



Harris County
Healthcare Alliance

Obesity Prevention Collaborative in Houston/Harris County

Responses to Questions Concerning the Request for Applications for Key Project Functions

INTRODUCTION

Thank you all for your interest in this Project. We are encouraged by the responses we've had to this Request for Applications. We received a total of 29 Letters of Intent, more than half of which indicated an interest in more than one of the three functions. While the vast majority of interested parties are in the Houston area, several are out of state. The following information should address the majority of the questions raised; however there are a few questions that cannot be answered at this time as they require additional decision-making by the Steering Committee or Community Planning Team.

GRANT OVERVIEW

The Obesity Prevention Collaborative was formed through a series of stakeholder meetings facilitated by the Houston Endowment in collaboration with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, starting in 2010. Stakeholders included leaders from various sectors and a steering committee was subsequently formed in response to the national obesity epidemic, which extends locally into Harris County. More "upstream" policy solutions in both health and non-health sectors

were of great interest among steering committee members as it is now becoming more apparent that policy decisions that impact larger systems and environments can play a direct role in the obesity problem and health more generally.

Furthermore, policy solutions, particularly those directed towards high-level, resource allocation decision-making may yield a more sustainable and widespread impact on obesity than programs that focus on the individual. These insights informed the development of a proposal later submitted to the Houston Endowment by Harris County Public Health & Environmental Services (HCPHES) and the Harris County Healthcare Alliance (HCHA) on behalf of the Obesity Prevention Collaborative Steering Committee. In September 2011, the Houston Endowment awarded a \$2.5 million dollar grant award to HCHA as the fiscal agent whereby HCPHES would provide project oversight and directorship in collaboration with the governing steering committee to carry out a two-year planning process that centers on mobilizing policy action towards system and environmental change. Therefore, this is not a grant opportunity designed to fund existing obesity-related programs.

The Collaborative aims to achieve the following outcome objectives:

- 1) community interest and capacity to curb childhood obesity in Harris County across key sectors and families is strengthened;
- 2) our community is mobilized for action;
- 3) a network of health and non-health sector partners is enhanced and sustained; and
- 4) policy strategies that reflect the communities' interests and priorities are identified and synthesized into a community action plan.

The Collaborative Steering Committee is responsible for providing overall governance of the planning initiative. It is not accountable to any other organization (eg, Harris County Commissioners' Court, Harris County Healthcare Alliance Board). As the governing entity, the Steering Committee is responsible for ensuring the Community Planning Team (CPT) has the necessary guidance and resources to carry out the planning process. For example, the Steering Committee has defined the scope of the initiative, which will provide parameters within which the CPT will work.

This is indeed an ambitious undertaking; while there are model approaches that locals in other jurisdictions have taken to perform similar work, and while there are public health planning tools such as MAPP and PACE-EH that will be relied upon to complete the project, there aren't models that we could identify that can be directly applied to fit our local geo-political context:

- over 30 municipalities and their respective mayors
- Land area that is 65% unincorporated
- 22 independent school districts
- Elected officials serving on the Harris County Commissioners Court, representing 4 county precincts
- 32 House and Senate districts

We recognize the complexity of our jurisdiction, and are not striving for a one-size fits all approach at every level or slice of the larger Harris County Community, but rather intend to mobilize movement where we are all working in the same direction to effectively curb obesity in our area.

BUDGET/FINANCIAL

In preparing the two-year, \$2.5 million dollar planning grant budget, the Steering Committee anticipated that 27% of the total budget would be expended on Project Management and Planning Team Coordination. This would include the necessary contract staffing for the project management and planning team functions described in the RFA as well as project participation stipends, facilitation supplies and materials, and any necessary related administrative overhead or contracted, ad-hoc temporary staffing. Sixty percent (60%) of the grant budget is designated to fund the following 4 functional areas: assessment, community/stakeholder engagement, policy tracking and evaluation. Bidders for only one of these four functions - community/stakeholder engagement - are being sought under this RFA. This portion of the budget also includes "Other Services" noted under part C of the RFA. The remaining portion of the budget covers other anticipated expenses, such as capacity building workshops, trainings and professional meetings, technical assistance, etc. This RFA focuses on contract staffing of personnel for only the project management, planning team coordination and community & stakeholder engagement functions. Additional contractual services will be sought in the future, and may or may not require an RFA. Neither those who are awarded contracts under this RFA nor those not selected under this RFA are at any particular advantage or disadvantage for future RFAs we may issue.

A payment schedule will be negotiated with the selected contractor and will be tied to both regular progress reporting (the frequency of which will be negotiated as part of the payment schedule) and specific deliverables for each of the three functions currently being sought. Expected deliverables for each of the

three functions can be found in the RFA. Contractors will be expected to invoice the Harris County Healthcare Alliance per the agreed upon payment schedule and payment will be made within ten business days of satisfactory submission of the related progress report and/or deliverable. Such items must be approved by the Project Director before payments are issued.

The current grant has been awarded for planning and capacity building, not implementation activities. The Steering Committee anticipates seeking implementation funding at the end of this two-year grant to sustain the momentum of the initiative, and has engaged philanthropic organizations at the Steering Committee level to help ensure support for subsequent grant requests. Additionally, there may be some recommendations from the action plan particularly around policy adoption that do not require funds for implementation. Potential contractors should not assume funding beyond the current grant award, though they may be considered for additional funding if awarded to the Collaborative.

REVIEW PROCESS

The Project Director has selected an application review team consisting of individuals with knowledge and expertise in grants management, planning, community engagement, and policy-making. The application review team will assist the Project Director in selecting the organizations with whom to contract. While the Steering Committee is the governing entity for the overall project, the selection of contractors for these key functions has been delegated to the Project Director and application review team. No additional approval of selected contractors beyond the decision of the Project Director, supported by the

application review team, will be required. The individual names of those serving on the application review team will not be released; however, it is important to note that none of the application review team members will be potential contractors for these functions.

TIMELINE

We do anticipate flexibility in the timeline for specific components within each phase of 2-year project; however, there are no plans to extend the overall project period at this time. The Collaborative is in Phase I of the project, performing duties as proposed concerning the steering committee. We anticipate that the selected contractor(s) will begin working at the end of Phase I or early part of Phase II. It is important to note that this is not a linear process, but rather dynamic. Therefore, work that has been completed may have to be revisited as we move along (e.g., recruitment of additional steering committee members as needed) with the support of the selected contractor(s).

Additionally, there are no plans to extend the proposal deadline of noon, Wednesday, January 18, 2012. As noted in the RFA, we anticipate notifying bidders of their selection or non-selection by February 13, 2012, with an expectation that contracts will be executed and effective within 45 days. Thus a contract start date no later than April 1, 2012, should be anticipated.

STAFFING/SUPPORT

We are seeking to totally outsource the key functions of Project Management, Planning Team Coordination, and Community & Stakeholder Engagement to selected individual contractors or firms. Neither Harris County

Healthcare Alliance nor the Harris County Public Health & Environmental Services Department will provide office space, equipment, support staff or other resources to support these functions. Each organization has meeting rooms that can be utilized for Steering Committee and Planning Team meetings, and other related meetings as needed, and can provide temporary workspace for brief periods of time if needed.

We do not intend to select and combine multiple bidders for a single function under this RFA, but rather select one individual or firm for one or more functions. An individual or firm selected for a specific function, for example community and stakeholder engagement, will be expected to perform that function across the entire county. However, there may be some geographic areas that get more focus for particular activities based upon prevalence of obesity, related contributors and other factors. As stated in the RFA, an individual or firm may bid on more than one of the three functions being sought at this time. Additionally, if a contractor intends to sub-contract out portions of the function for which it is applying, the names of those subcontractors can be included in the application if they have been identified. If not, the contractor should outline the time required to identify sub-contractors in their proposal.

If an individual is selected for one or more key functions, that individual will enter into an independent contractual arrangement with the Harris County Healthcare Alliance. Employment through HCHA is not anticipated.

An ongoing process evaluation is built into the planning process for the overall initiative, including all three of the functions being sought at this time. More general aspects of the evaluation are performed mostly by HCPHES staff; however, it is expected that personnel carrying out their respective function will

be able to gauge effectiveness of their work and, as required, make corrective actions as quickly as possible. The quality of the deliverables will be determined by the Project Director, using the scheduled agreed upon by the contractor, the Project Director and the Alliance.

Finally, this opportunity is open to individuals and firms located outside of the Houston area. However, significant on-the-ground time is anticipated to successfully fulfill these roles. Potential contractors should include any anticipated travel costs in their proposals, which if significant, could put out of town applicants at a disadvantage when the review committee is considering the cost of a specific proposal.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The five page limit applies only to the narrative response to Section B of the RFA. There is no page limit on supporting material (resumes, sample work products, etc.) for the narrative response. Any supporting material mailed by hard copy must be postmarked by January 18, 2012.

Harris County Public Health and Environmental Services has the necessary platform for development of the Sharepoint website.