)
- Whom should I say will attend the meeting? (him)

JARGON AND CLICHÉS

Casey-speak is often lamented as a deeply ingrained way foundation insiders talk to each other, a kind of code unfathomable to outsiders — not that murkiness is the intended result. The use of jargon, clichés, hyperbole and tired words or phrases diminishes the power of the message and, too often, impedes understanding.

Jargon is the language, especially the vocabulary, peculiar to a particular trade, profession or group is characterized by uncommon or pretentious vocabulary and convoluted syntax is often vague in meaning.

A **cliché** is an expression or idea that has been overused to the point of losing its original meaning or effect, especially when it was considered meaningful or novel at some earlier time.

Hyperbole is obvious and intentional exaggeration.

Words to Use Sparingly:
- access (verb, as in "helping students to access services")
- accountability (overused without explanation and begs the question: for what, to whom and with what consequences)
- action tank (a play on the phrase "think tank")

- around (sounds evasive)
- at-promise (euphemism for "at-risk")
- baseline (do not use as a verb)
- branding (often confused with commercial advertising; consider using identity)
- convener, convening (considered antiquated, may be perceived as pretentious)
- conceptualize (use "think about")
- comprehensive (vague)
- challenges, challenged (vague, overused)
- capacity (vague; say what you mean)
- critical mass (overused and often imprecise; if it can be defined, do)
- diversity (vague and overused; be specific)
- drill down (consider replacing with "take a closer look," "examine" or "perform a detailed analysis")
- empower, empowerment (overused, often incorrectly)
- granular
- grassroots, grasstops (overused, tired metaphor)
- impact (overused, imprecise without clarification)
- implementation (vague, overused)
- infrastructure (overused and lacks clarity; consider substituting "components," "parts," elements" or "administrative functions")
- learnings (not a word; an invented term for information and knowledge)
- leverage (overused and often inappropriately applied to nonfinancial areas)
- maximize (overused, imprecise)
- metrics (overused, use "measures")
- modalities (use "ways of")
- more fully understand
- parameter (overused and often misused, confused with perimeter)
- partnership (vague, imprecise and overused)
- real time (imprecise, born in IT, often misused)
- robust (overused)

- silos (this overused metaphor is jargon; most folks do not know what it means)
- space (clarify)
- synergy (define)
- technical assistance (consider using "instruction," "consulting," "training," "advice")
- thought leader
- traction (overused)
- transformative
- unique (avoid unless entity or situation is truly one-of-a-kind)
- utilize
- value-added
- value proposition (if you use this term, you must define it for your readers)

A special note on the word *impact:* The programs we support do not *impact* the lives of families and children. They *improve* the lives of families and children.

For more on jargon, visit www.comnetwork.org/category/jargon.

Pseudo Words to Avoid:
- impactful
- incentivize
- learnings
- persons (the correct word is "people")
- planful
- resourced (adjective, as in "under-resourced communities")
- supports, as a noun (as in "we provided supports for the grantee")

EMAIL ETIQUETTE

Please follow these guidelines for office email:

- Keep the content professional.

- Never use email to discuss confidential information.

- Read and spell-check your email before you send it.

- Make it personal, but aim for a tone that is professional and respectful.

- Include a meaningful subject line to indicate your content and purpose.

- Rewrite the subject line when forwarding older messages to keep current.

- Respond promptly.

- Limit the use of large attachments.

- Avoid using all capitals; they indicate SHOUTING.

- Avoid using exclamation points unless the meaning is clear [Greetings!].

  - Remember, exclamation points can also indicate annoyance or anger.

- Use "Reply to All" and "CC" (courtesy copy) sparingly.

  - "Reply to All" should not be used to respond to a meeting request, acknowledge receipt of an email or to say thank you, which should be directed only to the sender.

- Use "BCC" (blind courtesy copy) when sending email to a large distribution list.

- Direct personal emails to your home email account.

- Consider face-to-face or voice-to-voice communication as an alternative, especially with sensitive matters. Email can't convey the nuances of actual speech.

- Avoid using "high importance" too often. Save it for truly urgent matters.

- Sign your emails with your name, title and contact information. Be sure to include the Casey website: www.aecf.org

- Do not include favorite quotes or personal graphics with your business email, as they could be construed as Casey Foundation taglines or branding.

Remember: an email message reflects you and the Casey Foundation. Email is not private, and once it leaves your computer, it could be forwarded to unintended readers.

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