



Healthy Relationships, Sexuality & Autism Pilot Program

Organization Name: Autism Nova Scotia

Program to be Evaluated: Healthy Relationships, Sexuality & Autism (HRSA) Program

Invitation:

Autism Nova Scotia is seeking a qualified program evaluator to conduct an assessment of the new Healthy Relationships, Sexuality & Autism Program. This proposal will focus on: a) developing the HRSA program with an evaluative lens built into the program's curriculum, b) the anticipated and intended goals and outcomes of the project and its train-the-trainer component, as laid out in the funding proposal c) document the successes and challenges of the pilot program and its train-the-trainer component, and d) offer basic recommendations for improving the delivery program and its train-the-trainer component.

Background:

Autism Nova Scotia (formerly the Provincial Autism Centre) was founded in October of 2002, with a vision of connecting individuals with autism, families and loved ones into a community to address the need for information, and to others facing a similar diagnosis. The organization offers a variety of programs and services including family support, social groups, camps, employment support and more.

Our Vision: A world where all people living with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) can live their lives fully.

Our Mandate: We are a community-based organization that fosters understanding, acceptance, and collaborative approaches for those living with Autism Spectrum Disorders throughout Nova Scotia.

Purpose of the Project:

Autism Nova Scotia is developing a sexuality education curriculum and corresponding train-the-trainer framework for teens and adults with high functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), that helps them understand how to appropriately express their sexuality, and how to avoid many of the common problems that people with ASD face in their sexual lives. People with autism may face many of the same challenges as neurotypical people. However, their unique social, communication and sensory differences mean that they are much more likely than the general population to struggle with how to appropriately express themselves and understand sexual interactions and signals while observing accepted and often unsaid norms. Additionally, people with autism are much more likely to identify as gender variant. The result of this convergence of factors is that people with ASD are more likely to be victims of sexual assault, and to inadvertently be victimizers. People with autism have varying social

communication and sensory differences that require diversified strategies for teaching. Because of this, general sexual education is not delivered in a way that people with ASD can easily learn from and extrapolate to their everyday lives. Education and awareness are key to preventing sexual violence. Yet there is very little available to teach persons with developmental disabilities like ASD about sexuality, including appropriate sexual expressions and interactions. This means that a key piece of the preventative puzzle is missing for the autistic community—despite a more acute need and an increased likelihood of being victims and perpetrators of sexual violence.

Autism Nova Scotia is attempting to bridge this gap using provincial funds through the Department of Community Services' Prevention and Innovation. With that, Autism Nova Scotia wishes to gain feedback on this program for the potential continuation supports.

An evaluation is sought to offer feedback on: a) building evaluation into the development of the program from an early stage, b) the anticipated and intended goals and outcomes of the project, as laid out in the funding proposal document the successes and challenges of the pilot program, and c) offer basic recommendations for improving the delivery program and its train-the-trainer component.

Interested evaluators may request a copy of the grant proposal that outlines the objectives and rationale for the pilot.

Scope of Works

The successful evaluator should be able to support Autism Nova Scotia staff by providing suggestions on how to build the curriculum and assessments for evaluative purposes. Along with, employing both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The evaluator will be asked to construct their approach and methods around consulting with Autism Nova Scotia staff charged with overseeing the administration and contracting of the HRSA program.

The evaluator will also be asked to engage with participants, as well as to follow up with any participants who left the group, through interviews and/or questionnaires, and will be asked to allow those interviews to inform recommendations for how to best structure the program moving forward.



Deliverables

- Feedback on incorporating evaluative approaches during the development of the program
- Evaluation design for the Healthy Relationships, Sexuality and Autism Program
- Articulate clearly the scope, successes, and adaptations of the project to meet the support needs of persons with autism enrolled in the Healthy Relationships, Sexuality and Autism Program
- Articulate clearly the scope, successes, and adaptations of the project to meet the needs of the student train-the-trainers
- Where possible, suggestions on scalability to move the pilot across the province
- Interviews with the Program Director, Advisory Group members, volunteers and participants
- Supporting data analysis
- Final evaluation report

Timelines:

November 2017 –May 2018

Proposal Requirements

- Cover letter offering any relevant experience, as well as an overview of a Project Management Approach and work plan for evaluating the program;
- Declaration of Experience and Qualifications (Attach a separate CV if needed.)

Budget

The budget for this project is \$4, 650, excluding HST.

Application Deadline

Please submit applications electronically by Tuesday, November 14th, and direct any questions to:

Yevonne Le Lacheur
Program Director
Autism Nova Scotia

programs@autismns.ca