Responses to Questions from Question/Answer Period

FY22 Nicotine and Substance Use Prevention Grant

# If we do not have 2019 district Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) data, should we use 2017 for our needs statement and overall application?

Please note: we recently learned that the 2019 YRBS SU/SD level data *has* been released to schools, it just has not been uploaded completely to the public website by Department of Health. Please request a copy from your principal for use in your application. If you have difficulty getting it or if that is not possible, email Beth Keister for a copy.

In the event that 2019 data wasn’t available to everyone, the plan was to encourage people to use whatever data they had, including 2017 to whatever extent it was relevant, to complete their applications and especially the needs statement. In that case, AOE would also have changed the first scored section (which depends on 2019 data).

# Who has to complete the worksheet in Appendix H?

This worksheet is only required for applicants who propose to do completely self-designed programs for Strategy 5. Self-designed means that the program will not have any affiliation with an established/external program such as, but *not* limited to, Getting to Y, UMatter, Above the Influence, etc. The purpose of the worksheet is to make clear the connection between the proposed youth engagement activity and the aspects of youth engagement/empowerment and topics of nicotine and/or substance use prevention, mental health, and/or other related topics. For example, suppose that an applicant wanted to fund a youth engagement group that involved woodworking and which was totally self-designed—not based on any kind of program outline that can be easily referenced elsewhere. They would be required to connect this activity (which we can all agree is “nice,” but not necessarily meeting the description of youth engagement and empowerment) to the Youth Engagement/Empowerment strategy. The worksheet provides a clear way to do so. On the other hand, groups such as those mentioned above already have specific goals and outcomes that relate to youth engagement. Therefore, including those in the work plan does not require the completion of this worksheet.

If you choose a pre-established program for youth engagement and empowerment, still be sure to summarize the purpose and goals of that program in question 6e. and to spell out all acronyms.

# We have been using the WSCC model all this year and reading over the grant application it looks like the SHI will be replacing the WSCC model.  Is this correct?

WSCC (Whole School Whole Child Whole Community) is more of a model or approach to school health overall. It’s a great model, and one I recommend, but it is not explicitly required (or mentioned) in this new round of the grant as it was in the old one. SHI (School Health Index) is different; it is an actual self-assessment and planning *tool* used to take inventory of current school health policy/programs and determine next steps for improvement. The SHI was required in the FY17-21 grant and will be required in the next round for first-time grantees. Prior grantees would have completed the SHI work a couple of years ago. Prior grantees should summarize the work and accomplishments to date for the policy strategy (and for all strategies, regardless of whether they are choosing to take them on for FY22, in questions 6a.-6f).

For previous grantees, the policy strategy (like all of the strategies) is technically optional.  Additionally, if a returning grantee does wish to take on school health policy in this next round, they don’t necessarily need to complete the SHI again unless they feel it would be useful. For example, a returning grantee may opt to do the Policy strategy but only to continue with some policy initiatives that they are still working on as of this spring that need ongoing work.  On the other hand, if it has been several years since the SHI was last completed or if other circumstances suggest an update would be good, a different returning grantee may choose to take on this strategy and do the whole SHI again.

# If a previous grantee has struggled to accomplish certain deliverables in the past, will that harm their chances of getting the grant again?

Previous struggles don’t automatically lower ones chances.  The context of why that was the case is more important.

Previous grantees are permitted to apply for any number of strategies rather than committing to all six. However, the degree to which a previous grantee was or was not able to meet the requirements of all strategies in prior years is still important for consideration in the next round as this provides the reviewers with information regarding how well the grantee was able to accomplish what they set out to do.  This doesn’t necessarily mean that any challenges will be taken as a predictions of future challenges. The chances of being awarded the grant would depend on the application in its entirety; part of that involves how the applicant demonstrates readiness and ability to take on the work they sign up for moving forward, despite any past challenges.

Past challenges should be acknowledged and also explained. For example, struggling with deliverables in the past despite best efforts and due to almost impossible circumstances is very different than having struggled due to not making the best effort.

# If we choose to not apply for a section, do we write in the section why we are choosing not to or just leave blank?

Returning grantees need to write something about what they accomplished related to each strategy for questions 6a.-f. If not choosing that strategy for FY22 and beyond, they should briefly explain why. For strategies they are choosing for FY22 and beyond, they would then go on to describe their plan.

That is the section where grantees can summarize their work to date specific to each strategy and this will give the reviewers that context and background. This is important both to provide a rationale for not choosing a particular strategy as well as rationale for choosing to continue with a particular strategy.

For instance, if a returning grantee has recently overhauled their curricular offerings with the HECAT, this would help explain why they aren’t choosing to go with the curricular strategy (or why they are choosing to do it but only need to purchase extra copies of curricula vs. completing the HECAT).  Another example would be if a grantee struggled with a particular strategy due to x, y, z reasons despite their best efforts, that would provide context for why they aren’t including it for their FY 22 proposal.

# Can the grant be used to purchase "vape" detectors for school bathrooms?

That type of item is not something that is specifically prohibited as far as I know. So, theoretically, a bidder could include that in a budget. Whether that application as a whole or any of the aspects therein, such as that budget, were accepted and awarded would depend on various factors, including how clearly the plan and investments related to the grant strategies described in the grant documents.

# Regarding question(s) 6: If a returning grantee does not choose to take on all six strategies, will they fare worse than a first time grantee who will be taking on all six?

The total score for this section does not depend on how many strategies an applicant takes on. An applicant will not automatically get less points because they apply for fewer strategies. The scoring for this section (see rubric) depends on a) addressing objectives for each strategy chosen and (for previous grantees), b) summarizing past accomplishments, c) providing rationale for choosing or not choosing that strategy. In other words, it is the strength and quality of the response, not the amount of work, which determines the scoring.

# Are VT independent schools, who primarily function as public schools and participate in the YRBS, eligible to apply for this grant?

Applicants must be a supervisory union or district rather than an individual school. However, an independent school would be encouraged to reach out to the SU/SD closest to them to see if they would be interested in applying for and collaborating on the grant. In the past, other districts have done this. The school district applied and was awarded the grant, and they collaborated with the local independent high school to both help carry out the work of the grant and for the students at that high school to benefit from it. This type of partnership is particularly useful when the actual SU does not contain a high school.

# Food

There is an error in the grant document, which states that food purchases are prohibited. This is actually not accurate. Food purchases can be allowed to the extent that they are “supplies” to support one of the approved activities that link directly to grant strategies (for instance, bubblegum for cessation “quit kits” that students might put together, or snacks at youth engagement or family engagement meetings to help foster participation. Any food purchases must:

* Must have an approved Tobacco Grant award that allows purchase of the food in the budget detail.
* The food must be for an event or activity that was approved in a grant
* It cannot be candy in a bowl on top of a desk for anyone to help themselves to.
* Must have an approved purchase order signed by the business office before purchasing the food.  On the purchase order it must state what the food item is for and the date it will be used.
* Reimbursement can’t include sales tax and requires a receipt
* Examples of food related purchases that would not be allowed: paying for an expensive dinner for a youth meeting and transportation to get there rather than purchasing snacks and having a meeting at school.

# How many grants are available?

There is no specific number of grants available due to the fact that it’s not known how many people will apply and for how much, and who will be awarded and for how much. There is currently enough funding to support roughly 15 grants at the full $35,000 each. However, some applicants may request less money due to the scope of the work plan. The review team may also decide to issue partial awards in some cases, depending on the quality of the applications and the scope of the work plans. As such, it is difficult to determine how many grantees there will be.

# What data will AOE refer to if the LEA/SU does not include a high school?

If there is no high school YRBS data to draw from, the middle school data will be used. In either case, the score range will correlate with the range of SU/SD scores statewide. That is, the same range of possible points will be awarded and the score range for middle school data would be based on the low, median and high middle school scores.

# If the supervisory union (SU) has an area high school that they partner with but which is not part of the SU, can the RFP include collaborating efforts and activities such as OVX?

Yes, so long as that high school is not part of another SU/SD who is also receiving the grant. Even if they were, that collaboration could still be encouraged, but grantees could not both receive funds to support that same group.

One example might be that there is an independent high school in the same region as a public SU/SD. The grantee (which would have to be the district or SU) would be encouraged to reach out to and collaborate with that independent school to partner on and benefit from the grant work. It would just need to be very explicit how that collaboration would work and there would need to be contracts in place.

# What options are there if the LEA/SU doesn’t include a high school with regards to forming an OVX group?

If there is no high school within the LEA or that the LEA would want to partner with (such as in the example above), then the grantee would simply commit to the VKAT group (middle school) and potentially have a small adjustment in award to account for the lack of high-school level OVX work.

# The School Health Index (SHI) has multiple modules. Which modules are required to complete by June 30 of the first fiscal year? Are all modules required to be completed?

The goal is for all modules to be completed within the first year. All modules are required to be completed.

# If the SU doesn’t include a high school, how should the SU address annually offering NOT (Not-On-Tobacco cessation program)?

The NOT program can be offered at the middle school level. Additionally, as mentioned above, the grantee would be welcomed and encouraged to collaborate with any independent high schools, as part of their grant work, or other area organizations serving area high school aged youth to offer the cessation services to high school youth when possible and appropriate.

# Reminders:

All grantees may apply for up to $35,000. There is no specific amount allocated per strategy, but it is also assumed that, if a previous grantee is applying for the full $35,000, they will plan to take on all strategies.

All grantees may apply for differing amounts of funding from year to year, if desired. The prospective budget is intended to anticipate any of those fluctuations, if applicable.

It is intended to be a three year grant. The competitive process happens this spring (for FY22) only. A competitive process does not happen in each year of the grant. However, grantees will need to submit a work plan for review and approval in the second and third years of the grant in order to secure funds for the second and third years. Funds are contingent on timely completion of the work plans and deliverables, and on the availability of funding to AOE.

It is the Supervisory Union or District who is ultimately the applicant and potential recipient. If another individual or organization is involved in the preparation of the application, the coordination of the grant and/or the implementation of the grant activities, this is fine (there must be a contract in place). However, the responsibility still rests within the SU/SD.