



United Way of Greater Houston

United Way Center for Philanthropy, Leadership and Volunteerism
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January 26, 2011

Thomas Suehs, Executive Commissioner
Texas Health and Human Services Commission
4900 North Lamar Boulevard
Austin, TX 78751-2316

Dear Commissioner Suehs:

House Bill (H.B.) 492, 81st Legislature, Regular Session, 2009, was created to strengthen the capacity of faith-and community-based organizations in the State of Texas. In accordance with this legislation, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) created the Renewing Our Communities Account (ROCA) to fund capacity-building activities, and established the ROCA Advisory Committee to submit recommendations to the HHSC Executive Commissioner on the powers and duties of the account.

Pursuant to the directives described in H.B. 492, advisory committee members, comprised of representatives from faith- and community-based organizations throughout Texas, met twice in 2010 to discuss and identify recommendations. The advisory committee developed nine recommendations through consideration of past and projected use of account funds by OneStar Foundation, and other resources relevant to strengthening Texas' nonprofit sector, including legislative recommendations developed by the Task Force on Strengthening Nonprofit Capacity.

As chair of the ROCA Advisory Committee, it was my pleasure to facilitate the development of recommendations by my fellow members. On behalf of the advisory committee, I respectfully submit these recommendations for your consideration, and am prepared to respond to questions and provide additional information. We appreciate the opportunity to represent the interests of our communities in this manner.

Very truly yours,

Ronnie Hagerty
Assistant Vice President, Community Relations
United Way of Greater Houston

Chair, ROCA Advisory Committee

ROCA Advisory Committee members:

Kenneth L. Gladish, Vice-Chair

Martha T. Blaine

Teata Collier

Marlene A. DiLillo

Dalia Rodriguez

Bridget Samuel

Charlene M. Shreder

J.D. Young

Texas Health and Human Services Committee
Renewing Our Communities Account Advisory Committee Recommendations

Background

House Bill (H.B.) 492, 81st Legislature, Regular Session, 2009, directed state agencies to expand faith- and community-based health and human services and social services initiatives in Texas. The purpose of these initiatives is to provide charitable and social services to needy persons in this state by strengthening the capacity of Texas faith- and community-based organizations (FCBOs) and forging stronger partnerships between those FCBOs and state government.

As part of this expansion, the legislation directed the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to establish the Renewing Our Communities Account (ROCA) to fund HHSC efforts to increase the capacity of FCBOs for providing services to Texans in need, assist local governments with establishing faith- and community-based initiatives, and foster better partnerships between state government and FCBOs. The legislation directed HHSC to contract with the State Commission on National and Community Service (OneStar Foundation) to administer ROCA funds and establish the ROCA Advisory Committee to make recommendations to the HHSC Executive Commissioner on the powers and duties of the ROCA.

In accordance with the directives of the legislation, HHSC created the ROCA and contracted with the OneStar Foundation for the administration of ROCA funds. In addition, the HHSC Executive Commissioner established the ROCA Advisory Committee by appointing nine representatives from FCBOs throughout Texas.

Established in accordance with the directives identified by H.B. 492 (81R), designed to strengthen the capacity of FCBOs in the State of Texas, the advisory committee, created under Sec. 535.108, met twice as a formal body in 2010 to prepare recommendations for consideration by the HHSC Executive Commissioner.

Discussion and Recommendations

The ROCA Advisory Committee wishes to affirm the vision and wisdom of the Texas Legislature in creating an excellent model for supporting and sustaining healthy communities throughout Texas. Given the size, scope and diversity of the nonprofit sector in the state, and the critical role the sector plays in meeting basic human needs, it is critical that every effort be made to leverage all available resources and ensure the very best value for every dollar invested.

H.B. 492 (81R) serves as an important instrument that recognizes the critical nature of the relationship between public and nonprofit sectors and creates an environment in which that partnership can achieve the highest quality outcomes and deliver the best value for resources invested.

As instructed by H.B. 492 (81R), the advisory committee prepared the following recommendations for consideration by the HHSC Executive Commissioner.

1. Maintain the ROCA as a permanent component of Texas' legislative and budgetary planning.

2. Continue to engage OneStar Foundation through grants or contracts to administer funds appropriated from the ROCA for the purpose of coordinating efforts to build the infrastructure of FCBOs to ensure their ability to support healthy communities.
3. Maintain the availability of support for all FCBOs across the state, ensuring access to information and assistance that will lead to the adoption and implementation of best practices in serving their clients. The continued use of a coordinating entity such as OneStar Foundation serves to increase efficiency, ensure transparency, optimize resource utilization and minimize duplication of effort.
4. Provide flexibility in terms of size of grant recipient organizations, recognizing that smaller organizations may be better served through use of a larger fiscal agent or collaborative partner to ensure proper use of funds and required reporting.
5. Continue the practice of contracting with intermediary management support organizations whose expertise is in the arena of capacity building as a means of ensuring quality deliverables and leveraging use of funds.
6. Explore ways in which local municipalities can be engaged in a more robust way in the capacity building work of communities in partnership with the state and FCBOs.
7. Retain measures that prohibit FCBOs from using funds received to advance a sectarian purpose or engage in any form of proselytization.
8. Actively seek collaborative opportunities that optimize the core competencies of all public-private partner entities to enhance communications, problem-solve and spur innovation.
9. Maintain the operations of the Interagency Coordinating Group (ICG), established by H.B. 492 (81R), to remove obstacles to partnerships between member agencies and FCBOs, with a goal of enhanced relationships, more timely and efficient interactions, streamlined application, compensation and reporting policies, and expanded economies of scale. Determine whether additional agencies should be included in ICG participation.
10. Use enhanced relationships between IGC members and faith- and community-based members to enhance collaboration at all levels of government, with particular emphasis on increasing federal support and expanding matching activities.