

December 18, 2014

Ms. Stephanie Celestain  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
HIV Prevention Project Officer

Dear Ms. Celestain,

As the Community Co-Chairs of the Chicago Area HIV Integrated Services Council (CAHISC), we are writing to you on behalf of the Steering Committee to voice our absolute objection to the Chicago Department of Public Health's (CDPH) management of the Request for Proposals (RFP) for HIV Prevention Projects (RFP# DA-41-3350-11-2014-003). Funding for this proposal comes from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and is aligned with CDC's Cooperative Agreement for HIV Prevention Projects (PS12-1201). After long discussion with CDPH staff, the Steering Committee believes that CDPH implemented an unfair, unethical, and potentially illegal competitive process. As a collective, we are voicing our disapproval for official record.

Chicago has been making tremendous strides to set national benchmarks for community involvement in the priority setting and resource allocation process for HIV prevention, care and housing services. CAHISC is the new HIV planning council for CDPH and is one of the first planning bodies in the nation to integrate HIV prevention, care, and housing priorities. This council provides guidance and feedback to CDPH on the allocation of approximately \$39,000,000 for HIV prevention, care, and housing services in the city of Chicago and 9 collar counties. Since 2012, CAHISC has worked hard to establish itself as a partner to CDPH in influencing the direction of HIV funding. In August, CAHISC released the first-of-its-kind Unified Plan, which summarizes a two-year process of evaluating data and needs assessments to determine the most effective investments that will increase our HIV prevention, testing, linkage and retention to care, and, ultimately, viral suppression.

CDPH publicly released the Request for Proposals on November 12, 2014 and set an application due date of December 8, 2014, which results in a 26-day turnaround for response. CAHISC Steering Committee made multiple requests to expedite an RFP release well before the actual date or provide other accommodations (i.e. extend current contracts for a period of months) to allow for thoughtful and well-constructed applicant response to the RFP. CAHISC recommendations were not taken into consideration for establishing the timeline of the competitive process.

CAHISC and the community were notified on December 9, one day after the proposal due date, that CDPH was extending the deadline to 4:30 pm on December 10. Furthermore, it was communicated from CDPH that the reason for extending the deadline was to accommodate a handful of applicants who arrived to deliver their proposals "15-20 minutes" after the deadline. This decision was made and communicated after the deadline and directly conflicts with the language in the RFP which stated numerous times that "No proposals will be accepted for any reason after this deadline."

On December 11, CDPH released a letter to the community stating that the intent behind the extension was "so that the applicant pool be more representative of communities most impacted by the epidemic." While the Steering Committee respects that intention, we, without debate, believe the decision to extend the deadline provides an unfair advantage to the handful of organizations that did not follow the expectations outlined in the proposal. The Steering Committee believes that this decision overshadows the otherwise strong transparency and community involvement in the planning process as well as the competitive funding process. In addition, due to its conflict with the published RFP as well as its selective implementation (it was decided to extend the deadline only after select agencies missed it in an effort to accommodate them), the decision was unethical and potentially illegal.

According to the CAHISC Bylaws, approved on June 25, 2014, one of the three purposes of the body is to "evaluate the administrative mechanism of the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH)." In addition, the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between CAHISC and CDPH, signed by the Community Co-Chairs and government representatives, states in regards to the RFP process that "Procurement is the Administrative Agency's responsibility,

but CDPH works with CAHISC to assure that directives are being addressed.” This explicitly states that CAHISC has a responsibility to ensure the integrity of the competitive process, prompting this letter.

Thank you for taking the time to review our concerns. The Steering Committee ask that you investigate this competitive process to determine if it was implemented in a way that is fair and ethical. We are open to having further conversation with you, and encourage you to reach out to us at Cheryl.potts@alexian.net or at pmclloyd@cookcountyhhs.org. We will assist in facilitating a conversation with the appropriate parties.

Again, thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Peter McLoyd  
Community Co-Chair, Elect



Cheryl Potts  
Community Co-Chair, Select