National Organization of
State Offices of Rural Health

SORH Proficiencies Guide

Introduction

This State Office of Rural Health (SORH) Proficiencies Guide is intended to provide a framework for building the capacity of the 50 SORHs and to inform the educational strategy of the National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health (NOSORH). The Guide was developed in response to the vision of NOSORH's Board of Directors, and through a collaborative effort of NOSORH's Educational Exchange Committee, the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP), and NOSORH staff. Coupled with an electronic self-assessment tool and resulting report, the effort provides SORH with data to objectively assess their capacity in four "Target Areas," identify self-directed capacity building goals, plan staff development activities, and establish office priorities.

Once a majority of offices have completed the self-assessment, NOSORH will analyze and report aggregate results. A group of SORH peers, through NOSORH's committees, will plan learning activities and identify resources to assist SORH to increase competency and achieve proficiency for each of four Target Areas. Once all SORH have had an opportunity to complete the self-assessment, a benchmarking report will be released so that SORH have a blind comparison with other SORH. The privacy of the individual SORH self-assessments is a primary consideration of NOSORH. Responses to the self-assessment will be kept confidential and used only in aggregate form. Individual state results will not be shared with other SORH or FORHP.

Although the results of the self-assessments will not be shared with FORHP, Project Officers may utilize these resources to facilitate quarterly calls and check-in conversations, as they are useful to help SORH meet program goals. FORHP plays a significant role in building the capacity of each SORH. Along with monitoring how federal funds are being spent and approving work plans, SORH Project Officers can assist SORH in navigating a variety of challenges. Through a Benchmarking report, NOSORH will identify existing resources and develop new resources to address the Target Areas and grow the proficiencies of State Offices of Rural Health.

Core Functions, Grant Requirements, Target Areas & Elements

The State Office of Rural Health work is shaped by the SORH core functions and grant requirements as described in the SORH Competitive Grant Guidance. The core functions are woven throughout this Guide and the Target Areas for SORH Proficiency. These core functions of a SORH are highlighted with the following abbreviations and icons:

CDI
(collection and dissemination of information),

C
(coordination of rural health activities)

TA
(technical assistance)

SORH must meet all requirements of the SORH grant guidance as defined in the competing guidance. FORHP Project Officers are the primary resource for all questions about grant requirements referenced in the assessment and throughout the Guide. **Bold blue print** denotes the required activities of the SORH grant under of the Target Areas. Grant requirements by SORH core function are listed below.

Required Activity: Collection & Dissemination of Information (CDI)

- Disseminate information provided by FORHP and other sources on grant opportunities, research findings, policy updates, best practices, and other rural health issues to statewide rural partners and stakeholders in a timely manner.

- Respond to inquiries for information and/or assistance via various methods (i.e. telephone, email, social media, website and regular mail) in a timely manner.

- Promote utilization of the Rural Health Information Hub (RHIhub) and Rural Health Research Gateway Websites.

Required Activity: Coordination of rural health activities (C)

- Participate in or attend select community, regional or statewide committees, board, councils, meetings, webinars, conference calls and other venues whose purpose is to engage in issues and activities that impact health in rural communities.

- Attend and participate in meetings, activities, and events offered by national-level partners to build or strengthen partnerships and gather information to further the goals of SORH.

- Support multi-state workforce recruitment and retention (R&R) systems used to track and place providers (i.e., the Rural Recruitment and Retention Network (3RNet)) or other R&R systems specific to your state.

Required Activity: Technical Assistance (TA)

- Provide TA to public and nonprofit private entities pertaining to participation in federal, state, and non-governmental rural health programs, grants, loans and other funding sources.

Four "Target Areas" for assessment and growing of SORH capacity have been identified:

- Grants Management,
- Information Dissemination,
- Funding, and
- Organizational Capacity.

These broad Target Areas incorporate the core functions outlined by the federal guidance for SORH grant funding and other functions which are key to SORH capacity. A range of elements have been developed to define and provide the details for quantifiable assessment and scoring each of the Target Areas of SORH capacity. A complete list of each Target Area and measurable elements are provided beginning on page 6.

Self-Assessment Tool

The self-assessment tool provides SORH with a numerical measure of the level of SORH capacity. The self-assessment tool is built from the Target Areas described above. There are three levels of capacity for each of the elements which comprise every Target Area: Needs Improvement, Competent, and Proficient as defined below:

Needs Improvement — identifies an area in which the office can strategically create improvement plans to build their internal capacity

Competent — the ability to complete tasks that meet the requirements of the SORH in a way that is universally accepted by peers as the norm

Proficient — when the expectations of completing tasks exceed the norm, allowing for innovation and pace-setting strategies for the office

Structure: The self-assessment tool has been built on the Qualtrics electronic survey system. Each Target Area is a separate page within Qualtrics. Definitions and explanations of some elements are visible in the survey by hovering over the choice with your cursor. Each element has a "N/A" option, which should be used to skip those elements which the SORH does not choose to assess.

Scoring: Scoring is done by Target Area, with an aggregate score provided overall for combined Target Areas and one for each Target Area. If a SORH opts out of scoring an area with an "N/A" response, those elements are removed from the scoring criteria, to avoid a false low score.

How To Use the Guide, Self Assessment Tool, and Report

A six-step process is recommended for completion of the assessment.

Step 1. Review the SORH Proficiencies Guide to ensure a thorough understanding of the Target Areas, elements of proficiency, scoring of the target areas, and the use of the assessment. If feasible, in advance of rating the Target Areas, each SORH should identify any of the elements which are not applicable to the capacity building efforts of the SORH. Please contact NOSORH's Education and Services Director for clarification, questions or any concerns.

Step 2. Determine who should complete the self-assessment. There are three ways that the self-assessment can be conducted: by the SORH Director only, as a joint staff or partner activity or independent scoring by multiple staff or partners.

Directors who chose to complete the assessment for their SORH should consider reviewing the target area elements with staff or partners in advance of beginning the assessment.

NOSORH recommends that SORH consider conducting the self-assessment as a staff activity. The Proficiencies Guide and Target Area elements can be shared in advance, and a staff or partner meeting can be convened to review and rate each element by group consensus. The discussions for the consensus rating effort should reveal a wide variety of perspectives for how the SORH functions, including areas to improve, and areas of high level of proficiency. NOSORH can support the planning of these efforts or serve as a facilitator for these sessions, if invited in advance to join virtually or in person.

The third manner in which a SORH may wish to complete the assessment is for individual staff leaders to complete the assessment independently. NOSORH recommends no more than eight staff participate and that staff with a variety of roles be engaged to participate. At a minimum, the individual responsible for implementing and managing the SORH grant should complete the self-assessment. For those SORH that have multiple staff members completing the self-assessment, NOSORH can develop an aggregate report. When all individuals have completed the self-assessment, please provide at least five business days' notice to NOSORH for the need of the aggregate report.

Step 3. Prepare to rate the elements of the Target Areas by considering each element in light of how your SORH functioned, ***on average, over the last three years.***

Step 4. When you are ready to begin, the self-assessment can be accessed at:

https://survey.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8ob4NAR5WNm8TjL

All four Target Areas are found within this single self-assessment. It should take approximately 15 minutes to complete the self-assessment, if you have read all of this material in advance. Select the rating which provides the best description of your SORH from an honest and objective manner. Not all elements will apply to all SORH; for those capacity building elements that are not plausible for your SORH use the "N/A" option. Those items marked as "N/A" will be removed from the scoring.

Step 5. Check the appropriate box to indicate your level of interest in additional support from NOSORH, peers or FORHP for targeted capacity-building.

Step 6. Submit your assessment and receive your SORH Capacity Score immediately, or within five days of notifying NOSORH that an aggregate report is needed. The report will include a score for each Target Area, along with a comprehensive score. Share results with the SORH team to ensure engagement in capacity building efforts.

Step 7. Revisit the tool on an annual basis, or as

Creating A Plan for the Results

Every SORH should consider the appropriate use of the assessment results for their office, and must determine if the report should be shared, and with whom it should be shared. NOSORH recommends that the Qualtrics report be reviewed by the staff that will be engaged in the work to build the capacity of your SORH. The development of an internal plan for addressing areas identified as "needs improvement" is an easy starting point for short-term goals. To address these areas your office could:

- engage in NOSORH educational resources and institutes

- recommend to NOSORH needed resources or institutes,

- participate in NOSORH mentoring activities to learn from peers,

- work with NOSORH to coordinate an internal strategic planning site visit from NOSORH, SORH peers or FORHP TA Team.

- Connect with your FORHP Project Officer to seek additional guidance

- conduct an internal strategic planning session to work collaboratively with your office,

- identify partnership opportunities to engage others to support the capacity-building efforts of the SORH.

When analyzing the results of the self-assessment, SORH must make their own decisions, based on their unique environment and resources, and determine whether their office should seek to be proficient in each area. The following document was prepared as a supplement to the SORH Proficiencies Guide and the accompanying self-assessment. The purpose of this document is to ensure that all SORH offices completing the self-assessment have a uniform set of definitions for each of the target area elements.

NOTE: The SORH proficiencies are designed to provide a framework in assisting a SORH in developing greater internal capacity. However, the description of proficiency should not be misconstrued to supersede any requirements of a State Office of Rural Health set forth by federal or state regulations, or requirements as a grantee of the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy.

needed.

Target Area I: Grants Management

Rationale: The NOSORH Proficiencies workgroup envisions that every SORH has competency to meet all grants management requirements for SORH funding. The key elements of the Grants Management capacity are: effective budget monitoring and expending of funds, work plan management to ensure a planned approach to achieve the objectives of the SORH grant, reporting and analysis to inform decision-making regarding any need for changes to the original work plan, and effective contracting practices to ensure full performance of all SORH partner contractors.

1.1 Budget

This category relates to the budget of the SORH grant only; do not include other grants your office may have, including Flex, SHIP, PCO, etc. According to the SORH competing guidance, all SORH budgets should:

■ Provide a clear differentiation between the utilization of federal versus non-federal matching funds,

■ Explain the amount requested in each SF-424A object line category and describe how each item will support the achievement of proposed objectives,

■ Describe utilization of funds that appear reasonable and in alignment with the activities proposed in the work plan, and

■ Provide a detailed explanation as to the purpose of each letter of agreement and description of proposed contracts including how the costs were determined or estimated and the specific contract deliverables.

1.1.1 **Monitoring of funds** — how often a SORH monitors their budget to ensure that funds will be spent prior to the end of the fiscal year in an effort to reduce the amount of carryforward potential.

1.1.2 Adjusting spending as needed — spending adjustments are made on an ongoing basis to minimize the amount requested for a carryover, following the correct procedures for notifying FORHP for amounts in excess of 25% of the original budget. For further information, please refer to the cost principles located in 45 CFR Part 75.302. For additional grants policy-related information, please refer to the Department of Health and Human Services Grant Policy Statement.

1.1.3 Organizational fiscal policies and procedures — the fiscal policies and procedures of the organization in which the SORH is located.

1.1.4 Disbursement of obligated funds — the extent to which a SORH has an unobligated balance at the end of the fiscal year, and how they handle current or potential unobligated balances.

1. Budget			
	Needs Assistance	**Competent**	**Proficient**
1. Monitoring of funds	SORH does not regularly review funds, and has a history of 3+ years of carryover requests	**Funds are reviewed regularly to identify possibilities of discrepancies or potential carryover requests**	SORH has a staff member assigned to monitoring of funds on a regular basis, with a process to identify when action should be taken for necessary changes
2. Adjusting spending as needed	Budget requests are not made to FORHP to limit the amount of carryover funds	**Budgets are reviewed regularly, SORH notifies FORHP project officer of possibility of carryover funds for the year, and requests from project officer any changes that would exceed 25% of the total budget**	Proactively adjusts categorical spending and reallocates resources within the budget when aware of changes in staffing or needs of the state
3. Organizational fiscal policies and procedures	SORH has no training or resources on internal fiscal policies and procedures	SORH knows the organizational policies and procedures for fiscal operations	SORH has assigned contact or staff person for navigating all organizational fiscal policies and procedures
4. Disbursement of obligated funds	SORH consistently has a large unobligated balance that requires a carryover request	**SORH infrequently has UOB due to unforeseen circumstances beyond their control**	SORH does not have an unobligated balance and requires no carryover requests

1.2 Workplan

This category relates to the development and adherence of a workplan submitted and approved by FORHP, for the SORH grant only.

1.2.1 Defining measures — the extent to which the SORH has identified, defined, and ensured accuracy for measures within the workplan through a definitive process. These should be considered as written guidelines for the proficient option (i.e. data dictionary, measures book, etc.).

1.2.2 Having a measureable workplan — how well the SORH workplan has a strategy to collect, analyze and use data in the decision-making process of the office.

2. Workplan			
	Needs Assistance	**Competent**	**Proficient**
1. Defining measures	Individuals in the office are asked to report on measures but without a clear definition or guideline on how to collect measures	Individuals responsible for reporting on measures have a definition and guideline on how to collect their measure(s)	SORH Office and reporting contractors have a unified definition of all reportable measures and guidelines on how to collect those measures

1.3 Reporting

This category relates to the required reporting components for the SORH grant to FORHP and any other required reporting tied to matching funds.

1.3.1 Appropriate data is available — this is the percent of the measures which are accessible to the office within a given year that support the outcomes and outputs of the workplan. If the office is relying on an open source of data the measures may be entirely reliant on the origin organization to continue capturing those measures and thus would have no access to the source data (i.e. using county health rankings data annually for grants — if county health rankings changes their methodology, then the measure may no longer be captured).

1.3.2 SORH reporting on FORHP-required PIMS measures — the extent to which the SORH follows a uniform method of defining, collecting and reporting measures. Information on the NOSORH-adopted recommended measures can be found at: https://nosorh.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/PM-Dictionary-Draft-8-31-11.pdf

3. Reporting			
	Needs Assistance	**Competent**	**Proficient**
1. Appropriate data is available	Office has access to the SORH grant data, required to support less than 100% of the work plan measures	**Office has access to the SORH grant data, required to support 100% of the work plan measures**	Office has access to the SORH grant data, and a plan for review and analysis to inform any necessary work plan or budget revisions
2. SORH reporting on FORHP-required PIMS measures	SORH does not have and use a clear written procedure defining the collection and reporting of PIMS measures	SORH follows the NOSORH measures guide for the required PIMS measures, and reports the measures in accordance with federal requirements and FORHP guidance	SORH expands the NOSORH recommended measures to develop internal documentation related to the collection and reporting of measures

1.4 Contracting/RFPs

This category relates to the contracting of SORH grant deliverables to outside partners and organizations that ensure completion of required components of the workplan.

1.4.1 Defining responsibilities — the extent to which the SORH identifies the responsibilities of contractors or those operating under a formal agreement with the SORH (i.e., those who are proficient would regularly require submissions from contractors [quarterly] compared to competent offices that require one lump sum at the end of the project period).

1.4.2 Development of requests for proposals (RFPs) — adherence to organizational requirements for releasing a RFP to the general public, per state guidelines and regulations.

1.4.3 Monitoring of contracts — the system in which the SORH tracks the progress of all contracts, MOUs, etc. in meeting deliverables, reporting requirements, and fiscal obligations.

4. Contracting/RFPs			
	Needs Assistance	**Competent**	**Proficient**
1. Defining responsibilities	Contracts identify a general scope of work with no outline of fiscal responsibilities, milestones, or collection of data	Contracts identify a schedule of specific deliverables, required reporting (including collection of data) and end of period reporting requirements	A mechanism and timeline for easily tracking the schedule of deliverables, payment dates and all reporting requirements are in place for every SORH sub-contract to ensure contractor performance
2. Development of requests for proposals (RFPs)	Office relies solely on outside expertise to develop all RFPs	**Office can compile a draft RFP, with assistance from organizational experts, for critiquing by others within organizational structure**	Office can develop a full RFP for distribution, according to organizational policies and procedures
3. Monitoring of contracts	Office does not have a process for monitoring contractor responsibilities or assigned staff person for monitoring	Office requires submission of contractor reports, which are tied to a payment schedule, by the end of the reporting period	Assigned staff review contractor progress according to the established timeline and address any deficiencies to ensure the highest level of contractor performance

Target Area II: Information Dissemination

Rationale: The NOSORH Proficiencies workgroup envisions that every SORH has competency to meet all information dissemination requirements for SORH funding. The key elements of Information Dissemination are: stakeholder review (ensuring a list of these stakeholders for easy dissemination of information), the use of effective and efficient communication modalities, partnerships that expand the reach of the SORH's information dissemination capacity, and ensuring SORH responsiveness to support FORHP and its partners.

2.1 Stakeholder Database

This category relates to the way in which a SORH identifies and maintains knowledge of stakeholders within their state. In order to meet the SORH's requirements of information dissemination, SORH should have a method of identifying and connecting with the rural stakeholders in their state.

2.1.1 **Collection and review process** (CDI) — the process by which SORH collects and monitors a distribution list of the key stakeholders within their state.

2.1.2 **List maintenance (CDI)** — the way in which a SORH maintains their distribution list of key stakeholders within their state.

1. Stakeholder Database			
	Needs Assistance	**Competent**	**Proficient**
1. Collection and review process (CDI)	SORH does not actively keep their stakeholder list regularly updated	**SORH updates stakeholder lists as information is obtained**	SORH has a strategy in place on how to collect and regularly update stakeholder lists
2. List maintenance (CDI)	SORH has a list of stakeholders but not in an electronic format or accessible by others	SORH maintains a list of stakeholders within their email account that can be shared with others	SORH maintains a list of stakeholders in an external format, which allows for tracking and identifies expertise of stakeholders, and includes FORHP grantees in the state

2.2 Communication Modalities

This category relates to the way in which a SORH leverages various communication modes to perform their information dissemination requirements of the SORH program.

2.1.2 **Targeted communications techniques (CDI)** — the way in which a SORH communicates with stakeholders and constituents in their state; this includes emails, faxes, social media posts, newsletters, and other modes of communication.

2.2.2 **Necessary resources are allocated** — the allocation of resources by the SORH to meet the office's communications needs. This could be the devotion of a full-time staff member, contracting out responsibilities, or building these duties into the responsibilities of an existing staff member.

2. Communication Modalities

	Needs Assistance	Competent	Proficient
1. Targeted communications techniques (CDI)	SORH communicates exclusively through email with no plan for engaging other mediums	SORH communicates primarily through email and leverages partner resources to disseminate in additional modalities	SORH develops messaging using at least one modality, in addition to email, for information dissemination that is appropriate for the target audience
2. Necessary resources are allocated	SORH has no FTE dedicated to managing office communications	SORH has less than .25 FTE dedicated to managing office communications	SORH has at least a .25 FTE dedicated to proactively planning and managing office communications

2.3 State Partnerships

This category relates to the way in which the SORH office leverages partnerships in the state to meet their requirements for information dissemination.

2.3.1 Identify and communicate with shared stakeholders (CDI, C) — the

way in which the SORH aligns with other known organizations within the state that share their target audience or have overlapping missions. To be considered Proficient, the SORH must have an ongoing communication with the other organization(s), preferably regularly scheduled calls (monthly, quarterly, etc.).

2.3.2 Leveraging of state partners (CDI, C, TA)

— the methodology used by the SORH to ensure that they are communicating with and leveraging their partners in a strategic manner.

2.3.3 SORH as trusted source of information

(CDI, C, TA) — stakeholders in the state's perception of the SORH office as a trusted source of information, as evidence by invitations to participate in dialogues and provide information.

3. State Partnerships

	Needs Assistance	Competent	Proficient
1. Identify and communicate with shared stakeholders (CDI, C)	SORH is unaware of state partners with audience and mission overlap, or has no method for communicating with those state partners	SORH identifies points of contact among state partners with common audience and mission	SORH has a methodology to collaborate with state and community partners, including non-traditional partners, who have common audience and mission
2. Leveraging of state partners (CDI, C, TA)	SORH does little or no cross-promoting of resources or distributing information	SORH engages state partners to utilize their resources to distribute information for specific events or activities	SORH leverages strategic state partnerships, on an on-going basis, to identify issues, information resources, expand reach, and cross-promote resources and distribute information
3. SORH as trusted source of information (CDI, C, TA)	SORH is not regularly invited to participate in dialogue with state partners	SORH is provided with a voice for information with state partners on certain issues only	SORH is regularly invited by partners to participate as a source of information

2.4 Supporting FORHP and Partners

This category relates to the requirements for disseminating information from other FORHP partners such as the RHIhub, the Rural Health Information Gateway, and others.

2.4.1 Knowledge of FORHP and Partners — the level to which the SORH is aware of FORHP resources and other FORHP partners and the way in which their services can benefit constituents in their state; this includes RHIhub, Rural Health Gateway, and NOSORH among others.

2.4.2 Dissemination of FORHP and Partner information (CDI) — the way in which the SORH meets their obligation to promote information provided by FORHP and other FORHP partners (RHIhub, Rural Health Gateway, NOSORH, etc.).

2.4.3 Leveraging and communicating with FORHP (C, TA) — the ability of the SORH to use the technical assistance services available to them from FORHP, and maintain regular communication with their Project Officer and/or other FORHP staff.

2.4.4 Leveraging FORHP Partners (C, TA) — the ability of the SORH to use the technical assistance services available to them from FORHP-funded partners. This could include requesting RHIhub to locate literature or data sources. This should focus on the free services offered to SORH as part of the scope-of-work for the FORHP partner.

4. Supporting FORHP and Partners			
	Needs Assistance	**Competent**	**Proficient**
1. Knowledge of FORHP and Partners	SORH does not fully understand FORHP and their partner roles	SORH is knowledgeable about FORHP and their partners	SORH has a thorough knowledge of FORHP and their partners, including FORHP grantees, what they offer, and how they can collaborate
2. Dissemination of FORHP and Partner information (CDI)	SORH does not regularly share information from FORHP and their partners with constituents	**SORH shares general information from FORHP and their partners with constituents**	SORH shares targeted information from FORHP and their partners with specific constituents
3. Leveraging and communicating with FORHP (C, TA)	SORH does not seek information or leverage the resources available from FORHP	**SORH participates in Regional Partnership calls on a regular basis and responds to FORHP requests in a timely manner**	SORH and FORHP engage to update one another on the challenges and accomplishments of SORH and FORHP initiatives, and leverage available resources at the state and federal levels
4. Leveraging FORHP Partners (C, TA)	SORH does not leverage the resources available from FORHP partners	SORH occasionally makes requests of FORHP partners or directs constituents to FORHP partners for more targeted assistance	SORH leverages FORHP partners to engage in activities that enhance the skills of constituents by engaging partners with specific skill sets

Target Area III: Organizational Structure, Expertise, and Partnerships

Rationale: The NOSORH Proficiencies workgroup envisions that every SORH has competency to meet all requirements for SORH funding. The SORH must have an organizational structure that provides an infrastructure with a high level of expertise regarding rural needs, is optimized by robust partnerships, and has the capacity to support and build sustainable communities to improve rural health.

3.1. Organizational Structure

This category relates to the organizational structure in which the SORH is located; which could include location in state government, university or non-profit organizations.

3.1.1 **Institutional knowledge for the benefit of rural communities (C)** — the way in which the SORH recognizes their location (state government, university or non-profit) and leverages the benefits of that location (i.e., proximity to lead state health officials, access to students/academic researchers, flexibility for increased revenue streams, and in-person contact, etc.) to advance priorities of the office.

3.1.2 **Educating constituents within the SORH organizational structure (CDI, TA)** — how the SORH uses their organizational location (state government, university, or non-profit) to provide education to constituents and other divisions within their organizational structure on the priorities of the SORH.

1. Organizational Structure			
	Needs Assistance	**Competent**	**Proficient**
1. Institutional knowledge for the benefit of rural communities (C)	SORH has limited institutional knowledge to leverage that can be used to advance priorities of their office	SORH has institutional knowledge that can be leveraged to advance priorities of the office, and a strategy for action	SORH consistently leverages institutional knowledge to advance priorities of the office through collaborative partnerships
2. Educating constituents within the SORH organizational structure (CDI, TA)	SORH is unable to educate others in its organizational structure about the needs of rural communities	SORH uses its organizational structure to educate policy or program decision makers within their state government, university or board on needs of rural communities	SORH utilizes unique placement to proactively educate others within and outside their organizational structure to take action or implement policies or programs to address the needs of rural communities

3.2 Expertise

This category relates to the staff expertise within the SORH, or through contractual partners that are used to meet workplan deliverables.

3.2.1 Environmental scan of state's rural communities (CDI) — this refers to how the SORH is conducting an environmental scan of the needs of rural communities within their state. To be considered a 'regularly occurring basis' for Proficient, the SORH must have a plan which indicates how often a scan is completed (i.e., every two years, etc.).

3.2.2 Linking resources to rural community needs (CDI, C, TA) — the ability of the SORH to translate the needs identified from their environmental scans, or identified in other ways, by linking the community needs with existing resources at the local, state, or national level.

2. Expertise			
	Needs Assistance	**Competent**	**Proficient**
1. Environmental scan of state's rural communities (CDI)	SORH plans and conducts a qualitative or mixed-methods scan of the needs of rural communities in their state at least every 5 years	SORH plans, conducts, and analyzes qualitative and quantitative environmental scans to assess the needs of rural communities in their state at least every 2 years	SORH uses the 2 year scan and convenes partners, advisory groups or funders panels to increase awareness and strategize to address the identified rural needs.
2. Linking resources to rural community needs (CDI, C, TA)	SORH uses general tools to recognize and connect identified local needs with some resources	**SORH matches identified local needs with informational resources such as research, reports, model programs or best practices upon request from communities in need**	SORH staff are assigned to strategically seek and share resources to meet identified rural community needs

3.3 Partnerships

This category relates to leveraging non-contractual partner subject matter expertise to further the mission of the SORH.

3.3.1 Partner resources to meet needs of rural communities (CDI) — the knowledge of the SORH when it comes to resources that are available to rural communities through other organizations, other divisions within the Department of Health, other grant programs, or those with mission or audience overlap.

3.3.2 Collaboration in the development of new resources to meet unmet needs (C, TA) — when a community need is identified for which no current resource exists, this topic discusses the collaboration with other partners to create the necessary resources for addressing the need. This could mean developing a fact sheet on new Medicaid rules in the state, or working with the RHIhub to build a resource page on a specific topic.

3. Partnerships			
	Needs Assistance	**Competent**	**Proficient**
1. Partner resources to meet needs of rural communities (CDI)	SORH has general knowledge of resources and directs questions about other available resources to an outside organization	**SORH is knowledgeable of resources and points of contacts to refer rural communities to other divisions/agencies or organizations that can specifically assist rural communities**	SORH knowledge is recognized and partners utilize SORH information to disseminate resources to targeted rural needs
2. Collaboration in the development of new resources to meet unmet needs (C, TA)	Partner participation is not a part of the SORH's process for developing new resources	SORH shares information with partners to develop new resources for rural communities	SORH and partners strategize the need to develop resources aimed at meeting the needs of rural communities

3.4 Community Sustainability

This category relates to the SORH's activities that assist rural communities in developing sustainability plans for activities, particularly those funded with FORHP's Community Based Division grants.

3.4.1 Sustainability of community-based initiatives (C, TA) — conversations and technical assistance offered to rural communities to assist them in planning and implementing strategies for sustainability.

3.4.2 Identifying additional resources to support sustainability (CDI, C, TA) — technical assistance provided to communities that are seeking resources to sustain a current program or expand its reach.

4. Community Sustainability			
	Needs Assistance	**Competent**	**Proficient**
1. Sustainability of community-based initiatives (C, TA)	SORH is not positioned to discuss sustainability with rural communities for their important programs	SORH engages communities in discussions about sustainability for important programs	SORH collaborates with rural communities to ensure sustainability of important programs, without ongoing support from SORH
2. Identifying additional resources to support sustainability (CDI, C, TA)	SORH is not involved in rural community projects and unable to identify needed linkages	SORH offers information about supplemental resources and funding opportunities to rural communities without tailoring announcements to specific projects	SORH and external partners target information, resources, state policy activities, and funding opportunities to rural communities

Target Area IV: Funding

Rationale: The NOSORH Proficiencies workgroup envisions that every SORH has competency to meet all requirements for SORH funding. The key elements of ***Funding*** are: cost sharing, partner investments in the SORH, diversifying revenue sources and grant seeking. SORH may engage partners, seek grants and other sources of funds, and host revenue generating activities as a strategy to expand the capacity of the SORH and broaden its reach.

4.1 SORH Match

This category relates to the funds used for the 3:1 match required of the SORH grant program.

4.1.1 Available matching funds for programs — the percent of dollars allocated by the SORH

or other entity to meet the required match of the SORH grant that can be directed back into programs. For this purpose, 'programmatic' excludes facility fees, administrative fees, and indirect costs. It may include staff time, granted staff time is applied to programs and not administrative functions.

4.1.2 Professional services leveraged as matching funds — access for the SORH to professional services used when documenting the matching funds for the SORH grant (i.e., data analytics and mapping services provided by an epidemiologist located within another division, administrative functions provided by grants management division, etc.).

1. SORH Match			
	Needs Assistance	**Competent**	**Proficient**
1. Available matching funds for programs	SORH are not able to utilize any of matching dollars toward programmatic purposes	SORH are able to utilize at least 15% of matching dollars toward programmatic purposes	SORH are able to utilize at least 25% of matching dollars toward programmatic purposes
2. Professional services leveraged as matching funds	SORH has no access to professional services indicated as matching funds	SORH has limited access to professional services allocated to the matching funds	SORH has access to, and benefits from, professional services allocated to the matching funds

4.2 Partner Investments

This category relates to the financial or in-kind support offered by partners (internally or externally) to further the reach of the SORH office and their projects.

4.2.1 Direct support from state partners for SORH programs — how the SORH office's partners in the state (whether within the same organizational structure or outside of it) provide direct support to SORH activities, reducing the burden to SORH staff and/or their budget.

4.2.2 Supplemental partner support for joint programs (C) — the support provided to the SORH by external partners to engage in joint endeavors (i.e. joint conferences, supporting administrators to attend a partner's event, etc.).

4.2.3 Development of joint programs with partners (CDI, C) — the way in which the SORH assists external partners (those outside of their organizational structure) in promoting programs which benefit rural communities. To be Proficient in this category,

promotion of the activity must directly ensure an increase in revenue generation for the partnering organization (i.e., sponsorship of attendees, exhibiting at a partner conference, etc.).

2. Partner Investments			
	Needs Assistance	**Competent**	**Proficient**
1. Direct support from state partners for SORH programs	SORH does not engage external partners who could support office efforts	SORH external partners support efforts with in-kind support, but no funding for programming	SORH external partners provide matching funds or specific financial support for SORH programming
2. Supplemental partner support for joint programs (C)	SORH external partners do not support joint endeavors	SORH external partners offer support towards joint endeavors, but without supplemental funding	SORH external partners supplement SORH funding toward joint endeavors
3. Development of joint programs with partners (CDI, C)	SORH does not engage with external partners for activities	SORH activities with external partners assist with promotion but do not generate revenue for partners	SORH activities with external partners assist in revenue generation for expanding reach of joint programs

4.3 Revenue Diversification

This category relates to revenue generating activities of the office that are beyond the funding received from the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy or matching SORH funds.

4.3.1 **Expansion of base funding beyond grant and match dollars** — activities or initiatives of any kind conducted by the SORH which have the opportunity to build the funding beyond the SORH grant funds or matching dollars, particularly in a sustainable manner (grants, contracts, etc.).

4.3.2 **Revenue generation through SORH-hosted activities for state constituents (CDI, C, TA)** — focusing on face-to-face or virtual events hosted by the SORH as an opportunity to generate revenue, cover costs or build new revenue streams.

3. Revenue Diversification			
	Needs Assistance	**Competent**	**Proficient**
1. Expansion of base funding beyond grant and match dollars	SORH does not have a plan to engage in activities which will grow or expand the current revenue base of the office	SORH has an adopted plan to engage in activities that will grow or expand the revenue base of the office	SORH actively engages in activities which will grow or expand a diverse revenue base of the office
2. Revenue generation through SORH-hosted activities for state constituents (CDI, C, TA)	SORH is unable to host activities for constituents' due to funding constraints	SORH hosts activities for constituents but does not generate any revenue	SORH hosts activities which generate revenue to, at a minimum, cover costs

4.4 Grant Seeking

This category relates to the actions of compiling and submitting the SORH grant application to FORHP.

4.4.1 Identifying appropriate funding opportunities — the ability of the SORH to look beyond the SORH funding to identify additional opportunities for supplementing activities through grants. This may not be the SORH who completes the grant writing, but rather identifies potential overlap with other divisions/organizations and works with them to identify funding for the SORH to participate or expand the reach of limited SORH dollars.

4.4.2 Using appropriate data — the extent to which the SORH can leverage data and data analysis to enhance their grant writing, either internally or externally. While trending data are acceptable, those in "Needs Improvement" may be unfamiliar with new or additional data that can further support the SORH mission.

4.4.3 Organizational personnel, policies and procedures for submission — the personnel assigned to these tasks, and the organizational policies or procedures that dictate the process for writing and submitting the SORH grant.

4. Grant Seeking			
	Needs Assistance	**Competent**	**Proficient**
1. Identifying appropriate funding opportunities	The SORH office does not seek additional funding opportunities, and no staff person is assigned to conducting this activity	The SORH office seeks additional funding opportunities that strategically align to office priorities, as a team effort without an assigned staff person for these activities	The SORH has staff and other resources assigned, and a plan in place, to strategically identify and seek additional funding that aligns to the office priorities and state needs
2. Using appropriate data	Office relies on updated data from previous grant applications to support future grant applications	Office seeks additional support from data experts to identify appropriate data for inclusion in grant applications	SORH has a staff member that is fully able to identify, analyze, and describe pertinent data to grant applications
3. Organizational personnel, policies and procedures for submission	Office has limited knowledge of organizational policies and procedures related to grant submission	Office has understanding of organizational policies and procedures related to grant submission	SORH has applied knowledge of the local organization policies and procedures related to grant submission, with an identified responsible staff member