



National Organization of  
**State Offices of Rural Health**

# **SORH Capacity Building**

## **Core Proficiencies Benchmarking Report 2018 – 2020**



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# SORH Capacity Building

## Core Proficiencies Benchmarking Report

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### Background

In July 2018 NOSORH released a robust State Office of Rural Health (SORH) self-assessment tool and [SORH Proficiencies guide](#) to provide a measured system of identifying SORH needs to develop appropriate resources for SORH. The self-assessment was organized by four key competencies of SORH work: Grants Management, Information Dissemination, Organizational Capacity and Funding. Forty key elements was used as measures of those competencies. A portion of the elements were derived from those requirements of the SORH grant, which are highlighted in **bold font** throughout the rubrics. The results of the first two years of the SORH Core Proficiencies provides the basis for this report. Future updated reports, including biannual trending reports, and Topical proficiencies will be available to SORH.

### Purpose

The benchmarking report serves three purposes. First, it provides individual SORH with an opportunity to benchmark their own scores to aggregates of their peers. Second, it provides NOSORH with an opportunity to strategically identify the greatest needs. Third, it provides resources which can be of support to SORH in improving their capacity.

SORH should use this benchmarking report in their strategic planning for internal capacity building, to identify areas in which your office excels or may be in need of some technical assistance. The resources that are identified within this report help provide a quick, easy to understand tool or document for learning more about specific rubric elements. Additional resources include staff at NOSORH and FORHP, the SORH grant guidance and relevant circulars. This document and the SORH Proficiencies will continue to evolve as more data and resources are collected.

### Methodology

Responses to the NOSORH Proficiencies Self-Assessment were collected via an online survey emailed to the SORH and made available on the “members only” section of the NOSORH website for two separate rounds of data collection in quarter three of 2018 and the second quarter of 2020. To be included in the 2020 Benchmarking Report, respondents must have fully completed the self-assessment between January 1, 2018, and March 13, 2020.

## Results

A total of 39 (78%) of SORH met the inclusion criteria for participation in the benchmarking report. Mean scores were calculated using a three-point scale, ranging from 1.0 to 3.0, and all responses included an N/A option that would remove the element from the scoring. Rankings were determined by analyzing scores within one standard deviation of the Mean.

1.0 - 1.99	Needs Assistance (NA)
2.0 - 2.69	Competent (C)
2.7 - 3.0	Proficient (P)

Target Area	M	% by Response Category		
		NA	C	P
<b>Organizational Capacity</b>	2.28	18%	64%	18%
<b>Funding</b>	2.34	16%	60%	24%
<b>Grants Management</b>	2.41	5%	75%	20%
<b>Information Dissemination</b>	2.42	13%	54%	33%

When looking nationally, SORH reported Information Dissemination and Grants Management as their strongest target areas. Approximately 95% of respondents indicated that they were Competent or Proficient in the Grants Management target area.

Of the 40 ranked elements that are part of the Core Proficiencies, 44% were ranked as proficient, 49% were ranked as competent, and 7% ranked as needing assistance.

Highest Ranked Elements	Mean	% P
<b>Funding — 4.3: Organizational personnel, policies and procedures for submission</b>	2.62	65%
<b>Grants Management — 4.3: Monitoring of contracts</b>	2.63	63%
<b>Information Dissemination — 3.3: SORH as trusted source of information</b>	2.63	68%
<b>Grants Management — 4.2 Development of requests for proposals (RFPs)</b>	2.65	65%
<b>Information Dissemination — 3.2: Leveraging of state partners</b>	2.66	68%

The highest-ranked elements are provided in the chart above, from low to high. The third column identifies the percentage of SORH who recorded a Proficient response for the elements. The lowest-ranked elements are in the chart below, with the third column identifying the percentage of SORH who recorded a Needs Assistance response.

Lowest Ranked Elements	Mean	% NA
<b>Organizational Capacity — 2.1: Environmental scan of state's rural communities</b>	1.92	27%
<b>Funding — 3.1: Expansion of base funding beyond grant and match dollars</b>	1.94	42%
<b>Organizational Capacity — 4.1: Sustainability of community-based initiatives</b>	1.97	26%
<b>Grants Management — 3.2: SORH reporting on FORHP-required PIMS measures</b>	2.05	8%
<b>Funding — 4.1: Identifying appropriate funding opportunities</b>	2.08	19%

### Mean Regional Scores, by Target Area

Target Area	Region A	Region B	Region C	Region D	Region E	National
Grants Management	2.43	2.22	2.35	2.47	2.52	2.41
Information Dissemination	2.48	2.47	2.31	2.42	2.53	2.42
Organizational Capacity	2.35	2.19	2.11	2.34	2.36	2.28
Funding	2.41	2.44	2.09	2.39	2.53	2.34

Regional analysis shows some slight variations, though each Target Area is ranked consistent with the National average. Regional variations ranged from 0.13 – 0.26 between the highest and lowest scoring Target Area, with a National range of 0.14.

## Discussion

The updated 2020 Benchmarking Report includes 17 new resources that can assist SORH in addressing areas of highest need in their office. While the list is not exhaustive, it's intended to serve as a foundation of available resources. In the 2019, report there were 25 identified resources, while the 2020 report has 42 identified resources. Resources were identified by SORH peers on the Educational Strategy Committee, partners at FORHP, and in collaboration with NOSORH staff.

Regional variations show little difference between regions and a consistency between Target Area rubric scoring nationally. Low variability helps ensure that the assessment is used consistently, and a good measure of SORH response.

The results of the self-assessment are being used to help drive NOSORH programming in a variety of ways. Ranked scores are being used by the ESC to identify and develop resources targeted to those areas of highest need for SORH. NOSORH will be providing further analysis of assessment scores during the 2020 Regional Meetings and a targeted learning opportunity during the 2020 Annual Meeting, in addition to ESC resources.

## Grants Management (M=2.41)

1. Budget				Aggregate Score
	Needs Assistance	Competent	Proficient	
1. Monitoring of funds	SORH does not regularly review funds, and has a history of 3+ years of carryover requests	<b>Funds are reviewed regularly to identify possibilities of discrepancies or potential carryover requests</b>	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	2.54
2. Adjusting spending as needed	Budget requests are not made to FORHP to carryover funds that are unobligated	<b>Budgets are reviewed regularly, and grantees adjust spending during the budget year to minimize unspent funds; if changes exceed 24%, the grantee request change to the FORHP project officers</b>	Proactively adjusts categorical spending and reallocates resources within the budget when aware of changes in staffing or needs of the state	2.59
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	2.59
4. Disbursement of obligated funds	SORH consistently has a large unobligated balance that requires a carryforward request	<b>SORH infrequently has UOB due to unforeseen circumstances beyond their control</b>	SORH does not have an unobligated balance and requires no carryover requests	2.21

2. Workplan				Aggregate Score
	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	2.37
2. Having a measurable work plan	The work plan has no/little strategy for capturing measures	<b>The work plan has a data collection strategy that will be implemented to collect, analyze, and track data to measure performance and determine impact of outcomes.</b>	The work plan provides outputs and outcomes that are specific and measurable	2.21

3. Reporting				Aggregate Score
	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	<b>Office has access to the SORH grant data, required to support 100% of the work plan measures</b>	Office has access to the SORH grant data, and a plan for review and analysis to inform any necessary work plan or budget revisions	2.05
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 an internal documentation related to the collection and reporting of measures	2.49

4. Contracting/RFPs				Aggregate Score
	Needs Assistance	Competent	Proficient	
1. Defining	Contracts identify a general scope of work with no outline of fiscal responsibilities, milestones, or collection of data	<b>Contracts identify a schedule of specific deliverables, required reporting (including collection of data) and end of period reporting requirements</b>	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	2.65
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	2.63
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	2.41

## Grants Management Resources

- [Public Budgets: Governance Structures, Norms, and Organizational Practices](#)
- [Effective Use of Performance Budgeting](#)
- [DHS Grants Policy Statement](#)
- [HRSA Grants Management Resources](#)
- [Developing Program Goals and Measurable Objectives](#)
- [NOSORH's Rural Health Data Institute](#)
- [NOSORH Performance Measures Tool and Recommended Measures \(2011\)](#)
- [Tools for existing TruServe users](#)
- [Information for potential TruServe users](#)
- [Monthly TruServe learning communities and trainings](#)
- [North Carolina Data Dictionary \(SORH Example\)](#)
- [Developing a Request for Proposal](#)
- [Brief 22: Public Procurement](#)
- Connect with individuals in your organization to identify a fiscal point of contact to learn organizational fiscal policies and procedures.
- Connect with individuals in your organization to identify a point of contact and learn organizational procurement policies and procedures.

## Information Dissemination (M=2.42)

1. Stakeholder Database				Aggregate Score
	Needs Assistance	Competent	Proficient	
1. Collection and review process (CDI)s	SORH does not actively keep their stakeholder list regularly updated	<b>SORH updates stakeholder lists as information is obtained</b>	SORH has a strategy in place on how to collect and regularly update stakeholder lists	2.34
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	The work plan provides outputs and outcomes that are specific and measurable	2.21

2. Communication Modalities				Aggregate Score
	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	2.53
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	2.32

3. State Partnerships				Aggregate Score
	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	<b>SORH identifies points of contact among state partners with common audience and mission</b>	SORH has a methodology to collaborate with state and community partners, including non-traditional partners, who have common audience and mission	2.43
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	2.66
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	2.63

4. Supporting FORHP and Partners				Aggregate Score
	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	2.37
2. Dissemination of FORHP and Partner information (CDI)	SORH does not regularly share information from FORHP and their partners with constituents	<b>SORH shares general information from FORHP and their partners with constituents</b>	SORH shares targeted information from FORHP and their partners with specific constituents	2.53
3. Leveraging and communicating with FORHP (C, TA)	SORH does not seek information or leverage the resources available from FORHP	<b>SORH participates in Regional Partnership calls on a regular basis and responds to FORHP requests in a timely basis</b>	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	2.32
4. Leveraging FORHP Partners ww (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	2.28

### Information Dissemination Resources

- [Rural Community Health Toolkit, Module 6: Disseminating Best Practices](#)
- [Dissemination of Rural Health Research: A Toolkit](#)
- [Rural Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Toolkit: Health Communication](#)
- [Community Toolbox 6.1: Developing a Plan for Communication](#)
- [Partnerships: Frameworks for Working Together](#)
- [County Health Ranking's Partner Center](#)
- [Public Health 3.0: Transforming Communities](#)
- [FORHP Rural Health Resource Guide](#)

### Information Dissemination Partners

- [Federal Office of Rural Health Policy](#)
- [Rural Health Information Hub \(RHlhub\)](#)
- [Rural Health Research Gateway](#)
- [National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health](#)
- [National Rural Health Association](#)

## Organizational Capacity (M=2.28)

1. Organizational Structure				Aggregate Score
	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	2.54
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	2.31

2. Expertise				Aggregate Score
	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.	1.92
2. Necessary resources are allocated	SORH uses general tools to recognize and connect identified local needs with some resources	<b>SORH matches identified local needs with informational resources such as research, reports, model programs or best practices upon request from communities in need</b>	SORH staff are assigned to strategically seek and share resources to meet identified rural community needs	2.18

3. Partnerships				Aggregate Score
	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	<b>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</b>	SORH knowledge is recognized and partners utilize SORH information to disseminate resources to targeted rural needs	2.51
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 and 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	2.41

4. Community Sustainability				Aggregate Score
	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	1.97
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	2.36

## Organizational Capacity Resources

- [From the Outside In: Using Environmental Scanning for Evidence-based Planning](#)
- [A Community Approach to Address Health Disparities: Toolkit for Health & Resilience in Vulnerable Environments](#)
- [Rural Community Health Toolkit, Module 5: Planning for Sustainability](#)
- [RWJF's Public and Community Health](#)
- [NASHP's Resources to Help States Fund Health-Related Social and Economic Needs](#)
- [CDC's A Sustainable Planning Guide for Healthy Communities](#)
- [NOSORH's Resources for Rural Community Health Needs Assessments \(CHNA\) and Community Health Improvement Plans \(CHIP\)](#)

## Funding (M=2.34)

1. SORH Match				Aggregate Score
	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	2.58
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	2.39

2. Partner Investments				Aggregate Score
	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	2.30
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	2.27
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	2.37

3. Revenue Diversification				Aggregate Score
	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	1.94
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	2.24

4. Grant Seeking				Aggregate Score
	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	2.08
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	2.53
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	2.62

## Funding Resources

- [HRSA SF-424 Application Guidance](#)
- [Grants.gov Notices](#)
- [RHIfhub Updates & Alerts](#)
- [RHIfhub Funding Opportunities](#)
- [NOSORH Grant Writing Institute](#)
- [NOSORH Grant Writing Institute: Beyond the Basics](#)
- [NOSORH in-person Grant Writing Workshops \(by request\)](#)