



INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Housing and Community Development Department

TO: Danielle Moore, Assistant Audit Manager

FROM: Carlos S. Thomas, Interim Division Manager
Office of Grants and Community Partnerships

DATE: July 10, 2015

RE: **Audit Response: 2013-2014 F.R.E.S.H. and
Human Services Grants**

This memo is in response to the June 5, 2015 memo and Audit report of the 2013-2014 F.R.E.S.H. and Human Services Grants, in which seven (7) finding were cited.

Regarding Finding 1 - Insufficient participant information

To allow for better evaluation of outcomes of the programs funded by the F.R.E.S.H. and Human Services Grants, agencies will required as a part of their performance report to submit demographic information of the participants served with grant funding. During the 2013-2014 Grant cycle this information was only submitted during the application phase of the grant process. The Office of Grants and Community Partnerships will continue to work with grantees to ensure compliance on submission of complete participant information to properly verify unduplicated participants served with grant funding.

Regarding Finding 2 - Failure to properly monitor Human Services grants

The Office of Grants and Community Partnerships utilized staff employed in other Fulton County Divisions and Departments that pertain to the six Human Services Funding categories to partly manage the Human Services Grants. The staff performed functions as a Grant Liaison as well as the functions required for their full-time position. Therefore, the functions the staff could perform were limited and did not include all duties necessary to properly manage the Human Services Grants. A request to fund a position to manage the Human Services Grants was denied. In addition, during the 2013-2014 grant year the staff level decreased from eight (8) to six (6) staff. Adequate staffing levels are needed to properly monitor and review the program activities of the F.R.E.S.H. and Human Services Grant program. The Office of Grants and Community Partnerships is currently comprised of five (5) staff: Interim Division Manager; and four (4) Administrative Coordinators II.

Regarding Finding 3 - Lack of verification of data collection methods

To help strengthen the reported performance results, the Office of Grant and Community Partnerships will incorporate a section as a part of the performance report for grantees to identify the specific data collection tool/sources used to report performance outcomes. During the 2013-

2014 Grant cycle this information was only submitted during the application phase of the grant process.

Regarding Finding 4 - Insufficient monitoring tools

To provide a more comprehensive analysis of contract monitoring and grantee compliance, the Office of Grants and Community Partnerships will utilize the WebGrants online database management system to document and track grantee compliance. In addition, staff will receive training on the use of the online contract monitoring tool. The use of the online system will provide efficient access for management to review forms to ensure completeness and provide feedback to staff.

Regarding Finding 5 - Lack of knowledge of mandated licenses, permits, and certifications

During the Initial Eligibility Review process, staff is required to notate if an applicant submitted evidence of mandated licenses, permits, and certifications that are applicable to the applicant's operations. To ensure that staff is adequately prepared for this phase of the review, a list of mandated licenses and permits will be provided for each funding category. During the 2013-2014 grant year, staff relied on the applicant to report what mandated requirements were applicable.

Regarding Finding 6 - Failure to require background checks

The Office of Grants and Community Partnerships will seek advisement from the County Attorney's Office and the Purchasing Department for prior practices and possible options that are available under our purview regarding background checks for FRESH and Human Services Grant applicants.

Grantees have measures in place to provide a level of protection and safeguard against liabilities should an employee be found to have a criminal background. To help ensure that grantees are aware of these liabilities, the following requirements are set forth as a part of the grant process:

Organizations applying for F.R.E.S.H. Grant or Human Services Grant funds in the Funding category of Youth and Families, must submit documentation issued from Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL), recognizing the agency/program as one of the following: 1. A licensed program with the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning; 2. A program that is not subject to licensure by the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning and, therefore, is exempt from licensure; 3. A program that does not fall within the jurisdiction of the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning and, therefore, does not need a license or exemption.

Updated requirements as listed on the DECAL website are inclusive of a background check:

- "All family day care home providers, directors, and employees hired on or after January 1, 2014 will be required to undergo a national fingerprint background check and obtain a satisfactory determination from DECAL. All employees hired prior to January 1, 2014 will have to undergo a national fingerprint background check and obtain a satisfactory determination from DECAL by January 1, 2017. Beginning January 1, 2019, every family day care home provider, director, and employee must have a satisfactory records check determination on file that has been issued within the past five years; a new fingerprint background check will be required every five years."

In addition, all F.R.E.S.H. and Human Services Grantees who are awarded funding and don't possess a current/valid Fulton County Basic Standards Certificate must successfully complete the Basic Standards for Non-Profit Organizations certification process.

Basic Standards for Non-Profit Organizations is a quality measurement tool adapted from the Quality Enhancement Standards Assessment Tool (GA Coalition to End Homelessness) and developed by the Fulton County Office of Children Youth that identifies the minimum requirements that all grant funded agencies must meet in order to receive Basic Standards certification. The Basic Standards tool covers the areas of administration, fiscal management, food service, medical, personnel, safety and environment, and program operations/procedures.

Regarding Finding 7 - Inability to determine adequate staffing levels

The Office of Grants and Community Partnerships will research best practices options that can be used to help track the amount of staff time spent on the performance of duties.

During the 2013-2014 grant year the staff level decreased from eight (8) to six (6) staff. Adequate staffing levels are needed to properly monitor and review the program activities of the F.R.E.S.H. and Human Services Grant program. The Office of Grants and Community Partnerships is currently comprised of the following five (5) staff: Interim Division Manager; and four (4) Administrative Coordinator II positions-District Administrators. The following three (3) staff positions are vacant: Program Manager, Administrative Coordinator I-Database Specialist; Administrative Assistant III-Program Support Specialist.

Regarding Opportunity for Improvement 1 – Sufficiency of Performance Measures

To ensure that performance measures are specific, measureable, actionable, relevant and timely, the Office of Grants and Community Partnerships will implement the following: Establish time frames within the defined performance measures; Require grantees to report on performance measures established by the County; and Require grantees to report on their agency-defined performance measures and outcomes during the grant cycle.

Regarding Opportunity for Improvement 2 – Historical Records on Recipient Performance

The Office of Grants and Community Partnerships will expand the evaluation of a grantee's past performance to determine if the returning grantee has consistently and satisfactorily performed programs and services to fulfill their scope of contractor's duties.

Regarding Opportunity for Improvement 3 – Frequency of Site Visits

The Office of Grants and Community Partnerships will continue to ensure proper grant monitoring throughout the entire contract term. This is inclusive of announced and unannounced site visits; ongoing communication with the grantee via phone and e-mail regarding contract terms and compliance; and a thorough staff review and feedback on performance reports.

Regarding Opportunity for Improvement 4 – Funding of FRESH and Human Services Grants

Beginning in 2015, the contract period for the F.R.E.S.H. Grant and Human Services Grant was changed to align with Fulton County's Fiscal Year, January 1st - December 31st. The contract period for the 2013-2014 grant cycle was July 1st-June 31. The Office of Grants and Community Partnerships will propose an earlier grant application in order to present a preliminary set of grant recommendations for approval as a part of the County's budget process. Staff will continue to inform applicants that funding is contingent upon approval of the Fulton County budget.

Regarding Opportunity for Improvement 5 – Centralization of Grants Management

The Human Services Grant program was established and supported by the Fulton County Board of Commissioners in 1989 to bridge the gap in direct government services. The F.R.E.S.H. Grant program was created and supported by the Fulton County Board of Commissioners in 1995 to expand and/or enhance existing youth related programs and services.

Throughout the history of the grant program, cities and counties have contacted the Office of Grants and Community Partnerships to benchmark our process, to include a staff presentation of the program in Vienna, Austria. The most recent inquiries were from Tacoma, Washington in April, 2015, and Mecklenburg, County in June, 2015.

The Office of Grants and Community Partnerships will continue to explore best practices and review recommendations for improvement to ensure success of the F.R.E.S.H. and Human Services Grant program.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 404-613-7944.

cc: Mike Rowicki, Deputy Director, Housing and Community Development