SUBJECT:
Best Start LA: Community Based Action Research (CBAR) Technical Assistance

RECOMMENDATION:
Approval of up to $560,000 over 7 years to provide Community-Based Action Research technical assistance to four demonstration communities.

BACKGROUND:
The requested $560,000 allocation will be combined with the $140,000 approved by the Board in September 2007, when the board approved the total budget for the Pilot demonstration community. A Request for Qualifications (RFQ) will be released requesting applicants to apply for a contract totaling up to $700,000 over 7 years. The selected contractor will assist the lead entities in all five demonstration communities in the completion of their CBAR process. Due to the unique start dates for the five demonstration communities, the contract will be a total of 7 years, beginning in May 2009.

To further expand on the history of this recommendation, the five-year $13,011,660, approved in September 2007 for the Pilot Demonstration Community included the following cost categories:

- Family Engagement Staff: $ 5,175,760
- Place Based Staff and Activity Supports: $ 2,967,000
- Community Mobilizing Staff and Activities: $ 2,775,000
- Administrative and IT Staff: $ 637,500
- Evaluation Staff and Activities (5%): $ 620,000
- Facility/Start-up Costs: $ 836,400

The approved “Community Mobilizing and Activities” budget included $140,000 to provide technical assistance to the Pilot Demonstration Community's Lead Entity for five years.

The Lead Entity in each of the Best Start LA Demonstration Communities plays a significant role of anchoring the community’s efforts to catalyze an infant/toddler-friendly environment. The Lead Entity will facilitate discussions among traditional and non-traditional community partners to identify existing resources and activities on which to build and that can be integrated to support the realization of Best Start LA outcomes. The CBAR process will play an important role in facilitating these conversations and in the development of the Best Start LA Partnership.

First 5 LA will provide a CBAR contractor to also assist the Lead Entity in facilitating a community planning process with all relevant stakeholders in the CBAR process to:
1. Define local issues, concerns and a set of community-driven strategies;
2. Develop questions relevant to the issues and vision identified;
3. Gather and analyze relevant data; and
4. Prepare recommendations for the Best Start LA Partnership

**DISCUSSION:**
The objectives for a CBAR technical assistance partner are to assist communities in:

- Building their capacity to use research in order to create sustainable, grassroots strategies to improve the lives of children 0-3, their families, and the communities that they live in
- Generate data from the target population in order to increase the understanding of the context, strengths and concerns of communities and to help inform current and future initiatives

CBAR is a community mobilizing, capacity building, and empowering method for the community, which is organized around three key integrated elements: research, education, and action.\(^1\) Like other forms of research, CBAR is based on social science methods of systematic inquiry and data collection. It diverges from traditional research in its focus on education, action and participation of those affected by the research. CBAR does not end at the data collection phase, but includes the utilization of social data to educate those affected by the data and to mobilize individuals, communities and programs to action. The CBAR approach:

- Involves community residents in all stages of the research: the design, implementation, interpretation and dissemination of data;
- Takes place in communities;
- Studies problems identified by the community;
- Is disseminated widely in the community;
- Recognizes that there are multiple ways of knowing and acquiring knowledge;
- Acknowledges that community members are vital resources of knowledge about their community strengths, needs and conditions and;
- Includes the development of research products that are useful, timely and available to all stakeholders

The CBAR Technical Assistance contractor’s primary tasks will include assisting the Lead Entity in engaging all relevant stakeholders in the CBAR process to: 1) define local issues and concerns and define what CBAR participants want via an environmental scan; 2) develop questions relevant to the issues and visions identified (i.e. Are you getting all the support you need? Do you feel safe in your neighborhood? Is there enough green space? What resources may be lacking? Are you getting sufficient support in clinic settings with other pregnant women?); 3) gather and analyze relevant data; 4) provide technical assistance, including training, coaching and mentoring; 5) document and disseminate the lessons learned from CBAR and 6) prepare recommendations for the Best Start LA partnership.

The role of the CBAR technical assistance contractor is intended to help support communities in their implementation of a community planning process that builds knowledge that a community creates, owns and transforms into social capital for social

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change. The CBAR process builds an “inquiry” culture that is imbedded in existing patterns of interaction, which may include:

- Parents meeting each other at school via a variety of activities (i.e. PTA meetings, children’s programming, school events)
- Utilizing public venues (i.e. libraries, parks, recreational centers/areas, neighborhood councils, fairs, local market, and shopping areas)
- Child care settings
- Early intervention settings (i.e. clinics, regional centers)

**COST PROJECTIONS:**
The total budget, estimated at $700,000, with approximately $140,000 per community allocation, is based on the Commission’s experience with the Neighborhood Data Use Collaborative project and lessons learned. This amount reflects an expected $20,000 yearly allocation for each community, with an additional $20,000 in years 1 and 5 to accommodate more intense periods in the model. The CBAR technical assistance contractor is expected to demonstrate flexibility and the ability to identify the differing needs of the communities, and allocate the resources accordingly. Due to the unique start dates for the five demonstration communities, the contract will be a total of 7 years, beginning in May 2009.