

September 19, 2017

Mr. Bevan Baker

City of Milwaukee Health Department

Milwaukee Office of Violence Prevention

841 N. Broadway

Milwaukee, WI 53202

Commissioner Baker,

This letter is in response to your inquiry about the standing of your SAMHSA ReCAST grant accomplishments and expenditures as you complete your first year of funding this month. While Milwaukee has experienced delays in hiring, contracting, and completing some of the required first year activities, other grantees in your cohort across the country have experienced similar delays in reaching the aggressive timelines set forth in the original funding opportunity announcement. Milwaukee's completion of the Community Needs and Resource Assessment was of high quality and aligns well with the city's overall violence prevention strategy as requested in the site visit recommendations.

From the site visit, it is clear that a lot of thought was given to the partners and staff assembled for this project. The Director of the Office of Violence Prevention and his team have done an outstanding job of getting this effort off the ground even prior to being fully staffed. I understand how challenging it can be to build the capacity necessary to manage and execute a grant of this size given the existing demands of a local Health Department. As Project Manager, Sumaiyah's work ethic and attention to detail are noted for the capacity she has added to the ReCAST project. The Office of Violence Prevention has done a commendable job of balancing its response to ongoing community needs while engaging residents in planning for long-term strategies to improve mental health and violence reduction.

As is typical with a grant this size which requires community participation and planning, your first year of expenditures was expected to be lower than the total approved funding amount. In my experience, grantees will take the entire year to develop their strategic plan and will expend approximately 40-60% of their grant funds within the first year, with full implementation starting in the second year. With your completion of the ReCAST needs assessment and Blueprint planning process in less than a year, your grant is well on target with this trend.

As mentioned above, the quality of the Community Needs and Resource Assessment (CNRA) was impressive and reflective of the time and thought your team took to align it to the goals of city's comprehensive violence prevention plan as recommended. The CNRA reflected many of the community's needs we discussed during the site visit and also provided insight into your top areas for addressing the community's needs with activities identified in your plan. As your city moves forward with implementation, I look forward to continuing to provide guidance and technical assistance to your staff to advance ReCAST goals. Additionally, a great deal of effort in the transition between year 1 and 2 of your grant will be dedicated to building a strong community engagement strategy in partnership with your Office of Violence Prevention that includes support of champions from your community, including the Mayor and City Council.

The purpose of ReCAST is to assist high-risk youth and families, promote community resilience and equity, and foster linkages to trauma-informed behavioral health services. This grant was exclusively awarded to local municipalities such as city or county offices in the 8 cities selected for ReCAST. Health Departments are uniquely positioned to bring together diverse partners from a range of sectors to support community healing, resilience building, and linkages to behavioral health services for those in greatest need. While these goals support your overall Violence Prevention strategy for the city, it is important to remember that ReCAST funding is designed to support strategies that align with both the ReCAST needs assessment and Blueprint for Peace. As we discussed in the site visit recommendations, the city's support of both the violence prevention strategy as well as the ReCAST strategic plan is needed in order to successfully reduce violence in the community while addressing the existing trauma residents have faced due to harmful life experiences resulting from structural and community violence.

Please accept my congratulations for your receipt of your year 2 continuation award funding via your Notice of Award sent by SAMHSA's Division of Grant's Management. That is your official approval to continue the good work you are doing for the city of Milwaukee. This letter is in continued support of your efforts and encouragement to continue engaging community and service-providing partners to support ReCAST Milwaukee.

Best,



Wendie Veloz

Public Health Advisor/Federal Project Officer

SAMHSA – Center for Mental Health Services

Division of Prevention, Traumatic Stress & Special Programs