



NEW YORK CITY
DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
SERVING NEW YORK CITY YOUTH, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITIES

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JEANNE B. MULLGRAV
Commissioner

January, 2008

Dear Community Members:

We are delighted to present you with the attached Technical Assistance (TA) Services Concept Paper and equally pleased to invite you to comment on the approach we outline here with respect to these critical services. This Concept Paper serves as a precursor to a forthcoming TA Services Request for Proposals (TA RFP).

As you know, the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) works to strengthen communities by funding a broad range of youth development, workforce development, and other human services programs throughout New York City. In keeping with the City's procurement rules and regulations, our direct service providers engage in an open, competitive process to ensure that those selected for awards are able to carryout DYCD initiatives. Within every program area, contractors vary considerably in terms of organizational structure, experience and expertise, resulting in a rich and diverse portfolio. To help us maintain and raise quality across the board, DYCD enlists technical assistance service providers, such as you, to help each of our contractors successfully deliver their programs and achieve key goals for the City's youth, adults and families. I am sure you will agree that the importance of TA is only underscored by the trend in the nonprofit sector toward heightened standards of accountability and evidence-based programming.

DYCD is deeply committed to building capacity among its direct service providers. This administration created a Capacity Building Division with Technical Assistance and Professional Development Units for this purpose and we are now excited to present a new, more focused approach to the TA Services provided by outside consultants. This approach is based on the latest research and the many lessons we have learned as we continue to improve and revamp DYCD program designs, technology, support services, and systems for contract monitoring. Based on extensive input from administrators and program staff throughout DYCD, the attached Concept Paper describes DYCD's proposed TA approach and sets out five distinct competition areas, as well as proposed funding and other information regarding this procurement.

To assist us in developing the forthcoming TA RFP, we would greatly appreciate your thoughts and feedback. Please email your comments to cp@dycd.nyc.gov (enter "technical assistance" in the subject line of the email). If you prefer, you may mail written comments to the attention of:

Cressida Wasserman
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Please note that we are only able to consider written comments received by 5:00 p.m. on February 15, 2008.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. Your collaboration is a valued component of our efforts to advance the field of youth and community development.

Sincerely,

Jeanne B. Mullgrav

NYC DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES CONCEPT PAPER

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) works to strengthen communities by funding a broad range of youth development, workforce development, and other human services programs throughout New York City. The community-based organizations (CBOs) providing these services play a significant role in the social, cultural and economic vitality of all communities. Their viability is, therefore, critical to community development and stability in the neighborhoods they serve.

DYCD's CBO contractors must be organizationally, fiscally, and programmatically sound. To ensure they are all equipped to deliver programs successfully and achieve their goals, DYCD provides technical assistance (TA). The fundamental purpose of TA is to foster high-quality services that promote desired outcomes for program participants. To this end, TA provided through DYCD addresses a range of CBO needs, including general organizational development as well as program-specific issues.

DYCD has demonstrated its commitment to build capacity among its CBO providers by creating a Capacity Building Division that comprises Technical Assistance and Professional Development Units. The agency has also expanded internal staff resources that help CBOs meet their contractual obligations and function as effective organizations.

In partnership with its TA contractors, DYCD offers a variety of TA at no cost to CBOs. Its Technical Assistance Unit focuses on helping CBOs build effective boards of directors; develop and implement strategic plans; raise and manage funds; and design and implement programs and monitor and evaluate their effectiveness. Its Professional Development Unit seeks to increase skill levels among front-line and more senior CBO staff, by coordinating programs that offer opportunities for personal and professional development through the Family Development Training and Credentialing (FDC) program, the Family Development for Supervisors Series, and DYCD Scholars.

DYCD is introducing significant changes to its TA services. This concept paper reflects those changes and is the precursor to a forthcoming TA Request for Proposals (RFP). Through the RFP, DYCD will solicit proposals from appropriately qualified organizations to deliver TA to a variety of CBOs providing services to youth and families in New York City. **The RFP will not cover TA services for DYCD-funded Literacy, Out-of-School-Time, or Service Learning programs, as TA for these programs is separately provided.**

DYCD's PERSPECTIVE ON TA SERVICES

As stated above, the agency's ultimate aim in providing TA is to raise program quality for the benefit of those served by its contractors. In all its efforts, DYCD embraces a strength-based, capacity-building approach in which the TA provider and the recipients of TA services form a community of learners built on trust, flexibility, and mutual commitment and support.¹ Thus, organizations awarded TA contracts will be expected to operate as partners with DYCD to build the agency's network of CBO providers and enhance the delivery systems for a wide range of services for youth, families, and communities.

DYCD's approach to TA is also comprehensive in the sense that it addresses both general organizational development and specific programmatic issues. Thus, TA contractors will be expected to increase program quality by building knowledge and skills among CBO front-line staff, but also focus on improving the organizational systems. DYCD will therefore encourage TA strategies designed to make an enduring impact on CBOs, for example, by enabling them to build effective training and management systems.

TA services are sometimes required as part of a corrective action instituted by DYCD staff: for example, where a program is facing difficulties complying with its contractual obligations. However, here, too, TA will be a pro-active, problem-solving, and, primarily, capacity-building service, with TA contractors functioning as experienced partners able to help the CBO overcome its specific challenges. Where a single organization has multiple DYCD contracts, and common problems are identified in several programs, the TA contractors will work both with individual program directors and senior leaders in the CBO to develop and implement broader organizational solutions.

To complement its general strength-based approach, DYCD will seek TA contractors who understand the need to link off-site training with on-site support and skill-building. As noted above, the essential purpose of TA is to help CBOs grow and develop as organizations so that they can successfully implement their programs.² Emerging research suggests that the most successful approaches are likely to include: individual consultations and on-the-job coaching; sequenced, multi-session training designs; opportunities for participants to demonstrate new knowledge and practice new skills within the training arena; opportunities to share implementation experience as an integral part of a training; and follow-up services and support.³ Studies demonstrate that more individualized training approaches may be vital to effect the changes in practice (among front-line staff and managers) that are needed to achieve the desired outcomes for program participants. Accordingly, DYCD will encourage TA providers to tailor their services, as much as possible, to the needs of individual CBOs.

¹ Cahill, Michele; Norm Fruchter; and Ellen Wahl; "Building Capacity: A Review of Technical Assistance Strategies", Working Paper, Institute for Education and Social Policy, February, 1998.

² See, for example, National Implementation Research Network: *Synthesis of the Literature on Implementation Research*, <http://nirn.fmhi.usf.edu/resources/publications/Monograph/>; Alison J.R. Metz, Karen Blasé, and Lillian Bowie: *Implementing Evidence-Based Practices: Six "Drivers" of Success*. Fostering the Adoption of Evidence-Based Practices in Out-of-School Time Programs. Child Trends, October, 2007, http://www.childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-2007_10_01_RB_6SuccessDrivers.pdf

³ Ibid.

A FOCUSED APPROACH

In accordance with the approach outlined above, DYCD will seek TA contractors who demonstrate the ability and experience to offer services that address both organizational development and program implementation challenges. TA capacity building services will be flexible and reflect best practices. Anticipated TA modalities and components (described below in more detail) will include on-site consultations, train-the-trainer and line-staff sequential workshops, peer networks and exchanges, and follow-up services and support. The aim going forward is to provide TA tailored more closely to the changing needs of CBOs and DYCD program goals and linked to measurable outcomes, using the most effective modality for identified challenges.

Services designed to strengthen organizational infrastructure and development will include areas such as the legal framework in which not-for-profit organizations operate; development of boards of directors; program management; fundraising and income diversification; personnel and salary issues; and administrative and supervisory skills. In the case of individual consultations, TA services will be responsive to identified needs but will address, as necessary, any issues underlying the challenges facing the CBO.

The other main focus of TA services will be assistance designed to help CBOs with the effective implementation of their programs, addressing areas such as staff development, training and supervision; best practices; program assessment and evaluation; measurement of program outcomes; and building collaborations and partnerships.

DYCD recognizes that different modalities can be used to achieve the same TA goals. For example, to improve program quality, a TA contractor might offer a series of train-the-trainer workshops that enable CBOs to provide in-house training for front-line staff. Alternatively, the TA services could comprise individual or small group consultations that help providers create written policy and procedure staff manuals, or establish ways to secure resources to enable their staff to attend external trainings. However, in all cases, contractors will be expected to define the goals to be achieved through the chosen modality in ways that enable TA outcomes to be measured and assessed by DYCD staff or external evaluators.

Technical assistance may be provided as result of a request from CBOs (at any time from the start of their contracts) and DYCD staff. The Technical Assistance Unit will review all requests and select those to be undertaken.

Technical Assistance Modalities

TA formats will be informed, as far as possible, by evidence-based strategies that research has shown to be effective in raising the quality in human services for the benefit of program participants. Modalities will include, but not be limited to, organizational consultations and on-the-job coaching, sequenced train-the-trainer and line-staff workshops, and follow-up support services, including telephone helplines, and development of supportive peer networks.

Proposals submitted in response to the RFP will describe and justify the suggested range of TA modalities and refer to prior experience. They will also describe and justify suggested topics or areas suited to the different modalities. All topics and services proposed by TA vendors will be subject to DYCD approval, and DYCD may also ask contractors to cover additional topics or areas.

Organizational Consultations

In organizational consultations, TA is provided directly to an individual CBO or to small groups of agencies. CBOs may request this form of assistance, but all organizational consultations will be subject to DYCD approval, with priority given to CBOs referred by DYCD staff. Organizational consultations may also be required by DYCD as a part of a corrective action.

Following approval to proceed with an organizational consultation, DYCD will identify and assign an appropriate TA provider to work with the CBO to develop a TA Work Plan tailored to its needs. The Work Plan will outline the scope of work to be undertaken and specify the short-term objectives to be achieved and the long term outcomes that may be expected. The Work Plan will also detail the costs of the proposed consultancy services, based on the TA contractor's Full-Day Expense (FDE) rate and the number of days needed to complete the work.

As part of the development of the Work Plan (which must receive prior approval by DYCD before work is begun), the TA provider will conduct a general "Pre-service Assessment" that DYCD anticipates would take one half-day to one full-day. Proposers responding to the RFP will be expected to outline their assessment process and submit a copy of any assessment tools to be used. After the consultation has taken place, the TA provider will be required to sign a statement confirming that the work has been satisfactorily completed and the specified short term outcomes achieved in accordance with the Work Plan.

Organizational consultations may include on the job coaching involving intentional relationship building to enhance CBO knowledge, skills and experience. DYCD will expect coaching practices to focus on goal-setting; building trust; observation; modeling; and positive strategic feedback. Like other forms of TA, coaching will support professional and organizational development.

Trainer-the-Trainer Workshops

Train-the-trainer workshops can help raise standards of practice among CBOs, increase organizational capability, and institutionalize best practices. Therefore, they have potential to overcome some of the challenges associated with high staff turnover - a common problem for many CBOs. In addition to educating key staff on relevant topics, train-the-trainer formats can help organizations develop effective supervision structures and in-house staff training systems that, in turn, can influence organizational habits and culture, promote best practices,

and raise program standards.

Train-the-trainer workshops will generally be designed as sequential, multi-session learning experiences. They will allow trainees to demonstrate their new knowledge and practice skills taught in a safe environment and include follow-up monitoring and support to ensure that those who participated become effective trainers within their agencies.

Proposals submitted in response to the RFP will be expected to suggest and justify the most appropriate areas for train-the-trainer modalities.

Other Workshops

A variety of topics relating to program implementation can be addressed through appropriately designed workshops for front-line or more senior staff. Generally, such workshops will comprise a series of sequenced sessions. They will also be organized to ensure that those who attend have opportunities to demonstrate newly-acquired knowledge, practice newly-learned skills, and share their post-training implementation experience with the TA provider and peers in other CBOs. TA contractors will always provide some post-workshop services such as site visits, follow-up phone calls, or access to telephone assistance. The research literature suggests that enhanced, multi-session forms of training are likely to be more effective than single-session workshops.⁴ Proposals submitted in response to the RFP will be expected to suggest and justify the most appropriate areas for workshop modalities.

Workshops for DYCD Staff

In addition to their role as monitors of CBO performance, DYCD's contract managers are members of the TA community of learners. Accordingly, TA providers will periodically meet with the contract managers to inform them of their activities and exchange information regarding DYCD funded programs and organizations. From time to time, TA providers will also offer special topical workshops for DYCD staff, including contract managers.

Marketing Workshops

Train-the-trainer and other workshops will be marketed by the TA contractors in partnership with DYCD. Marketing strategies will be targeted to ensure that each workshop series comes to the attention of, and is delivered to, the appropriate representatives of the CBO providers, whether front-line staff, program directors, or senior managers in the organization.

Peer Exchanges

Peer exchange is a useful way for CBOs to build on and complement learning experiences provided through organizational consultations and workshop modalities. Through contact with their peers, CBO staff gain insights and practical ideas about effective ways to address challenges. In particular, peer exchanges can be an effective means through which smaller

⁴ Ibid.

CBOs benefit from the broader and more extensive experience of larger organizations. Peer meetings and events provide opportunities to strategize around system-wide challenges, and encourage lasting relationships between CBOs. TA providers will be expected to foster development of peer networks and, intermittently, to convene meetings between DYCD-funded CBOs to encourage a mutually supportive community of learners.

Proposed Competition Areas

DYCD anticipates that total funding for TA services under the RFP will be \$800,000, divided among the five competitions described below. However, DYCD will reserve the right to modify the allocation of funds among competitions, if necessary.

TA services in all the competitions will be comprehensive, addressing organizational and managerial challenges as well as issues relating to effective program implementation.

Youth Services (maximum total funding \$200,000)

TA in this competition will be designed to assist a wide range of organizations providing DYCD-funded youth services, including Beacon Community Centers and Neighborhood Development Area (NDA) youth programs. These programs serve children and youth from many different communities, cultures, and socio-economic backgrounds.

Many programs for youth face common challenges such as recruitment and retention of participants, staff turnover, and effective supervision of junior staff. Consequently, TA services will be designed to help build the capacity of CBOs as non-profit service providers, with special attention to areas such as staff recruitment, retention, professional development, and supervision; recruitment, engagement and retention of diverse groups of youth; best practices in youth development programming; effective classroom management; cultural and language barriers and cultural competency; sensitivity to issues of sexual orientation and gender; and compliance with health and safety requirements.

Social Services (maximum total funding: \$125,000)

TA services in this competition will be designed to raise quality in a variety of social services programs where case management features as a core service. Examples include services for runaway and homeless youth and family-focused services provided through NDA programs. In addition to general capacity-building, TA will address, in particular, areas such as needs assessments, crisis intervention, development of individualized service plans, coordination with other agencies, keeping appropriate case-notes, case monitoring, and provision of follow-up services and support.

Workforce Development Services (maximum total funding: \$225,000)

TA for workforce development programs will seek to build organizational capacity to ensure

effective program implementation among CBOs providing in-school youth (ISY) and out-of-school youth (OSY) services.

All DYCD-funded workforce development programs for youth include the following basic components: job readiness preparation, work experience, and education to raise literacy and numeracy skills. TA will be designed to help CBOs meet all requirements under the federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA), the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), and the Young Adult Internship Program (YAIP), as applicable.

For WIA programs, TA contractors will demonstrate knowledge of eligibility rules and key program elements such as comprehensive support services, job readiness preparation, mentoring and post-program follow-up services. They will also have experience addressing the different challenges facing providers of ISY programs, where the focus is on high school graduation and college enrollment, and OSY programs, where the focus is on preparing participants for entry-level jobs through occupational skills training, job search and placement assistance, and assistance with basic educational qualifications. In addition, TA contractors will provide critical help to enable CBOs to adhere to mandated time-frames and reporting of participant data in compliance with WIA mandated performance measures.

Youth with Special Needs (maximum total funding: \$100,000)

TA services in this competition will focus primarily on helping CBOs integrate youth with special needs into their programs. TA will cover areas such as staff screening, recruitment, training and supervision, and the promotion of best practices serving youth with special needs. The TA will help CBOs recognize and respond appropriately to the wide variety of physical and emotional special needs they may encounter, and, in particular, address challenges associated with classroom management where behavioral problems are linked to emotional needs of youth.

Small CBOs (maximum total funding: \$150,000)

These TA services will be designed for CBOs with annual operating budgets of \$500,000 or less and seek to increase their capacity to successfully serve communities in high-need neighborhoods. They will focus on developing small agencies as viable non-profit organizations by building their capacity to deliver effective programs and successfully fulfill their contractual obligations. Attention will be directed toward basic organizational and managerial challenges common among smaller non-profit organizations. Areas covered will include, for example, compliance with legal requirements; recruitment of board members and the role of the board; effective management practices; fundraising and development of a diverse financial base.

Measuring Outcomes

DYCD has an expectation of continuous quality improvement among CBOs as a result of the TA they receive.⁵ Accordingly, TA contractors will adjust their strategies as needs change and monitor the impact of their services with outcome measures that are tailored to the different modalities they utilize.

TA contractors will assess the impact of organizational consultations and training events, using appropriate tools and techniques. Prior to each activity, the TA providers will specify both short and long-term measurable outcomes. Attainment of longer-term outcomes will also be ascertained by DYCD, through periodic evaluation by the Capacity Building Division or during routing site visits by contract managers.

Qualifications for Technical Assistance Contractors

TA contractors may be for-profit as well as not-for-profit organizations. TA services can be provided by the contractor directly or in partnership with qualified subcontractors or consultants, subject to approval by DYCD.

TA contractors will have a proven track record of providing TA to CBOs in the relevant competition area, as well as current capacity to deliver such services in the modalities referred to above. They will also have proven ability to conduct pre-service organizational assessments and to define and track outcomes in TA services.

DYCD recognizes that there are different ways in which TA services can be delivered and that staffing patterns and arrangements among TA contractors may vary. However, the agency expects all contractors to provide high quality services and guarantee the professional and cultural competency of all their employees, consultants, or subcontractors.

Payment Structure

The technical assistance payment structure will be based upon a Full Day Expense (FDE) rate for each TA provider. This rate will cover all the expenses relating to the TA services. For workshops and train-the-trainer TA, the rate will cover expenses such as outreach, marketing, preparation of the curriculum or series of linked workshops, development and duplication of workshop materials, administrative activities, equipment, instructor's time, on-the-job skill-building and supervision, and any follow-up activities. For organizational consultations, the FDE rate will cover all the expenses relating to conduct of the Pre-service Assessments, consulting and administrative activities, and follow-up services.

⁵ For examples of workforce development programs that have adopted outcome measurement for continuous improvement, see Martha A. Miles. *Good Stories Aren't Enough: Becoming Outcomes-Driven in Workforce Development*. Public/Private Ventures, April 2006. http://www.ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/203_publication.pdf

Full reimbursement of expenses will be contingent upon the TA contractor achieving the outcomes stated for each workshop and organizational consultation.

Performance Reporting Requirements

Contractors will be required to submit periodic reports of activities and progress relating to their DYCD contracts.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

DYCD will issue the TA Services RFP in accordance with the New York City Procurement Policy Board Rules and may request post-proposal presentations and interview proposers prior to making awards.

Planned Method for Proposal Evaluation

Proposals will be evaluated pursuant to evaluation criteria set out in the RFP. These will include the quality and quantity of successful relevant experience, demonstrated level of organizational capability, and quality of proposed approach to TA under the different competition areas.

Procurement Timeline and Contract Term

It is anticipated that DYCD will release an RFP for this procurement in Spring 2008. The proposal submission deadline will be approximately six weeks from the release of the RFP. DYCD anticipates entering into 3-year contracts for TA services starting September 1, 2008, with an option to renew for up to three additional years.

Comments

Please email comments on the concept paper by February 15, 2008 to cp@dycd.nyc.gov inserting the words “technical assistance” in the subject line.

Written comments may also be mailed to:

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