

2008 Innovations Awards Program APPLICATION

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ID # (assigned by CSG): 08-E-12MA

Please provide the following information, adding space as necessary:

State: Massachusetts

Assign Program Category (applicant): Health & Human Services: Children and Families (Use list at end of application)

1. Program Name: DD Suite National Collaboration
2. Administering Agency: Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council
3. Contact Person (Name and Title): Craig Hall, Chief Financial Officer
4. Address: 1150 Hancock Street, Third Floor, Suite 300, Quincy, MA 02169
5. Telephone Number: 617-770-7676 ext. 106
6. FAX Number: 617-770-1987
7. E-mail Address: craig.hall@state.ma.us
8. Web site Address: www.mass.gov/mddc/ddsuite
9. Please provide a two-sentence description of the program.

The DD Suite National Collaboration is a unique intergovernmental partnership between 36 State Councils on Developmental Disabilities to achieve a higher level of program performance for their states and to develop uniformity and consistency in performance reporting. Although located within state governments, DD Councils are created under federal law and funded by state appropriation and with federal funds allotted by Congress.

10. How long has this program been operational (month and year)? Note: the program must be between 9 months and 5 years old on March 1, 2008 to be considered.

The collaboration began with 11 states in 2005, growing to 24 in 2006, and 36 in 2007.

11. Why was the program created? What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address?

Several years of level funding has strained the ability of DD Councils to effectively meet their mandates, and the collaboration was formed to address this through the development of a model that would improve data management, operational efficiency and program performance.

The national collaboration effectively addressed two interrelated issues. The on-line data collection system implemented by the U.S. Administration for Children and Families is archaic and unreliable, not conducive to quality data analysis, and provides no real benefit to states. Utilizing the system requires time consuming manual data entry, forcing a shift of Council resources away from addressing program needs within their states to meeting administrative requirements for the federal government. Through the collaboration State Councils agreed to a uniform, reliable, and accurate system of collecting performance data and created a universal tool to archive, analyze and report performance data.

The prospect of collaborating for solutions resonated because it would offer significant benefits in terms of mitigating risk, leveraging resources, and providing other mutual gains. In addition, no single State Council, the national association of Councils, or the federal oversight agency had yet been able to provide solutions to the State Councils' common issues of performance measurement, cost-effectiveness, and lack of data analysis tools needed to make critical decisions about staff allocation, grant efficacy and other business decisions.

12. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.

Winter 2005: MA State Council designs a performance measurement and outcome reporting database while considering the idea of collaborating on problems and issues facing State Councils.

Spring 2005: MA engages four State Councils also exploring the idea of collaboration. A pre-pilot of a collaborative model and adaptation of the DD Suite was completed.

June 2005: MA is invited to present the results of the collaborative model and replicability of the DD Suite at the annual technical assistance institute in Washington, D.C. A conceptual outline and partnership is explored.

Fall 2005: With support from the national association and U.S. Administration on Developmental Disabilities \$10,000 in funding for a pilot of the collaborative model as well as universal enhancements to the DD Suite. An additional five State Councils are included for a year 1 pilot.

July 2006: MA facilitates presentation by states at annual technical assistance institute on the results of the pilot which included a governance plan, strategic goals, and project plan for year 2.

Fall 2006 – June 2007: The second year of the pilot expands the collaboration from 11 to 24 State Councils. The collaboration continues to gain support from the national association and technical assistance funding from the federal government as results and success is reported.

June 2007: The collaboration is offered technical assistance funding for a dedicated topical session at the annual technical assistance institute. The collaboration continues to formalize the governance and sets strategic goals for the 2008 fiscal year.

September 2007: In meeting a strategic goal, the collaboration approves a project plan for an update to the DD Suite.

October 2007-To Date: In meeting strategic goals, new State Councils are added to the collaboration and outreach plan to smaller minimum allotment states is completed.

June 2008: MA and collaboration is invited to present their collaborative model at the annual technical assistance institute in Washington, DC.

13. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?

The model of collaboration is unique for intergovernmental partnerships. It was initiated as a defensive posture to respond to the pressures of federal mandates, but evolved into a collaboration to proactively address issues that cross-cut states and regions. The Massachusetts State Council led efforts to establish the collaboration, and the partnership has expanded to 36 State Councils in just two years. All Councils are equal partners in setting the objectives to be achieved and developing the strategies of the collaboration. This collaboration is most innovative in that specific problems have been addressed through mutual leadership and investment.

Our investigation indicates there is no intergovernmental collaboration like ours. In addition to addressing issues between State Councils, the collaboration has changed the federal-state relationship in a way that no other program has been able to do. This change is best evidenced by the commitment from the U.S. Administration for Children and Families to revise the federal data collection to be compatible with the DD Suite data management system, a key product and tool of the collaboration. The initiative to collaborate was driven by State Councils and changed the state relationship with the federal government from subservient grantee to a partner more equally invested in achieving results.

14. What were the program's start-up costs? (Provide details about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other financial expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)

A pre-pilot lead by Massachusetts that included Maine, Vermont, Arizona, and Wisconsin funded the model for collaboration as well as joined in developing a performance management tool. This group was then invited to present the model and performance management tool at the 2005 Technical Assistance Institute in Washington, DC.

The collaborative team approach was appealing to many other State Councils as well as our federal partner which approved \$10,000 for a pilot of the collaboration as a national model. The pilot included the original five State Councils and expanded to 11, surveyed and selected from a diverse segment based on several factors that included demographics. During the second year of the pilot the collaboration expanded to 24 State Councils in 2006 and now includes 36 State Councils and continuing to expand with continuing interest from other state programs.

The federal government and State Councils and national association have since provided over \$30,000 in matching funds to the collaboration and in replicating the DD Suite database in 2006

and over \$42,000 in 2007. The collaboration has solved many issues and problems for State Councils particularly to the application of performance measurements and federal mandates.

15. What are the program's annual operational costs?

The staff from State Councils, generally through a designated liaison, as well as executive directors lead and govern the collaboration. The cost of staff time is absorption by the State Council because the interaction and activities of the collaboration are part of the strategic operations of the collaborators.

16. How is the program funded?

The resources for the collaboration include financial and in-kind support from the collaborating states, and technical assistance funds. The only remaining cost for the collaboration is outlined in a project plan that has been approved by the collaboration to update the major product of the collaboration, the DD Suite, to an online system. The budget plan for this is approximately \$100,000. The collaboration plans to request a segment of the annual technical assistance funding be dedicated to maintenance of this system or adoption by the federal partner for continued operation.

17. Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations? If YES, please indicate the citation number.

No.

18. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program?

The collaboration doesn't require dedicated technology or software, nor does it limit the expansion, adaptability, and replication of this model.

19. To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator's name, present address, telephone number and e-mail address.

The idea and vision for a better way to conduct business began with a cross-section of stakeholders. The Council Members, the governing body of each State Council, in Massachusetts, the staff, sub-grantees, state-wide self advocacy organization, and other partners challenged the existing process and reporting mechanisms for State Councils to the federal government, particularly that for Massachusetts.

At that time other State Councils were considering means to improve performance of their organization as well as reduce administrative inefficiencies while also adding more effective value to their limited resources. The idea of collaborating resonated because of the mutual gains in sharing resources. That and neither the national association, federal partner, nor individual State Councils were able and capable of providing the answers they needed to common problems that all State Councils needed to address. State Councils were also struggling with what was described as a parent – child relationship with our federal oversight agency. This last issue may have

been the inspiration for thinking beyond state borders and the limitations in the role of the federal partner.

20. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ?

The model of collaboration and approach has not been replicated or adapted from any other practice or innovation. The evidence of this is the fact that after tremendous research we have found no similar state model or state-federal model that has improved federal program success in the states that also challenged the federal-state relationship, and achieved increased outcomes based on federal performance measures. All states have federal funding and struggle with formulas that sometimes reward bureaucracy not creativity. This unique intergovernmental collaboration has focused on and succeeded in using more of their federal funding on priorities of the state, not on administrative bureaucracy of the federal government.

21. Has the program been fully implemented? If NO, what actions remain to be taken?

The model has been piloted and now being implemented across State Councils. As with any new model the partnering states continue to expand on the strategic goals and objectives of the collaboration.

22. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program's effectiveness in addressing the defined problem[s] or issue[s]. Provide tangible examples.

The model of collaboration has provided three significant outcomes. The first is the approach in the state-federal relationship. All states receive federal funds for many programs. The funds come with mandates and a tremendous administrative burden often siphoning more and more of those funds from program priorities. This collaboration can be adapted to other state programs that receive federal funds and that are also required to comply with the federal government's mandate for performance reporting. For example, in Massachusetts, the amount of person-hours spent on administrative tasks such as filing reports, tracking and collating performance measures and the like, was reduced by nearly 60%, an average annual savings of approximately 6,240 person-hours, or roughly 3 full time equivalents. Assuming that other State Councils have similar administrative costs and savings, the collaboration could reduce the administrative costs of all the State Councils by over \$20 million annually.

The second outcome is a product used by all the collaborators that was developed to meet higher performance demands and as a means to measure performance and achievements. Again, in Massachusetts, we were able to meet higher performance demands by increasing our efficiency. The Massachusetts State Council uses the Performance Measure Index, or PMI, as a means to gauge how efficiently our dollars are being spent. We calculate the PMI by dividing the sum of our performance measures by inflation adjusted dollars spent on program activities. In FFY 2003, our PMI was 1,517, and in FFY 2004 our PMI had jumped to 2,027, an increase of 33.6% after one year of analysis. In 2005 and 2006, the index stood at 2,312 and 2,168, respectively. In short,

we were able to operate about 1/3 more effectively after implementing the new data analysis tools developed for and by the collaboration.

This innovation, being a model of collaboration, doesn't have limitations, or barriers that can't be overcome. The model and concept is defined and designed by those who need to collaborate as a means to bring efficiency and effectiveness with measurable results to their state programs.

The third, The State Council's primary customers are the nearly 5.5 million U.S. citizens with a developmental disability (Gollay & Associates National Prevalence Rate). Our primary focus is to engage in activities that result in changes in public policy that foster greater inclusion, integration, productivity, and independence of people with developmental disabilities. The collaboration allows us to focus more of our time and money on our primary customers, and less on our administrative tasks. The collaboration has also provided us insight into which projects are having the greatest effect, and allows us to correlate those projects with their expenditures to find the projects that have the greatest efficiency.

In addition to the reduced administrative workload and the concomitant reduction in administrative costs, by collaborating State Councils have benefited from other financial benefits. If we assume that all 36 of the current collaborators, State Councils in other states) would have eventually acted independently on similar planning and reporting mandates, and that the average cost would be approximately the same as what has been expended by the collaboration, then those State Councils saved nearly \$3.5 million. If collaborative model is eventually adopted by all 55 of the nation's State Councils, the savings would amount to \$8.1 million for this one state program.

23. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

The fact that the collaborative model and design was appealing to State Councils on Developmental Disabilities as well as to the federal oversight agency clearly demonstrates that the federal-state relationship must change along with the drive for performance by both states and the federal government.

There is substantial evidence that the collaborative model as well as its major product, the DD Suite performance management database, can grow and be replicated and or adapted by the remaining State Councils and other federally funded state programs within and outside of the U.S. Health and Human Services Department.

The State Councils are overseen by the Administration for Developmental Disabilities under the Administration for Children and Families within the U.S. Health and Human Services Department. State Councils are one program with the Administration on Developmental Disabilities, which in itself is only one agency within the Administration for Children and Families. In terms of growth and replication, the collaborative model can be easily adapted to other state programs receiving federal funds and needing to comply with federal mandates.

State Councils have shared both quantifiable evidence as well as empirical assessment that the collaboration has been overwhelmingly successful. As the collaboration grows and other similar state-federal relationships investigate this collaborative model the two significant benefits are the approach to intergovernmental collaboration and method for providing reliable planning and performance data.

24. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program?

The collaboration has fostered a strong relationship with the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities. The collaboration also has a strong working relationship with Information and Technical Assistance Center for Councils on Developmental Disabilities. These relationships have allowed the collaboration to recognize barriers that existed between State Councils and between the federal government. These barriers included the funding formula for State Councils, the demographic and policy differences, as well as technical tools for planning and reporting.

A remaining barrier continues to diminish, but remains. That is the challenge of equal partnership between State Councils and the federal oversight agency. The parent – child relationship has begun to shift, not necessarily because of a federal desire, but because of insistence and out of results by this collaboration of State Councils. The collaboration has achieved a magnitude of results directly benefiting people with developmental disabilities. These results have been recognized and, but some resistance remains to work more closely together on a more equal level.