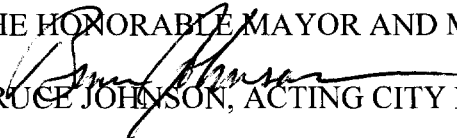


City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** NOVEMBER 1, 2011  
**TO:** THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL  
**FROM:**  BRUCE JOHNSON, ACTING CITY MANAGER  
**SUBJECT:** GRANT PROPOSAL FOR 2010 ACTION COMMUNITIES FOR HEALTH, INNOVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE

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**ISSUE:** Consideration of a grant application submitted in response to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Association of City and County Health Officials (NACCHO) call for proposals released October 11, 2011.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council:

- (1) Approve the submission of the grant application (submission deadline was November 7, 2011); and
- (2) Authorize the City Manager to execute the necessary documents that may be required.

**BACKGROUND:** In February 2009, the Alexandria Health Department, on behalf of the *Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria*, received an ACHIEVE (Action Communities for Health, Innovation, and EnVironmental change) grant of \$40,000 over three years from NACCHO and the CDC. Since that time, the Alexandria Childhood Obesity Action Network (COAN) – formerly the ACHIEVE Planning Team that grew from the initial grant – has evolved to include more than 80 partners and volunteers. COAN has been instrumental in developing community change around breastfeeding, food accessibility, preschool education, and playground accessibility.

Some of the Childhood Obesity Action Network’s achievements in the last two years include:

- Creation of the Health Preschool Network dedicated to leading health initiatives within the preschool community. In October 2010, fourteen preschools (including 22 centers, 45 classrooms, and over 1,000 children) and 30 family day care providers adopted an evidence-based healthy eating program called “Color Me Healthy” to encourage the consumption of fruits and vegetables. Based on overwhelming positive feedback from family child care providers piloting Color Me Healthy, the Early Childhood Division of the Department of Community and Human Services recently decided to adopt Color Me Healthy for providers city-wide. A new physical activity-oriented program called “Active Play!” is now being launched.

- Collaboration with Inova Alexandria Hospital and the Four Mile Run Farmers Market to establish a “Double Dollar” program that doubles the first ten dollars that SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) participants spend at the farmers market each week. This farmers market is one of the first in Northern Virginia to accept Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT)/SNAP. Through August more than \$700 has been distributed through this program.
- Partnership with the Alexandria Redevelopment Housing Authority (ARHA) to establish adult garden plots and a children’s garden with gardening and healthy cooking programs. It is now in its second year. In the first year, 54% of participants reported that they spent less money at the grocery store during the gardening season, and 77% reported that they got to know their neighbors better as a result of gardening.
- Partnership with The Reading Connection, an organization dedicated to encouraging a lifelong love of reading to children in housing crisis, to host weekly read-aloud programs at ARHA. Once a month the read-aloud programs focus on healthy eating and active living themed-topics.
- Commencement of planning for the “Play Spaces for Tots” Initiative -- included in Goal 2 of the Alexandria City Council Strategic Plan -- by conducting a community-wide assessment of public and private playgrounds for children, ages 2-5.

On October 11, NACCHO and the CDC released a call for proposals inviting current ACHIEVE communities to mentor another jurisdiction which would subsequently strengthen their own coalitions and provide platforms for developing cross-cutting action plans to address chronic disease factors such as obesity. This grant award would fund each community \$20,000. Alexandria’s funding would be targeted towards continued implementation of the COAN’s obesity prevention plan, as well as to cover travel and training costs for mentoring our neighboring jurisdiction Prince William County.

Given the quick turnaround time required by grant application deadlines, the grant was submitted to NACCHO by its deadline on November 7, 2011 after consultation with the City Manager’s Office.

**DISCUSSION:** Both Alexandria and Prince William County have high rates of unhealthy weight among children. Individual members of both coalitions (COAN and the Healthy Greater Prince William Coalition) have been meeting informally over the last year; this grant will provide a critical opportunity to expand the dialogue and to foster interregional collaboration and exchanges of information that will benefit the children and families of both our communities.

The grant requires at least one community visit to Prince William County and attendance at a Coaches Meeting and Learning Institute by at least two COAN members. The Coaches Meeting and Learning Institute will be excellent opportunities for coalition members to learn more about effective obesity prevention efforts from national experts. Travel and training costs for mentoring Prince William County’s coalition will be covered by the grant and it is anticipated that the benefits of the collaborative exchange for both communities will far outweigh the costs.

The total amount of the grant, if awarded, is \$20,000 per community. Staff estimates that approximately \$5,000 awarded to Alexandria will be spent in fulfilling the grant’s mentoring

requirements mentioned above and the remaining sum (approximately \$15,000) will be used in implementing the obesity prevention plan of the Partnership's Childhood Obesity Action Network and continuing its work in the community.

Over the last two years, COAN has been able to leverage its initial NACCHO/CDC funding of \$40,000 to raise an additional \$102,967 in grant funding to support obesity prevention initiatives; this does not include all the additional in-kind time and resources that volunteers and community partners have devoted towards COAN initiatives.

If awarded, the grants will help with synergies around the obesity in Alexandria and the region. COAN volunteers and partners are enthusiastic about this possibility. Alexandria Health Department and Prince William County Health Department already have excellent working relationships. Northern Virginia Health Foundation has provided leadership by bringing COAN and The Healthy Greater Prince William Coalition together for initial discussions and sharing of concepts.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** If awarded, the Alexandria Health Department will receive \$20,000 with approximately \$5,000 used to support the mentoring responsibilities and \$15,000 used to fund COAN's obesity prevention existing work in breastfeeding, food accessibility, preschool education, and playgrounds.

No City funding match is required and grant funding is provided by NACCHO upfront.

**STAFF:**

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