

**Maricopa County Arizona
Department of Public Health**

**Assessment of the Administrative Agency
Ryan White Part A Grant
Phoenix EMA
October 2009**

Presented by
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Purpose of the Report

Knowledge Capital Alliance, Inc. (KCA) was engaged to conduct an evaluation of the Administrative Agency (AA) for Grant Year 2009 as mandated by the Ryan White Care Act (Sections 2602 and 2617). The focus of the 2009 assessment was: 1) the efficiency and effectiveness of the provider invoicing and payment process, and 2) the Administrative Agency's ability to implement the directives of the Ryan White Planning Council (RYPC).

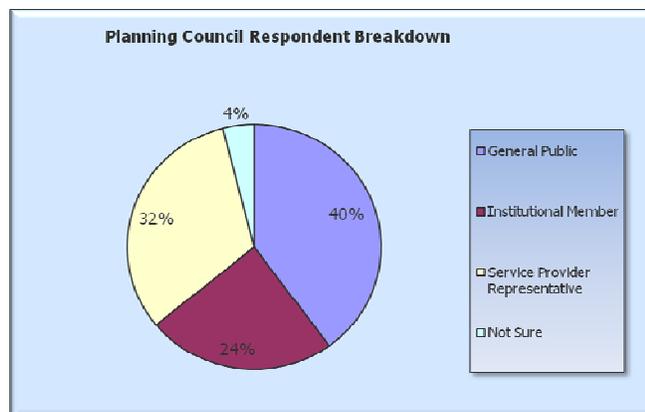
Assessment Methodology

KCA conducted a three-phased evaluation process to conduct this assessment of the Administrative Agency. The three phases were: Phase 1: Interviews with The Administrative Agent and the Provider Relations & Contracts Administrator, Phase 2: Surveys of the Ryan White Service Providers and the Ryan White Planning Council, and Phase 3: Reviews of Administrative Agency Processes, Reporting Mechanisms, and Performance Data.

The three-phased evaluation process was conducted during August – September, 2009 in Maricopa County, Arizona.

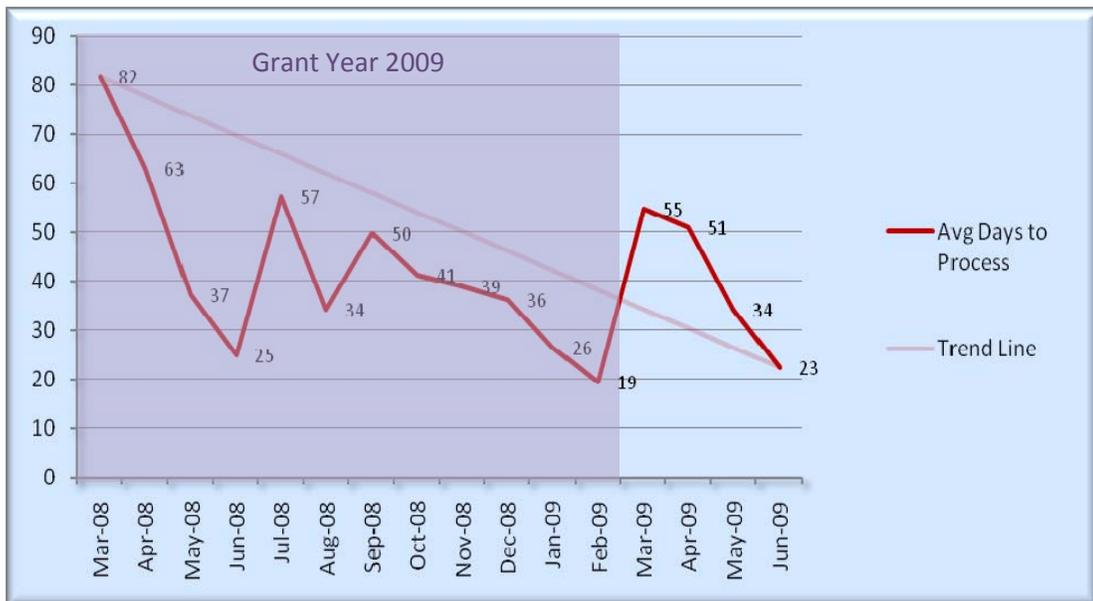
Findings

The findings of the 2009 Assessment of the Administrative Agency are reported in three Parts: Part 1 Findings: Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Service Provider Invoicing and Payment Process, Part 2 Findings: Administrative Agency's Ability to implement the Directives of the Ryan White Planning Council, and Part 3 Findings: Overall Survey Comments. A complete listing of the Service Provider and RWPC survey questions, answers, and comments can be found in Appendices 1 and 2 at the end of this document. KCA received a response rate of 83% of the RWPC and 100% of the Service Providers. The Planning Council survey response demographics are depicted in this pie chart:



Part 1 Findings: Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Service Provider Invoicing and Payment Process.

At the beginning of the Grant Year 2009 nearly all of the Service Provider invoices were over 60-days due. Significant changes were made within the Administrative Agency including staffing, process and procedures, and the implementation of the Grant Management System. These changes had dramatic reductions in the invoice payment cycle. The average days-to-payment at the beginning of the Grant Year (March 2008) was 82 days and at the end of the Grant Year (February 2009) it was less than 20 days.



The Service Providers were surveyed as to the number of invoices which were paid within 60-days during the past twelve months. The response indicated that 96.3% of all completed invoices were paid within 60 days of receipt by the Administrative Agency. A review of the invoices submitted indicated that many of the invoices not paid within 60 days occurred prior to the changes made by the Administrative Agency in the early months of the Grant Year.

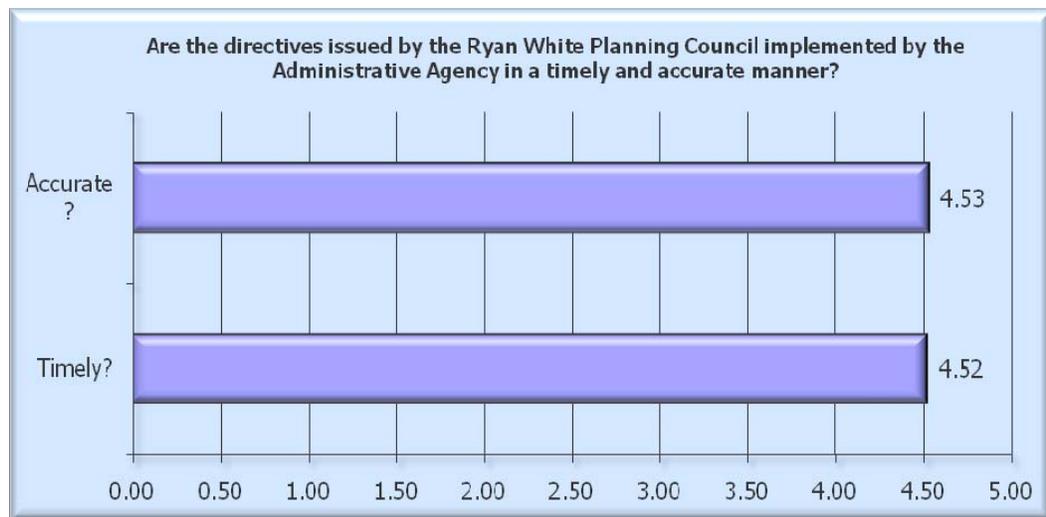
The Administrative Agency appears to diligently follow County and Federal guidelines for contracting and billing procedures. However the AA continues to be challenged during two different cycles 1) at the beginning of each grant year when contracts are granted and federal funds lag, and 2) the County fiscal year end accounting close out resulting in delayed invoice processing. When the federal funds are delayed, payments to Service Providers can be held up for several weeks. The fiscal year end delays also result in delays in payments to Service Providers as the County staff struggles to catch up. Although both of these issues are beyond the control of the AA, it is important to note that the AA is working to communicate these issues to the Service Providers and continue to work with the federal and county agencies to improve processes and reduce the impact on the Service Providers.

It is clear from the comments provided by both the RWPC members and the Service Providers that the AA has made significant improvements in its ability to process invoices in an efficient and timely

manner. This ability has produced a positive working relationship between the RWPC, the Service Providers and the Administrative Agency.

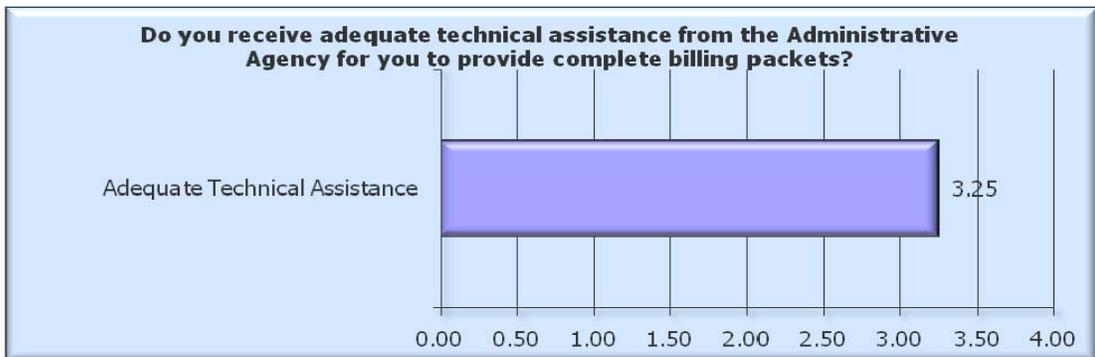
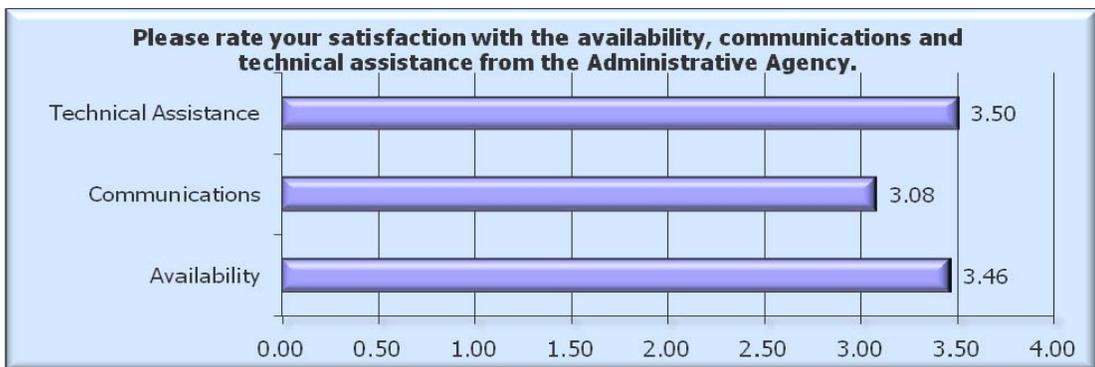
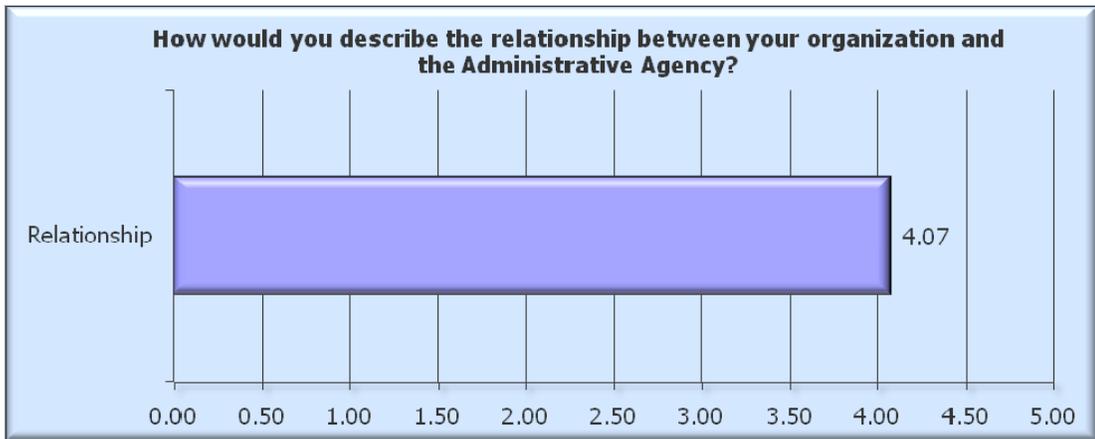
Part 2 Findings: Administrative Agency’s Ability to implement the Directives of the Ryan White Planning Council. A survey of the Planning Council gathered perceptions from the membership in two areas: 1) Did the Administrative Agency Implement the Directives of the RWPC in an accurate and timely manner? and 2) Did the Administrative Agency accurately contract the funding allocated by the RWPC?

RWPC Survey Results – Implementing Directives: The RWPC strongly believes that the Administrative Agency has implemented the directives in an accurate and timely manner. On a 1-5 scale (1 = never implements and 5 = always implements) the RYPC’s average rating was a 4.5.



RWPC Survey Results – Contract the Funding: The RWPC strongly believes that the Administrative Agency has accurately contracted the funding allocated by the RWPC. On a 1-5 scale (1 = never accurately contracts and 5 = always accurately contracts) the RYPC’s average rating was a 4.7.

Part 3 Findings: Overall Survey Comments. In addition to the findings above, the RWPC and the Service Providers were asked to comment on a number of items related to the performance of the Administrative Agency such as **the effectiveness of the AA’s communication process** and the current relationship between the Service Provider’s organizations and the AA. The survey responses were very favorable indicating a very positive relationship between the RWPC, the Service Provider organizations, and the Administrative Agency. Also, it is quite clear from the survey responses that the Administrative Agency has worked very hard in the past year to establish an effective communication process. A renewed sense of collaboration between all parties is evident.



Recommendations

KCA recommends that:

- The Administrative Agency continue to provide workshops for the Providers to assist them in submitting complete and accurate invoices
- The RWPC provide a comprehensive orientation regarding the roles and responsibilities of its members

- The Administrative Agency provide reminders to the Providers that there are two cycles where traditionally longer payment cycles due to matters beyond the AA's control (the July accounting close out from the County each year and the March Grant Year delay in receiving funding)
- The Administrative Agency continue to work with the Grantor and the Maricopa County Finance Department to streamline the Grant and Fiscal Year-end payment cycle anomalies.
- The Administrative Agency continue to look for ways to streamline/reduce the amount of information required for the monthly billing process
- The Administrative Agency should provide workshops for its staff to help them understand some of the management limitations of some of the Service Providers
- The RWPC continue to use a tool such as Survey Monkey to assess the Administrative Agency

Final Comments

It appears that the changes made by the Administrative Agency have not only enhanced the efficiency of its overall operation but also established a much more positive working relationship with the RWPC and the Service Providers. Additionally, the Administrative Agent, the Provider Relations Contract Manager, and their staff have instituted a new culture within the Agency. A culture of efficiency, effectiveness, customer service, and collaboration now exists which has been recognized and encouraged by the RWPC and the Service Providers.

KCA is proud to have been asked to conduct the 2009 Assessment of the Administrative Agency for the Ryan White Part A Grant Phoenix EMA.

Appendix 1 – Service Provider Survey Results

#	Question	Answer(s)	Comments
1	What is the minimum, average and maximum turnaround for payment of invoices accurately submitted to the Administrative Agency for your organization?	Minimum - <30=3, 30-60=9, >60=0 Average - <30=0, 30-60=11, >60=1 Maximum - <30=0, 30-60=5, >60=7	-Longest was 5 months. -We have only had Maricopa County as our contract provider since July 1, 2009. Before then we sub-contacted through Southwest HIV and turnaround time was long. With Maricopa it has been less than 30 days. -speed of payment has improved significantly this fiscal year
2	How accurate are the payments of invoices by the Administrative Agency?	Accuracy = 71%	-Both providers have been accurate. -We find that the payments are accurate.
3	In the last 12 months, how many invoices have taken greater than 60 days to process?	Total invoices > 60 days = 26	
4	Do you feel that the information you have to provide to the Administrative Agency for monthly billing purposes is:	About Right = 33% Too Much = 67%	-The billing process is an administrative burden. There are too many forms that require too much information not relevant for program success. -Now that we don't have to provide all of the back-up documentation (timesheets, invoices, etc.), the amount is getting closer to "about right". Previously it was like a mini audit every month. Some of the forms seem duplicative - we enter information into CW and other forms, or info from CW has to be entered into other forms. It would be more efficient if the CW Financial Report could serve as "the bill" with a brief narrative attached. I don't think I've ever heard any response from anything written in the narrative which makes me wonder if it is actually read. The variance report also seems like a mini-audit monthly - quarterly monitoring would seem more reasonable. -Monthly reporting requirements are burdensome, would prefer to report quarterly or semi-annually. -I feel this information is needed for improved client services. -I do not have interactions with the AA in terms of billing invoices but in past conversations I have heard that billing is always backed up. -Quarterly would be preferred for the reporting of expenses. -It not the volume of information required to process the billing that is an issue; I find that it is the number of electronic forms and the lack of "user friendliness" of the reporting forms. (Bugs, cumbersome, too many documents). If they implement a web based system, this info can be input into one website and supporting documentation could be uploaded at the same time. Possibly implement a "business to business" type electronic billing/payment system.

#	Question	Answer(s)	Comments
5	Do you receive adequate technical assistance from the Administrative Agency for you to provide complete billing packets?	Adequate Technical Assistance = 81%	<p>-Information is not always complete. Changes that are made are not always communicated (or retained) by AA's staff, which may lead to unnecessary delays and conflicting directions.</p> <p>-There have been times when there seems to have been miscommunication internally amongst RWPA staff regarding billing issues. Also, there have been times when we (the provider) had to provide TA to the RWPA office about billing issues. This is improving. The office seems to be making an effort to improve these issues.</p> <p>-Maricopa County has always "gone the extra mile" in order to provide the technical assistance we need. This has always been available in a timely manner. The Help Line has also been a valuable assistance. At SWHIV Libby Hunt was helpful.</p> <p>-We have never needed TA.</p> <p>-assistance is always good; sometimes the response is a little slow though. Overall I am satisfied, but TA could be quicker.</p>
6	Please rate your satisfaction with the availability, communications and technical assistance from the Administrative Agency.	<p>Availability - 87%</p> <p>Communications - 77%</p> <p>Technical Assistance - 88%</p>	<p>-See comments on #5</p> <p>-Maricopa County-They have never failed to speedily return phone calls, e-mails and requests for additional training. They not only say they are there for us, they truly are.</p> <p>-communications sometimes come nearly too late. Such as getting emails requesting info with a due date of less than a few a days. Not alot of lee way with that short of a deadline.</p>
7	How would you describe the relationship between your organization and the Administrative Agency?	Relationship - 81%	<p>-The addition of Rose Connor to the AA's office has strengthened the relationship with our agency. She solicits information, is receptive to feedback and includes provider input. She has created an atmosphere of cooperation with the providers rather than a sense that the AA's office was out to catch the providers doing something "wrong".</p> <p>-Maricopa County-I have never hesitated to call them with my requests because they extend a helping hand and are truly interested in helping us with any needs. I never worry that the question may be too trivial.</p>
8	How would you describe the Ryan White Part A contracting process?	<p>Ease of understanding RFP - 62%</p> <p>Time allotted for response - 68%</p> <p>Negotiation process/final contracting - 69%</p> <p>Awareness of reporting requirements, etc. - 68%</p>	<p>-The process in itself was difficult for me to comprehend, but each one of them took the time to "walk me through" each step and encouraged me to ask as many questions as needed. The RFP was a complete mystery before their assistance.</p> <p>-cumbersome could be streamlined; possibly developing a web based system to submit at least part of the documents during bidding (rfp) process.</p>
9	Do you need additional technical assistance or information from the Administrative Agency regarding any issues related to this survey?	Request Technical Assistance - 0%	
10	If you answered "yes" to the previous question and you would like us to provide your contact information to the Administrative Agency, please provide the following information". No one requested technical assistance.		

Appendix 2 – Planning Council Survey Results

#	Question	Answer(s)	Comments
1	Please indicate your membership status on the Planning Council (please select all that apply).	General Public - 40% Institutional Member - 24% Service Provider Rep - 32% Not Sure - 4%	
2	Are the directives issued by the Ryan White Planning Council implemented by the Administrative Agency in a timely and accurate manner?	Timely - 90% Accurate - 91%	-Administrative agent tells Planning Council one thing and in practice tells providers another. -I wish I could do as well in the management of my own clinic. -I believe that the Council works closely with the AA's office to insure that the needs of the people are addressed to assure that the best possible outcome is always achieved.
3	Does the Administrative Agency provide sufficient information to the Planning Council to allow them to monitor the implementation of the Planning Council directives?	Provide sufficient information - 93%	-Planning council is provided more than sufficient information. We also receive updates at our committee meetings. The AA attends and participates in most of our committee meetings. -They go out of their way to accommodate members. -Even in times of uncertainty of relevant or complex situations both the AA's office and the Planning Council work together toward so that the outcome is suitable for both parties .
4	Do you feel that the Administrative Agency accurately contracts the funding allocated by the Planning Council?	Accurately contracts funds - 94%	-I would like to see an accounting summary at each Planning Council meeting provided either printout of a slide. -The AA's office always reports what's going on as well as where funds are spent . This I must say is done on a regular basis.
5	Does the Administrative Agency provide adequate information and notification to allow reallocation of funds to other categories if necessary to ensure that grant funds are managed according to Planning Council directives?	Provides adequate notification? - 87% Provides adequate information? - 94%	-AA should provide the 'snapshot' report 24 hours prior to Allocations meeting so that members can be better prepared. -I have been a member of the Allocations Committee for couple years, this is the first year I am confident and knowledgeable about our decisions. We know exactly where we stand. -Again regular reports are given as an update on what's going on and where funds are being spent.
6	As a Planning Council member, please rate the communication between the Planning Council and Administrative Agency.	Communications - 88%	-Rose is available at all the meetings. I have called her at the office and my call was returned promptly with the information I needed. -The AA's office always provides up to the minute reports to keep us as a Council current.
7	Do you understand the roles and responsibilities of the Administrative Agency and Planning Council?	Administrative Agency - 91% Planning Council - 97%	-I am very new to the Council, but I am learning more every day. -As I become more involved as a Planning Council member, my knowledge of the what the AA's office is and does grows.

#	Question	Answer(s)	Comments
8	Please share any additional comments or information about the relationship between the Planning Council and the Administrative Agency.		<p>-I am very disappointed with the Program Coordinators continued efforts to inhibit member participation.</p> <p>-The hiring of Rose Conner has been key in increasing the quality of work and quality communication between the Council and the AA office. She has great people skills and has "professionalized" the AA's office. --Something it has needed for a while now. She has made good changes and good hires. What an asset for the EMA the AA and the Council.</p> <p>-Cohesive. Relationship is healthy, productive, and benefits our HIV/AIDS community. For the most part we all know our individual boundaries.</p> <p>-John and Staff do an outstanding, above required assistance when I need help, have questions or requests. Our chair is inclusive, open door policy and supportive of members that I think are weird and wacky</p> <p>-None at this time.</p>