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United Way of Massachusetts Bay  
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## Community School Readiness Wiring (CSRW) Bidder's Conference Questions and Answers

### **ELIGIBLE ORGANIZATIONS & NEIGHBORHOODS**

- 1. My organization works in more than one neighborhood. How would we submit a proposal on behalf of more than one neighborhood?**

**Answer:** Organizations working in more than one neighborhood must select one of the neighborhoods they serve to propose for Community School Readiness Wiring or submit a separate proposal for each proposed neighborhood.

- 2. Is it possible for a community to be too large to propose?**

**Answer:** Not explicitly, but given the resources available targeting too large a community could stretch resources so far that effectiveness is jeopardized.

- 3. Are the defined neighborhoods aligned with Boston Redevelopment Authority planning districts?**

**Answer:** Yes.

- 4. Can BPS schools apply to be the hub agency?**

**Answer:** Yes.

- 5. Can we propose a neighborhood that crosses boundaries if there is a good argument for doing so?**

**Answer:** We want applicants to do what makes sense for their children and families, as long as it meets the criteria of our funder. We are happy to help organizations determine if the community they would like to propose is eligible. Please contact Katie Britton ([katie.britton@thrivein5boston.org](mailto:katie.britton@thrivein5boston.org) or 617-635-3189) for assistance with this aspect of the proposal.

- 6. How were CSRW neighborhoods chosen?**

**Answer:** Allston / Brighton, Charlestown, Mattapan and Roslindale were selected in order to build on other United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley or City of Boston sponsored early childhood initiatives. Smart from the Start works in Charlestown, Mattapan and Roslindale, and the Allston Brighton Early Childhood System of Care works in Allston / Brighton.

The following neighborhoods are eligible to be the 5<sup>th</sup> neighborhood for the current CSRW funding: East Boston, communities within Dorchester, Roxbury or

communities within Roxbury and South End. These neighborhoods were selected based on criteria agreed to with our funder, who wanted an assurance that the neighborhood would be a diverse, low income neighborhood. These criteria are:

- At least 500 children birth to under age 5 reside there.
- At least 70% of children birth to under age 5 are children of color
- At least 29% of children birth to under age 5 live in households that are under the federal poverty line

**7. Can an organization propose to implement Community School Readiness Wiring in Dorchester?**

**Answer:** Dorchester as a whole is not eligible for Community School Readiness Wiring, based on the poverty and race/ethnicity criteria listed on page 4 of the RFP. Organizations are welcome to propose smaller communities within Dorchester (Upham’s Corner, Field’s Corner etc.) as long as they meet the eligibility requirements listed on page 4 of the RFP. We are happy to help organizations determine if the community they would like to propose is eligible. Please contact Katie Britton ([katie.britton@thrivein5boston.org](mailto:katie.britton@thrivein5boston.org) or 617-635-3189) for assistance with this aspect of the proposal.

**8. Families are transient. Can we serve families who do not live in the neighborhood we propose?**

**Answer:** There is no expectation that CSRW neighborhoods will exclude residents of other neighborhoods, however the communication channels and family interaction opportunity partners (described in the RFP, Section III) must be within the CSRW neighborhood.

## **BUDGET & FUNDING**

**1. Can we use more than 20% of the budget for sub-contracts?**

**Answer:** Yes.

**2. At the community meeting over the summer, you presented the grant amount to be \$37,500. What changed your mind in terms of increasing the award from \$37,500 to \$100,000?**

**Answer:** The input we received at the community meetings caused us to increase the award amount to \$100,000 for 18 months and \$75,000 for 10 months. We did this by including in the grant amount funding for a.) expanding and enhancing services, b.) outreach and engagement of Family, Friend and Neighbor Care providers, and c.) data collection and Continuous Quality Improvement. This is in addition to the \$37,500 specifically allocated to hub agency activities for a total award of \$100,000.

**3. Do organizations need to state in their application whom they are going to subcontract with?**

**Answer:** No. We understand that it is possible that hub agencies will not know whom they will subcontract with until they form their School Readiness Roundtable and create a CSRW Project Plan. If, however, you do know some or all of your sub-contracting plans, we encourage you to state them in as specific and detailed a way as possible in your budget and budget narrative.

**4. What will happen at the end of this 18-month grant period?**

**Answer:** We cannot guarantee funding to continue the Community School Readiness Wiring process, because we do not have additional funding at this point. We are, however, actively pursuing additional funding for hub agencies selected through this RFP including additional funding from Kellogg and to enable more neighborhoods to begin the CSRW process.

**5. How will the funding be dispersed?**

**Answer:** Hub agencies funded for 18 months will receive, 50% of the award in January 2010 and 50% of the award upon submission of the CSRW Project Plan (within 6 months of receiving the grant). Hub agencies funded for 10 months will receive 100% of the grant in September 2010.

**6. According to the Request for Proposals (RFP), hub agencies can spend 50% of the grant on salaries, wages and benefits. The RFP also states that hub agencies must subcontract at least 20% of the grant. Can the funding that is allocated for subcontractors include salaries, wages and/or benefits of the subcontractor?**

**Answer:** Yes.

## **COLLABORATION**

**1. How many collaborators are you looking for in a neighborhood?**

**Answer:** We do not have any specific number of collaborators in mind. We encourage organizations to think about how to implement CSRW in a way that is most responsive to a community's strengths, needs and demographics and form collaborations based on this.

**2. Can organizations be partners of proposals in multiple neighborhoods?**

**Answer:** Yes.

**3. Can we partner with an organization not working in Boston?**

**Answer:** There is no prohibition against working with organizations not working in Boston. Whether or not such a partnership would enhance the implementation CSRW will depend on the specific situation.

**4. Does a hub agency need to be the fiscal agent too?**

**Answer:** Yes. The hub agency is the fiscal agent for the funds.

**5. Will Thrive in 5 share the names of the organizations applying to encourage collaboration?**

**Answer:** No.

## **APPLICATION / PROPOSAL**

**1. What research does Thrive in 5 have about early childhood development and Boston neighborhoods that you can make available to applicants to help create their proposals?**

**Answer:** We recommend using the following websites for more research and data about early childhood and Boston neighborhoods:

- <http://www.thrivein5boston.org/resources.html>
- <http://www.bostonequip.org/index.html>
- <http://www.bphc.org/about/research/hob/Pages/Home.aspx>
- <http://www.bostonindicators.org/IndicatorsProject/>

**2. Where should we direct questions about the RFP?**

**Answer:** Please contact Katie Madrigal, Thrive in 5 Ready Families Manager, with any questions about the RFP. Katie's can be reached at [katie.madrigal@thrivein5boston.org](mailto:katie.madrigal@thrivein5boston.org) or 617-624-8196.

**3. We already have an existing coalition, with existing infrastructure, including Memorandum/a of Commitment. Do we need to create new Memorandum/a of Commitment for Community School Readiness Wiring?**

**Answer:** You may submit the Memorandum/a of Commitment (and other infrastructure) that you already have.

**4. Can a collaboration be the hub agency?**

**Answer:** Organizations that apply as a collaboration must designate one organization as the fiscal and lead agent called the hub agency. This means that Thrive in 5 will transfer payment to one organization (i.e. the hub agency) and this organization will be accountable to Thrive in 5. The way that this hub agency divides the money is up to the organization and its collaborating partners. For example, if one organization in the collaboration will be in charge of Family, Friend and Neighbor Care outreach and engagement and another organization will be in charge of the data collection system, the hub agency may transfer funds within the collaboration. On the budget worksheet, this may be designated as contracted services, but it does not need to be designated in this

way. Please note: We do recommend that hub agencies use an award letter, subcontract or other formal agreement among collaborators.

**5. Can the deadline for proposals be extended?**

**Answer:** No. All proposals must be submitted by November 2, 2009 at 4 pm. No exceptions will be made.

**6. September 29 – November 2 is a short turn around time to prepare a collaborative proposal. Given this short time frame, does Thrive in 5 expect all the Memoranda of Commitment to be complete?**

**Answer:** We understand that this is a short time frame, and that solidifying Memorandum/a of Commitment takes time. The value of a Memorandum of Commitment is that it shows a partnership agreement and includes the specific responsibilities of each partnering organization. If you are not able to finalize Memorandum/a of Commitment before the application deadline, consider submitting what you feel is the best representation of your shared commitment. One alternative to submitting Memorandum/a of Commitment is to include Letters of Support, which do not have to be as detailed and do not have to describe individual responsibilities or partnership agreements.

**7. Appendix D, the Neighborhood Landscape Form, appears to have three pages. The last page is marked “Appendix C: Neighborhood Landscape (page 3 of 3).” Does this page belong to Appendix C or does it belong to Appendix D?**

**Answer:** This is a typo. Appendix D: Neighborhood Landscape Form is three pages. The last page is incorrectly labeled Appendix C.

## **PROPOSAL REVIEW PROCESS**

**1. If two compelling proposals are submitted from the same neighborhood, will Thrive in 5 make any efforts at “match making”?**

**Answer:** No.

**2. Will applications that demonstrate a sustainability plan be given a preference in the selection process?**

**Answer:** CSRW cannot be dependent on an outside funder indefinitely. We do not, however, expect this kind of sustainability after 18 months. There is no one question in the application that specifically asks about sustainability. One way an organization can show that they are thinking about long term sustainability is by describing how it envisions changing the way communities support families and building a permanent movement, rather than using CSRW simply to add new programs and services.

**3. What will happen to competitive proposals that are not funded through this RFP? Will the time spent creating a proposal go to waste?**

**Answer:** No, the time spent creating a competitive proposal will not go to waste. We will keep your proposal on file. We will offer constructive feedback on the proposal if requested. If we receive additional funding to implement CSRW in more Boston neighborhoods, which we fully expect we will, you will not need to create another full proposal. You will have the opportunity to update your proposal, and we may ask you to update it based on lessons learned from this RFP process. We will also release an RFP in order to enable other organizations to apply.

**4. What will Thrive in 5 do if no competitive proposals are submitted from one or more of the neighborhoods originally selected (Allston Brighton, Charlestown, Mattapan, Roslindale)?**

**Answer:** If the strongest proposal from 1 or more of the originally selected neighborhoods does not rank within the top 50% of all proposals received, the proposal/s will be flagged for a special review. A review team comprised of community readers and Thrive in 5 staff will read the flagged proposal/s and make a decision whether to fund it or not. If it is decided that the proposal/s is not strong enough to fund, we will award the grant to the 5th strongest proposal instead. In this case, we would be funding CSRW in more of the diverse, low income neighborhoods listed in the RFP (Roxbury or communities within Roxbury, communities within Dorchester, South End and East Boston) rather than all 4 of the originally selected neighborhoods.

**5. Will there be extra points awarded to organizations willing to make a cash match to the grant?**

**Answer:** No. We do not want to penalize organizations that are not able to make such a contribution because of limited resources.

## **DATA COLLECTION & EVALUATION**

**1. What are the data collection expectations for the 18-month grant period?**

**Answer:** According to Section III of the RFP, the minimum expectations for data collection are:

- A data collection system, developed jointly by Thrive in 5 and hub agencies, will be established to track the number of referrals among providers (at a minimum). This data system will also track the # and type of participation in and satisfaction with services provided.
- The hub agency and at least 5 partners are using this joint data collection system and submitting data to Thrive in 5 on a regular basis for Continuous Quality Improvement.

Hub agencies will also be expected to submit periodic reports to Thrive in 5 that document progress toward meeting the established expectations and logic model outputs and outcomes.

- 2. In terms of tracking referrals, is the expectation to include providers within the collaboration or is the expectation to include providers outside the collaboration too?**

**Answer:** The 18-month expectation is to include providers within the collaboration.

- 3. The RFP lists 18-month expectations. Are the expectations the same for the 10-month grant period?**

**Answer:** No. We will work with hub agencies selected for the 10-month grant period to modify the expectations based on a shorter grant period.

## **SUPPORT FOR HUB AGENCIES**

- 1. Will organizations be asked to give any of the grant back for logistical and/or technical support?**

**Answer:** No.

- 2. Does Thrive in 5 plan to develop learning communities for hub agencies?**

**Answer:** We plan to ask hub agencies how we can be most supportive and respond accordingly. This may include the development of a learning community if it is identified as a meaningful support. The RFP outlines the additional responsibilities of hub agencies that have already been established on page 12.

- 3. Are there any in-kind contributions Thrive in 5 can offer to supplement the grant?**

**Answer:** We do not have any in-kind contributions established to offer hub agencies at this point. We do, however, look forward to working with hub agencies to determine what support they need to be successful. Katie Madrigal, Thrive in 5 Ready Families Manager, will provide and coordinate technical assistance to hub agencies based on the needs they identify in their proposal (Question #8 of the proposal narrative) and throughout the grant period. The Thrive in 5 Data and Research Team and will provide technical assistance on data collection and the continuous quality improvement process.

## **BACKGROUND & INFORMATION**

- 1. Who submitted the W.K. Kellogg proposal?**

**Answer:** Thrive in 5 leadership.

**2. How will CSRW connect with other parts of Thrive in 5?**

**Answer:** While Community School Readiness Wiring is a Ready Families strategy according to the Thrive in 5 equation, we very much view it as a strategy that cuts across components to include early education and care, health care and early intervention systems and the City of Boston. When the CSRW foundation is established it will create an infrastructure that will enable many Thrive in 5 (and possibly other) strategies to be successful. We look forward to working with hub agencies as opportunities to integrate other Thrive in 5 strategies present themselves.

**3. Is Thrive in 5 committed to promoting the “communication channel” locations (bodegas etc.) described in the RFP?**

**Answer:** CSRW is designed to build on the relationships and routines families have in their neighborhood by equipping key entities with early childhood resources. The result is that families have multiple connection points to knowledge and opportunities that support their child’s learning and healthy development within their typical day, in their physical neighborhood, through sources they already know and trust. We are relying on hub agencies and their partners (including families) to determine where it is families go and whom they have relationships with.

Please note that CSRW is not about putting flyers in locations throughout a neighborhood. It is a relationship-based strategy that will be specific to each neighborhood’s strengths, needs and demographics.

**4. Does Thrive in 5 envision a city-wide message to flow through each of the CSRW neighborhoods?**

**Answer:** We envision the possibility of a city-wide message flowing through each CSRW neighborhood and look forward to working on it collaboratively with hub agencies.

**5. Do we need to use the title Community School Readiness Wiring in our neighborhood or can we come up with our own name?**

**Answer:** We know that the title Community School Readiness Wiring is confusing and can be misleading. We would like to use one name across all neighborhoods, so we look forward to working with hub agencies and the CSRW Advisory Group to develop a name for this strategy that is more appropriate and descriptive.

**6. What is the connection between Community School Readiness Wiring and Community Partnerships for Children (CPC) clusters?**

**Answer:** Community School Readiness Wiring is designed to build on existing community strengths, including Community Partnerships for Children

neighborhood clusters. We would like CPC clusters to be involved in CSRW in each neighborhood and will rely on communities to determine the specific nature of this involvement. Connections are likely to be different in each neighborhood, depending on the work of the CPC cluster and the neighborhood's strengths and needs. Note: Two CPC lead agents are members of the CSRW Advisory Group, and therefore, were involved in designing the RFP and the selection process.