

The Birds & Bees Project of Pro-Choice Resources (PCR)

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Due Date for Applications: Thursday, August 21st, 2008

Interview Dates: Wednesday, August 26th, 2008

Selection Dates: September 2nd, 2008

Funding Period: September 2nd, 2008 to May 31st, 2010

Type of Funding: Research

Amount of Funding: up to \$100,000 (\$50,000 per PCR's fiscal year, July - June)

Project Overview: The Birds & Bees Project of PCR with funding from the Ford Foundation is seeking proposals to conduct focus group and survey research on Minnesota health teachers' perspectives, including benefits and barriers, to teaching sexuality education. On the basis of this RFP, PCR intends to award a firm fixed price contract as soon as September 2nd, 2008 for the fielding of focus groups and survey research, the creation of a documented data file that is sharable and user-friendly, the completion of basic descriptive analyses and a final report that describes the data collection efforts and discusses the descriptive findings.

The focus groups and survey will include a range of questions to assess challenges and successes to: training health educators, implementing sexuality education curriculum into the classroom and teaching sexuality education. Topics certain to be addressed in both the focus groups and survey include:

- Current training and technical assistance needs
- Labor issues for sex education teachers
- Current process and structure of sex education teaching assignments
- Beliefs about the best way for sex education to be structured
- Existing advocacy opportunities for teachers
- Current methods of preparing teachers to teach sexual health in the classroom
- Sexual health training teachers have received during and beyond college
- Beliefs about the attitudes toward sex education instruction in their community
- Demographic data (including length of time teaching, age, gender, etc.)

In assessing this information it will be critical to uncover not only topics for which the participants lack information, but also the participants' certainty in their own beliefs and awareness of their own knowledge gaps.

The Birds & Bees Project anticipates that the results of both the focus groups and surveys will identify labor issues associated with teaching sex education and suggest effective mechanisms for training, technical assistance, and the support necessary for success.

Additionally it is our hope that the report can be used as an advocacy tool to reduce teacher turnover and to support a best practices approach in teaching responsible sexual health education. *This research is part of a larger project that includes piloting a sexual health teachers' residency program and organizing efforts; thus, the selected research organization will need to work closely with Birds & Bees Project program staff to meet the overall goals of the grant.*

Background: Established in 1967, PCR is a wide-ranging, grassroots organization providing reproductive health resources and education to women and youth in Minnesota. Our programs are some of the most unique and independent reproductive health programs in the nation and are designed to break down barriers to reproductive health access and information, particularly in disadvantaged communities, through direct service, systems advocacy and individual empowerment. Our largest program, The Birds & Bees Project, is dedicated to increasing the capacity of reproductive health professionals to provide and providing youth and adults responsible sexual health information.

Nationally, advocacy around sexuality education in schools has focused on legislative mandates requiring schools to provide medically accurate and age-appropriate sexuality education that includes information on contraception and abstinence. Although legislation requiring, and sometimes funding, sexuality education in the schools is central to the universal adoption of the practice, legislation alone falls short of achieving significant sexual health outcomes for youth. These broad mandates often foist the responsibility of teaching sexuality education onto teachers who possess little or no sexual health training and limited classroom time and financial resources. This method of implementing programming into schools is inconsistent both with research on teacher effectiveness and with comprehensive sexuality education best practices. Additionally, national research has shown that new teachers who feel unsupported and unprepared to be successful are significantly more likely to leave the profession within the first four years of entering the field.¹

In Minnesota, there are no statewide sexual health education standards and no state-required trainings or certifications to teach sexual health education in our classrooms, yet the overall picture of the sexual health of Minnesota adolescents continues to illustrate the need for well-prepared, experienced teachers who can provide sexual health information to our youth. Recent reports from the Center for Disease Control indicate that 1 in 4 teen girls in the U.S. has a sexually transmitted infection.² The 2007 Minnesota Student Survey found that 49% of Minnesota youth surveyed in grades 9 and 12 self-

¹ Hare, D., & Heap, J. (2001, May). *Effective teacher recruitment and retention strategies in the Midwest*. Naperville, IL: North Central Regional Laboratory. Retrieved May 1, 2008, from http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/1b/26/47.pdf

² Oral Abstract D4a – Prevalence of Sexually Transmitted Infections and Bacterial Vaginosis among Female Adolescents in the United States: Data from the National Health and Nutritional Examination Survey (NHANES) 2003-2004. Center for Disease Control, Sara Forhan, MD, MPH.

report having had sexual intercourse and for the first time in 16 years, the teen pregnancy rate in Minnesota has increased; the percentage of increase was twice the national rate.³

Currently, many teachers who do provide responsible sexuality education to their youth invite non-profit organizations such as The Birds & Bees Project into their classrooms as guest speakers. However, with limited staff and funding, we and other non-profit organizations are not able to meet the demand. Additionally, outsourcing this work to non-profit organizations will never provide the institutionalized change necessary to make substantial, positive outcomes on the sexual health of our youth. Thus, two years ago our organization embarked on a project to increase the capacity of teachers based in recognizing and respecting the central role teachers' play in successful sexuality education in our state.

The majority of existing sexuality education research focuses on what is being taught in the schools, what parents want to be taught in schools and best practices for teaching sexual health information. We have found no state-wide data available on teachers' needs, labor issues, or perspectives on successful implementation of responsible sexual health information into classrooms and thus believe this will be the first survey of its kind in the nation.

More information about Pro-Choice Resources can be found at www.prochoiceresources.org and the Birds & Bees Project at www.birdsandbees.org

Additional Details and Key Considerations: The list below describes other key design and implementation considerations that should be addressed when developing a proposal:

- The focus group must support reliable estimates of key subgroups of both middle and high school teachers assigned to teach sexuality education. These include groups defined by gender, race/ethnicity, geographic teaching area (urban, suburban and rural), union members, pre-service training related to sexual health, and teachers with sexuality education assignments whose specialty is not health (i.e., physical education, math, science teachers, etc.) and possibly groups defined by other measures such as beliefs about teaching sexuality education, community/parent support for teaching sexuality education and years of teaching experience. Contractors are encouraged to propose other subgroups they feel are critical in the proposal.
- All current middle and high school teachers in Minnesota with sexual health assignments should be included in the survey sample.
- Overall, data quality and scientific rigor are a critical focus of this project. This includes sufficient efforts to address non-response and assess non-response bias, as well as careful attention to ensure that tabulation of weights and summary statistics appropriately reflect sample design.
- Survey design and implementation must meet rigorous standards for protecting data confidentiality and protection of human subjects.

³ Minnesota Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy, Prevention and Parenting (2008). "2008 MN Teen Pregnancy and Birth". Retrieved March 2008 from <http://www.moapp.org/moappDataReport.3.08pdf>.

- The contractor should anticipate working closely and collaboratively with the Birds & Bees Project during all phases of the work, and particularly with respect to focus group questions, questionnaire design and outreach to teachers.
- The initial focus groups for this project are scheduled to happen during the Education Minnesota conference on October 16th, 2008; thus contractors must be able and ready to begin this project immediately upon notification of award on September 2nd, 2008.
- We feel strongly that teachers feel invested in this research and that incentives for participation (boxed lunches, gift certificates to Target, etc.) are built into the budget costs
- **Rights to Data:** All data collected, focus group question, survey instrument and findings tabulated from those data during the contract period become the property of Pro-Choice Resources. However, upon the contract's completion and Pro-Choice Resources' initial public release of findings, it is Pro-Choice Resources' intent that the contractors would then have full discretion to complete and submit for publication further analyses they feel are informative. Additionally, we expect the contractor to keep and present PCR with detailed notes of the process of doing this research so that the findings could be replicated in another state after a reasonable period of time beyond the data collection stage has passed.

Instructions for Submitting a Proposal

Due Date: Thursday, August 21st, 2008 by 4pm

Point of Contact: Questions regarding this RFP may be directed to Nikki Madsen at: 612-825-2000 or nikki@birdsandbees.org

Method of Submission: Proposals may be submitted via hard copy or electronic file. However, Pro-Choice Resources is not responsible for any difficulties encountered by the applicant in transmitting electronic files.

Three (3) hard copy files may be mailed or delivered to:

Pro-Choice Resources
 Birds & Bees Project – Teachers' Perspectives on Sexuality Education
 Attention: Nikki Madsen
 250 3rd Ave N
 Suite 625
 Minneapolis, MN 555416

Electronic files must be in Word or PDF format and may be emailed to nikki@birdsandbees.org. Email submissions should include the words "Minnesota Teachers' Survey" in the subject line.

Content of Proposal:

Proposals shall include:

- A cover page, clearly stating the name and contact information of the applicant and any proposed partners, a one paragraph summary of the proposed research and total cost.
- A proposal narrative of no more than 10 pages double spaced, 12 pt font. Proposal narratives must include the following:
 - Description of proposed research design and methodology
 - Work plan, including a time line for key milestones and deliverables
 - Description of institutional capabilities relevant to this project, including: (a) capacity to provide a high quality focus group and survey with limited start-up time; and (b) demonstrated expertise in sexuality/health education, AND in schools, schooling and education policy.
- A budget and budget justification, broken out by major tasks and cost categories (please make sure to include printing and design costs for the survey and report as well as incentives for participation)
- A staffing plan, including summary of qualifications for key personnel, their role and proposed time commitment to this project
- Attachments:
 - CVs for all key personnel
 - Letters of commitment from any outside organization proposed to play a role
 - One-page summary of other major focus group and survey efforts completed successfully with a minimum of two references
 - Sample(s) of previous survey and report

Scope of Work

Below is the list of tasks the Pro-Choice Resources anticipates will be completed under this project. These tasks should factor into applicants' proposals and budgets accordingly:

Task 1. Project Initiation, Planning, and Management.

- 1.1 Review of background materials, particularly research findings or questionnaires on comprehensive sexuality education and conducting research with teachers.
- 1.2 Hold meetings with Birds & Bees Project staff, including an initial project meeting as well as monthly conference calls and additional correspondence as needed.
- 1.3 Bi-monthly emails listing progress toward milestones and challenges encountered.
- 1.4 Notes shall be taken by research staff during entire project so that research could be replicated in another state if desired.

Task 2. Finalize Focus Group Questions and hold a minimum of 3 focus groups in both urban and rural areas of the state

- 2.1 Contractor shall submit a detailed description for approval of focus group procedures and methods to enhance response and ensure representative and quality data quality, and safeguard data confidentiality. Contractor shall revise and resubmit as needed but must be ready to hold a pilot focus group by October 16th, 2008.
- 2.2 Analyze data from focus groups

Task 3. Develop Survey Instruments based on focus group feedback

- 3.1 Develop survey instruments, based on proposed focus group data, original proposal, and subsequent discussions
- 3.2 Finalize sampling plan.
- 3.3 Finalize survey procedures. Contractor shall submit a detailed description of survey procedures, including methods to enhance response, ensure representative and quality data and safeguard data confidentiality.
- 3.4 Field test and revise survey instrument.

Task 4. Implement Survey

- 4.1 Field survey, and conduct all activities necessary as agreed to in Tasks 3,
- 4.2 Assess data quality and non-response and take corrective action as appropriate, including efforts to follow up with non-respondents.
- 4.3 Provide detailed field report to project officer approximately mid-way through field efforts, outlining progress and any concerns.
- 4.4 Make sure all survey respondents receive incentives for participation in a timely manner.

Task 5. Preparation and Delivery of Data File and Documentation

- 5.1 Data entry of all survey responses
- 5.2 Data editing efforts to include review of all respondent records for completeness and any potential problems (e.g., inappropriate skips, out-of-range values, input errors and logical inconsistencies), and appropriate corrective actions.
- 5.3 Data conversion efforts to include the design and implementation of all necessary steps to convert survey data to a file that can be analyzed using SPSS. File shall include sample weights, identifiers for missing observations, and recodes to identify key subpopulations and analyze key concepts. Efforts shall also include any steps necessary to protect confidentiality of respondents, such that data can be shared publicly.
- 5.4 Data documentation to define each variable on the file, specify its location on the file and state the number of missing and non-missing values. While Pro-Choice Resources does *not* expect to receive a highly polished codebook, the documentation must be sufficient to enable PCR staff or other researchers to use the data reliably and independently.

Task 6. Tabulation of Key Summary Measures.

- 6.1 Produce table shells specifying a limited number of key measures and subgroups for which summary statistics such as weighted and unweighted counts, means, standard errors and significance of differences across groups will be calculated. Revise as agreed to by Pro-Choice Resources and contractor.
- 6.2 Produce summary statistics as specified in final table shells.

Task 7. Project Summary Document

- 7.1 Submit draft outline describing how the project summary document will be organized. Content areas should include, at a minimum, a brief overview of existing research, or lack of research, and how it relates to this project, the conceptual framework that guided this survey, summary information on the survey design and methodology,

results from the tabulation of summary measures, and a discussion of those results highlighting findings of note and suggested implications. Revise as needed.

7.2 Submit draft report based on final outline.

7.3 Submit final report in response to comments on draft, and revise as needed.

7.4 Have 500 copies of finalized report printed for distribution

Period of Performance and Contract Structure:

The anticipated performance period under this contract will be 20 months from date of award, September 2nd, 2008 to May 31st, 2010. This will be a firm fixed price contract distributed in two payments, the first half within one week of award and the second half no later than September 1st, 2009.