

**RFP#103: Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness  
and Resiliency in Education) Technical Assistance**

**TO:** Bidders and Interested parties  
**FROM:** Department of Mental Health (DMH)  
**DATE:** October 16, 2023  
**RE:** RFP Questions and Responses

**ISSUE DATE:** 10/10/2023

**QUESTIONS DUE:** 10/16/2023, 4:30pm ET

**RFP RESPONSES DUE BY:** 11/06/2023, 4:30pm ET

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- 1. The focus of most of the work appears to be providing support to the state team and to coordinate some support directly to LEAs. Given that the funding limit decreases every year, with the steepest drop after year 1, can you share more about the state's vision for the role of the TA provider in relation to the state team and LEAs and how it would change each year?**
    - a) We are using the gradual release model. In year one we are building capacity, collecting baseline data, and aligning VTmtss and Interconnected Systems Framework (ISF). In the ensuing years the focus will gradually shift from providing professional learning to engaging as thought partners to support sustainability beyond the scope of the grant.
  
  - 2. What are the expected start and end dates of the contract? Will the \$120,000 for year 1 be available the full 12 months or only through September 2024? Will it be prorated based on the delayed start?**
    - a) The contract is anticipated to start 12/1/2023 or as soon as negotiations allow. The YR1 funds are available through September 2024 (9/29/2024). The maximum available funding is for the federal funding period through 9/29/2024 and the bidder should include details in the budget to cover that period.
  
  - 3. How long do you anticipate the LEA MOUs, DCLT formation, and hiring of LEA Coordinators will take? The DMH Project Aware proposal narrative states that DCLTs will review community data to inform local needs assessments by 3.19.24. Is there any flexibility on this deadline?**
    - a) The Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) from SAMHSA requires submission of an implementation plan "no later than six months after award", which is March 30, 2024. Implementation plans are to be informed by the local needs assessment, therefore there is not flexibility with the deadline, other than moving it up earlier.
  
  - 4. Will the successful bidder have the opportunity to collaborate with the state team on the creation of the LEA MOUs and support around the formation of the DCLTs?**
    - a) The State would support the TA entity's assistance on those activities.
  
  - 5. Will there be separate funding available to the LEAs to implement their plans (with unique priorities) based on the DCLT needs assessment findings?**

a) Yes, there will be separate funding agreements with each LEA to implement their plan with some common requirements across all LEAs and some locally-driven components based on their local needs assessment. Please refer to the VT proposal.

**6. If onsite learning events are planned, who will cover the facility and food logistics and event costs?**

- a) SAMHSA funding is not permitted to be used towards food, even in the context of a full-day event. Meals would be the responsibility of each individual attendee.
- b) The State team would work with the TA entity to identify free or low-cost venues for learning events. The cost of a venue is an allowable cost for use of the federal funding. For the annual in-person meetings of all LEA/DAs and partners, the State would be responsible for arranging the site. For any TA-specific in-person meetings, the TA entity would be responsible for the cost related to securing a location; the State can assist with identifying a location.

**7. While the TA provider is expected to primarily provide support to the LEA/DCLT, can the work also be directed to the individual school teams?**

- a) To ensure equity and sustainability the needs of individual school teams will be supported in alignment with LEA/DCLT goals and expectations of this grant.

**8. In the linked Project AWARE Narrative, we see the YRBS data was used to highlight many of the concerns of Vermont youth in the three LEAs. Since YRBS data only addresses strengths and risks for middle and high school students, would you support the TA provide in helping the LEAs identify and problem-solve around data trends for younger students?**

- a) Yes, the TA could assist LEAs in identifying alternative data sets to look at trends for younger students, such as school climate surveys.

**9. Who will the State Team membership be by agency and position title?**

- a) Department of Mental Health: Director, Child, Adolescent and Family Unit; School Mental Health & Practice Development Coordinator; AWARE Lead Coordinator (to be hired)
- b) Agency of Education: Director, Student Support Services Division; Assistant Director, Student Support Services Division (Vermont Multi-tiered System of Supports (VTmtss) manager); AWARE Co-Coordinator (to be hired), other AOE representatives as it relates to quality improvement activities.

**10. Have the selected LEAs and DAs agreed to be partners in the implementation of this grant or will this be part of the vendor's scope of work to facilitate this partnership?**

- a) The NOFO required written letters of commitment from each LEA and DA, so they each agreed to be partners in implementing this project.

**11. CLARIFICATION: What does "Single Vendor" element mean in regard to the TA Services?**

- a) The "single vendor" element in the TA Services RFP doesn't prohibit an entity from submitting a proposal to both RFPs. It just means final contracts won't be awarded to a single entity for both scopes of work. While DMH cannot make determinations about specific entities prior to the RFP closing and reviewing proposals, a bidder can provide documentation in their TA proposal to support the separation/distinction of their entity from a potential bidder for the evaluation services.