

State Evidence questions:

- 1) On page 1 of the RFGA, the physical address for dropping the sealed package is listed as the Mills Jarrett Building at 2100 Bull St. However, page 3 gives additional drop off instructions for dropping the sealed package at 301 Gervais Street. Please provide clarity about the physical location where sealed application packages should be taken.

Response: The 2100 Bull Street address is the correct location. We will correct it on page 3 of the RFGA.

- 2) On page 2 of the RFGA, eligibility requires that the applicant have “a minimum of a three (3) year documented history of providing abstinence (avoidance) until-marriage program services using the Evidence-based curriculum” Questions:
 - a. This eligibility requirement is not mentioned specifically in the Program Assurances on page 10 or the Scoring criteria sections (pages 11-13) and assumingly not on the reviewers’ scoresheet. Because this is an eligibility requirement intended to protect the purpose and integrity of the use of the funding, it must be included in the Program Assurances as it would determine whether an applicant is responsive, not just asking/scoring the number of years of experience (1st bullet of Organizational History section, page 11). Will this be corrected?
 - a. What assurances will DHEC provide that applicants will be verified as eligible based on actually **providing** abstinence services with the Evidence-Based curriculum for 3 years, and not just receiving services?

Response: All applications must demonstrate the required history under the Organizational History section of their application.

- 3) On page 2, the RFGA mentions that the National Abstinence Education Association must certify that the curriculum meets all of the Title V Section 510 A-H definitions. Though the proviso still mentions NAEA, will DHEC please note to the reviewers that the NAEA has changed their name to Ascend, and the certification letter will be from Ascend rather than from NAEA?

Response: Yes, we will make note to the reviewers.

- 4) On page 4 of the RFGA, the 5th eligibility requirement requires documenting the previous five years’ success with DHEC funds (if applicable), and an example is provided to demonstrate number of children actually served compared to number of children planned to serve. Where is the expected and appropriate place for this information to be added to the application? It seems to be different than the 5th bullet point of Section 2 on page 11, which is not limited to DHEC awards and also not specifically mentioned in the last bullet of Section 2 page 11. Please provide guidance about where reviewers will expect to find this eligibility requirement and where this specific requirement will be listed on the scoresheet.

Response: This eligibility requirement is only for those that it is applicable to. Advice is to place this information in “Organizational, history and qualifications” section of the application.

- 5) On page 9, there is a requirement for grantees to attend required DHEC sponsored trainings. Can you provide more details about location, length of time, and frequency so that we may adequately budget for the travel expenses if they are not virtual? Will there be any other expenses related to the trainings?

Response: DHEC will engage with subrecipients to inquire on trainings needed throughout the grant year. These trainings will be hosted by DHEC and until further notice, all trainings will continue virtually.

- 6) On page 10 of the RFGA, it says that proposal packets must not exceed a total of 75 pages.
 - a. It mentions that the Table of Contents is page one. In the past 2 years' Question and Answer for this same RFGA, DHEC agreed to exclude the Table of Contents from the page count. Would DHEC consider that again this year? **Response: Yes.**
 - b. For the past 2 years under the Title V RFGA, we asked this question: *"Would DHEC consider removing the "program assurances" from the page count? We don't have control over the length of those required documents, and with the amount of supporting documents and MOUs that we have, it does not leave enough pages for us to adequately answer all of the required sections and explain our proposed implementation plan."* The following response was officially provided by DHEC: *"Yes. We will inform panelists as well of this change so that assurances will not be included in the page count."* For this year's State Evidence RFGA, we are asking that the same concession be allowed as was allowed in the other SRAE applications for the past 2 years so that assurances are not included in the page count, for the same reasons we gave as last year. We don't have control over the length of those required documents, and with the amount of supporting documents and school/community MOUs that we have, it does not leave enough pages for us to adequately answer all of the required sections and explain our proposed implementation plan. Also, recent reviewers on a previous SRAE applications complained that the required documents were not legible because we had to make them so small to fit many on a page with page limitations, and we believe that it would be better to have legible documents for the reviewers to see rather than documents reduced in size in order to fit a page count restriction. These documents are part of Eligibility and Responsiveness requirements (assurances) without points/scoring attached to them, so we want to make sure that they are legible so that we qualify for having our application reviewed by the scorers. Would DHEC consider removing the Program Assurances from the page count to allow 75 pages for answering the points sections? **Response: Yes. We will inform panelists that Program Assurances are not to be considered in the 75 page count.**
- 7) On page 12 of the RFGA, the last bullet under the Program Description section says "promote a trauma-informed approach, which involves understanding and responding to the symptoms of chronic interpersonal trauma and traumatic stress, as well as the behavioral and mental health consequences of trauma". Also on page 12, the 4th bullet under the Implementation Plan section says "describe how staff will promote a trauma-informed approach". Are these bullet points asking for duplicate information? Or, if they are not duplicates, can DHEC provide more clarity about what different information is expected for each of these 2 similar requirements?

Response: The last bullet under Program Description is asking that organizations describe any specific trainings that staff will receive to a trauma informed approach. The bullet under implementation is asking how will that approach be promoted within your implementation with youth (i.e. how will staff implement the trainings that have been identified).

- 8) On pages 11-13 of the RFGA, each section has been assigned a points value. However, we request that DHEC assign points in the RFGA to EACH requirement included in each section, just as the reviewers will have a scoresheet assigning point values to each requirement. It is difficult for an applicant to discern how to best use the space allocated by DHEC without a more detailed points system, such as is typically

provided in federal RFGAs. We request more detailed guidance and transparency about the scoring rubric for each requirement be added to the RFGA so that it isn't a scoring scale only known to reviewers and unknown to applicants.

Specifically:

- a) the Organizational Experience and Qualifications Section is worth 10 points and has 9 requirements—how is each requirement weighted in score value?
- b) the Program Description Section is worth 20 points with 9 requirements—how is each requirement weighted in score value?
- c) the Implementation and Goals/Objectives Section is worth 50 points with 7 requirements—how is each requirement weighted in score value?
- d) the Reporting and Evaluation Section is worth 10 points and includes 3 requirements—how is each requirement weighted in score value?
- e) the Budget Narrative and Summary Section is worth 10 points with 4 requirements—how is each requirement weighted in score value?

Response: The scoresheets that applicant receive reads: "SCORING: Met (Full Points), Almost Fully Met (3/4 Points), Partially Met (Half Points), Somewhat Met (1/4 Points), Unmet (0 points)". This is how scoring will be done.

- 9) In email communications with DHEC in June 2019, we requested that *"The 'points descriptions' sentences used in each section of the scoresheet be copied **verbatim** from the 'points description' sentences provided in each section of the RFGA. There is no defensible reason to tell the applicant one thing and then tell the people scoring the applications something else that has been reworded at the discretion of whoever is creating the scoresheet."* SC DHEC responded with *"We agree."* However, the scoresheets for previous applications, even as recently as Dec 2020, have not matched verbatim the points sections in the RFGA. Will DHEC provide assurance that the reviewers' scoresheets will be **verbatim** to the points section of the RFGA and that all required elements from the RFGA be included?

Response: The descriptions identified in the RFGA have been copied verbatim to the scoresheets that will be provided to review panelists.

- 10) In email communications with DHEC in June 2019, we requested *"The scoresheets should be distributed with the RFGA. Years of discrepancies between what the RFGA says and what the scoresheets say have made this request necessary. This way, any concerns about the scoresheet's points' descriptions not being exactly the same as the RFGA points descriptions – or either not being consistent with the funding legal standards – can be addressed prior to the process rather than after it is finished and awards have been announced, which makes the entire process harder on everyone involved."* SC DHEC responded with *"We agree."* We strongly request that the scoresheet that will be used for scoring this application be included within the RFGA so that there is accountability about the consistency and transparency for the applicants to fully know the scoring criteria. Will DHEC include the scoresheet in the RFGA?

Response: The scoresheet will not be included in the RFGA. However, once scoring is completed the scoresheets will be available via the FOIA process.

- 11) We request that DHEC provide a requirement to reviewers to provide comments justifying any point deductions on the scoresheet. Without comments, it cannot be determined what justified the

deduction, which also makes it more subjective than objective and can conceal bias. Also, applicants cannot learn from any feedback for improvement for future applications if comments/feedback is not provided. Will this requirement be added?

Response: We have stated on the scoresheet that if points are deducted, justification must be provided. Additionally, on last week, DHEC hosted a training with review panelists and this was explained again.

12) If changes are made to the RFGA in response to stakeholders' questions and feedback, we request that DHEC highlight any and all changes to assure that applicants do not miss major changes. In the past, Track Changes was also used to help identify additions, deletions, and edits.

Response: Each RFGA process is a new process and should be treated as such each grant cycle. There have not been any major changes made to this RFGA in response to the questions being asked.

State Emerging questions:

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Response: This eligibility requirement is only for those that it is applicable to. Advice is to place this information in "Organizational, history and qualifications" section of the application.

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