SUBJECT: IDEAs (Informed Decisions Empowering Adolescents) Program – BOH09007 (City Wide)

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board of Health approve the single sourced purchase of the IDEAs Program from Impact Consulting, as long as it remains consistent with best practice and continues to meet operational needs.

Elizabeth Richardson, MD, MHSc, FRCPC
Public Health Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In April of 1998, Council approved a recommendation to direct funds to Dr. Deanna Behnke-Cook to implement a pilot of the IDEAs Program. IDEAs (Informed Decisions Empowering Adolescents) is a school-based youth risk behaviour intervention program that has been designed to teach youth about how and why they should avoid becoming involved in risk behaviours and to encourage them to not use drugs or alcohol or become involved in premature sexual activities. This program has been specifically designed to meet the needs of elementary school youth in the Hamilton. There is no other program like it offered through schools because it is delivered by specially selected, trained and supervised peer mentors from secondary schools. Research demonstrates that youth require school-based health education programmes in order to make sound choices regarding risk behaviours. While data shows that youth trust
responsible adults (e.g. parents, teachers, etc.) for factual information, research further demonstrates that these adults have little effect upon the behavioural choices youth make. However, research does show that youth are profoundly affected by positive messages presented by peer mentors. The IDEAs Programme was designed specifically to address this significant void in educational settings.

Although other vendors might possibly be interested in providing a similar service, the cost for a vendor to both develop a program and deliver it would cost far more than the amount paid to Dr. Behnke-Cook. The funds have been increased since 1998 from $20,100 to $52,911 per year in order to reflect the scope of the program. The funding supports: knowledge translation; curriculum development; information sessions/meetings with school staff; administration and parent groups; recruitment of schools to bring IDEAs to their students; peer mentor recruitment from secondary schools as well as peer mentor training and on-going site-based supervision. A review of relevant and current literature related to school-based health education programmes and interventions, adolescent health best practices, evidence based initiatives and their implementation is completed on an ongoing basis.

In order to ensure the program’s success, Council approved in 1998 dedicated Public Health Nursing time to work with Dr. Behnke-Cook on the continued development and implementation of the IDEAs program. Currently a 0.3 FTE Public Health Nurse (PHN) is dedicated to the program within the School Program in the Healthy Living Division.

**BACKGROUND:**

In April of 1998, Council approved a recommendation to direct funds to Dr. Behnke-Cook to implement a pilot of The IDEAs Program. This program is an innovative problem-based learning intervention designed to develop decision making skills for elementary school students using a combination of school based education, peer support and community interventions. Peer mentors provide a unique approach to addressing Ontario Curriculum Expectations and the following Ontario Public Health Standards: sexual health; prevention of injury and substance misuse; chronic disease prevention and child health.

The underlying premise of this program is one that recognizes that youth need to be encouraged to delay becoming sexually active until they are appropriately mature, in a committed relationship and adequately responsible in order to protect their own sexual, emotional and relational health. In order to facilitate their positive behavioural choices, a number of subtopics are included in the program. They include high school culture (making the transition into high school a positive one), taking risks and substance use and abuse (encouraging youth to avoid becoming involved in substance use/abuse as it profoundly affects their decision-making skills and abilities), healthy relationships, sexuality (encouraging youth to delay becoming involved in sexual activities/relationships) and healthy lifestyle choices emphasizing physical activity and tobacco use prevention (encouraging youth to choose general healthy lifestyle behaviours consistent with addressing childhood/adolescent obesity rates). The program’s overall central message is that youth are encouraged to make positive choices about their health and well-being.
In order to assess the program’s efficacy, both qualitative and quantitative data was collected over the course of the program’s initial implementation during the pilot (1998-2001). Both the quantitative and qualitative analyses showed favourable results and are discussed in detail in the Analysis/Rationale section below. Data continues to be collected annually.

Since the programme’s inception, peer mentors have, and continue to be the central component of IDEAs. Peer Mentors who deliver The IDEAs Program do so either as volunteers as started in 2008 or through a co-operative education placement. Those who do so through co-operative education receive academic credit toward their Ontario Secondary School Diploma. Peer mentors who are volunteers deliver sessions in elementary schools by making time in their own schedules to meet the needs of youth in their community. The volunteer portion of this program started in 2008 as a means to give more secondary school students an opportunity as being a peer mentor when co-operative education was not a feasible option for these students. All mentors receive the same training and on-site supervision and support.

The following chart shows school and peer mentor numbers over the last four years from the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board for the program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>10 HWDSB</td>
<td>10 HWDSB</td>
<td>12 HWDSB</td>
<td>15 HWDSB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Mentors</td>
<td>15 co-op</td>
<td>13 co-op</td>
<td>16 co-op</td>
<td>16 co-op and 25-30 volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Sessions</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Youth Contacts</td>
<td>4629</td>
<td>3751</td>
<td>4629</td>
<td>4624</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Currently The IDEAs Program is entering into a board approval process in order to have this program delivered within the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board elementary schools. In 2010 the program hopes to expand to the two French School Boards.

**ANALYSIS/RATIONALE:**

The IDEAs Program is based on empirically verifiable evidence that argues youth require modeling in order to affect their behavioural decision-making. Thus, IDEAs rises from a Social Learning Theory and Social Inoculation Theory which provide youth with consistent positive role models (peer mentors) who promote positive choices in a real and relevant way. The peer mentors further provide on-going opportunities for the elementary school students to practice their new knowledge and decision-making skills within their peer groups (in school) so that they are better prepared to utilize those skills when faced with making choices about risk behaviours. Peer mentors are uniquely suited to this role since they stand in the gap between childhood and adulthood and thus are able to relate to the elementary school youth but are also able to share their lived experiences and strategies. Relevant literature consistently supports peer
mentors/ peer educators as having greater impact on youth self efficacy, knowledge, and behavioural intentions over adult-only led interventions (Kirby et al., 2007).

In order to assess the program’s efficacy, both qualitative and quantitative data was collected over the course of the program’s initial implementation during the pilot (1998-2001). Additionally, IDEAs had a PHRED evaluation completed in June 2003 which had favourable results. The data collected through the PHRED evaluation was qualitative in nature. The PHRED evaluation found that the IDEAs Program did deliver the intended messages, to not become involved in risk behaviours, to youth, and that the peer mentors were powerful agents in the delivery of these intended messages. Data continues to be collected annually.

The positive outcomes of The IDEAs Program are varied and considerable. The secondary school students who take on the role of Peer Mentors work collaboratively with teachers in order to assist youth in Grades 7-8 to develop skills that are necessary to make appropriate behavioural choices. Both elementary and secondary school students benefit from this skill development, as does the larger community. Dr. Behnke-Cook ensures continued review of best practices around youth risk so that The IDEAs Program continues to reflect identified successful programming requirements.

Successes of the program:
- 3,751 to 4,629 youth have received the program annually in the past four years as the number of schools increased who participated in this program;
- Collaborative relationship building with co-operative offices and school staff (teachers, administrators) in Hamilton Wentworth District School Board;
- Negotiations with the Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District School Board to implement a pilot of the IDEAs Program;
- Collaborative resource support with programs in Healthy Living Division;
- Skill development for both elementary and high school students;
- Co-operative opportunities for secondary school students which lead to enhanced personal and employment skills;
- Community involvement and collaboration among various community-based partners;
- Increased volunteerism, and empathy for/consideration of others among youth in the community

**ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:**

The Board of Health could choose not to support the ongoing purchase of The IDEAs Program. In doing so, the City would forego the opportunity to continue with a locally developed Hamilton based program that has established a partnership with two of the four local school boards. Dr. Behnke-Cook has committed to addressing the needs of students and will continue to align this program with available evidence regarding best practices, community needs, provincial and municipal mandates, and stakeholder preferences.

It is estimated that a similar service from a different vendor, tailored to the needs of Hamilton, would involve development costs of approximately $50,000, in addition to an annual cost for service provision that would be similar to that charged for IDEAs.
FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

A 0.3 FTE PHN position within Healthy Living Division-School Program is in place to support IDEAs. The PHN works collaboratively with Dr. Behnke-Cook to plan and implement IDEAs. Dr. Behnke-Cook’s role includes recruitment of schools and peer mentors, review of the program ongoing, collaboration with teachers, training/support and monitoring of secondary school students as well as consultation and collaboration with the Healthy Living Division.

POLICIES AFFECTING PROPOSAL:

Purchasing Policy – Section 4.11 – Policy for Negotiations requires approval when a single source for the supply of a particular good or service is being recommended instead of employing a competitive procurement process.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION:

Dr. Behnke-Cook continues to consult with all programs in the Healthy Living Division regarding the review and updating of this program.

This report is being submitted on the direction of the Manager, Purchasing.

CITY STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:

By evaluating the “Triple Bottom Line”, (community, environment, and economic implications) we can make choices that create value across all three bottom lines, moving us closer to our vision for a sustainable community, and Provincial interests.

Community Well-Being is enhanced. Yes No

Community involvement and mentorship among youth is promoted, facilitating the development of youth into empathic, caring, involved citizens who are conscious of the needs of others in this community.

IDEAs supports the development of skills for both elementary and secondary students and supports the following focus areas of the City of Hamilton’s Strategic Plan:

- Growing Our Economy-Increase the employment rate by 3 percentage points from 60.5 to 63.5 by the next census 2013;
- Social Development-Increase the number of Hamilton students who complete high school by 10%, by 2011;

Environmental Well-Being is enhanced. Yes No

Economic Well-Being is enhanced. Yes No

The IDEAs Program encourages youth to avoid risk behaviours such as substance use/abuse and premature sexual activity, promoting healthy and productive lives.

Does the option you are recommending create value across all three bottom lines?
Do the options you are recommending make Hamilton a City of choice for high performance public servants?  

Yes  √  No

Hamilton will be considered as a City of choice for high performance public servants because of its consistent, demonstrated and on-going commitment to acknowledging and applying scientific knowledge to enhance the well being of its citizens. By offering IDEAs, Hamilton demonstrates its commitment to include community partnerships in program development and delivery.