



Allegheny County Department of Human Services

Request for Proposals

Community-Led and Community-Operated Informal Mental Health Supports

RFP Posting:

Wednesday, May 11, 2022

Office Hours Session:

11 a.m. Eastern Time on Friday, May 27, 2022

9:30 a.m. Eastern Time on Thursday, June 30, 2022

Deadline for Questions:

3 p.m. Eastern Time on Friday, July 22, 2022

Submission Deadline:

3 p.m. Eastern Time on Monday, August 8, 2022

Estimated Award Decision/Notification:

September 2022

Allegheny County Department of Human Services
One Smithfield Street Pittsburgh, PA 15222

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Acronyms and Definitions

Unless the context indicates otherwise, the following capitalized words are defined as follows for purposes of this RFP:

1. Agreement: A contract negotiated between Allegheny County and the Successful Proposer to provide the Contract Services
2. Allegheny County or County: A home rule county and political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
3. Contract Services: The specific services that the Successful Proposer agrees to provide to the County in response to this RFP as more particularly described in the Scope of Services in the Agreement
4. Community-Led/Community-Operated: An approach that: is accountable to the vision and priorities set by a community; puts the people most affected by the work in the lead; ensures diverse representation in planning and decision-making; mobilizes the community's own resources; and uses feedback to improve.¹
5. Crisis Response Stakeholder Group (CRSG): A group of Allegheny County community stakeholders convened in 2020 to focus on improving existing services and piloting new ones to address the overreliance on law enforcement and incarceration for people with human service and behavioral health needs
6. DHS: [Allegheny County] Department of Human Services
7. Fiscal Sponsor: A nonprofit organization that provides fiduciary oversight, financial management and other administrative services such as taking on the responsibility of receiving and administering charitable contributions on behalf of the sponsored organization and performing back-office functions.²
8. Informal Mental Health Supports: Non-medical supports for mental health that can be provided via help from peers, friends and family, religious leaders or from other non-health professionals.³
9. LEP: Limited English Proficiency
10. Proposal: A completed Response Form, with specified attachments, submitted in response to this RFP
11. Proposer: The individual, non-profit organization, or for-profit organization or business submitting a Proposal in response to this RFP
12. Response Form: The Word document in which Proposers respond to requested information about this RFP
13. RFP: Request for Proposals
14. Successful Proposer: The Proposer(s) selected by the County to provide the Contract Services

¹ Definition of Community-Led is taken from [GlobalGiving.org](https://www.globalgiving.org). You can find the Community-Led checklist [here](#).

² Definition of Fiscal Sponsor is taken from the [National Council of Nonprofits](#).

³ Definition of Informal Mental Health Supports is taken from both [this study](#) and from WHO's "[Optimal Mix of Services for Mental Health](#)."

The RFP at a Glance

Purpose

The Department of Human Services (DHS), on behalf of Allegheny County, is seeking Proposals from qualified Proposers to create or expand Informal Mental Health Supports offered by Community-Led and Community-Operated organizations. Informal Mental Health Supports are non-medical supports for mental health provided by peers, friends and family, religious leaders or other non-health professionals. Proposers may propose Informal Mental Health Supports that: increase the availability of preventative and proactive supports that individuals or families can use for mental health and wellbeing; smooth pathways to more formal services; broaden the ways in which people connect to care; and/or reduce both stigma and crises. Proposed Informal Mental Health Supports is hereafter referred to as a Project.

Successful Proposals must target communities – both geographic and demographic – that may mistrust or feel alienated by traditional mental health and crisis prevention and response services, especially Black, LGBTQIA+, immigrant and refugee communities, and community members with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Each Successful Proposer must demonstrate a strong connection to the communities they proposed to serve and must include community members in the design, operation and assessment of an Informal Mental Health Supports Project.

Award Details

DHS would like to award Agreements to several (up to ten) Successful Proposers. A proposed Project can be either small or large in size and scope. DHS will consider all proposed budget requests for reasonableness and negotiate final budgets with Successful Proposers.

The combined funding budgeted by DHS for all Successful Proposers is approximately \$3,000,000. Funds must be spent over a two-year time frame. The Agreements may be renewable at the County's discretion upon review of performance.

There is no upfront expectation that Project services be billable to insurance (Medicaid or commercial insurance); however, Successful Proposers should be amenable to working with DHS over time to explore opportunities to bill services to the health insurance of the person receiving services under the Project. DHS intends to offer technical assistance to Successful Proposers as part of any future effort to enable Successful Proposers to bill insurance.

Who can submit a Proposal

Anyone is eligible to submit a Proposal in response to this RFP. This includes non-profit organizations, for-profit organizations, small businesses and individuals. Proposers do not need to have an existing contract with Allegheny County to apply, but they must meet and abide by all of Allegheny County's contractual requirements (see Section 6: Contract Requirements for Successful Proposers) and have the programmatic, financial and staffing capabilities to provide the Contracted Services.

Successful Proposers can satisfy the contracting requirements listed in Section 6 on their own or through a partnership, such as a partnership with a Fiscal Sponsor.

Collaborative Proposals, in which two or more organizations partner together to submit one Proposal, are permitted. See Section 4.2.c for details.

What's important to us

DHS is interested in Successful Proposers:

- That focus on person-centered engagement and education
- That demonstrate strong ties to communities that mistrust or have been failed by formal systems, and propose to focus on serving these communities
- Whose leadership includes people from the communities that they serve
- With a commitment to improving the continuum of care for those most harmed or marginalized by the current mental health system and various crisis response systems.

Though not a requirement, organizations are welcome to propose Projects that involve working collaboratively with traditional service providers and DHS to help identify and reduce barriers to access.

Timeline

Office Hours (see section 4.1 for details)	Friday, May 27 at 11 a.m. Eastern Thursday, June 30 at 9:30 a.m. Eastern
Deadline for Questions	Friday, July 22 at 3 p.m. Eastern
Last Website & Q&A Update	Thursday, July 28 at 6 p.m. Eastern
Deadline for Proposals	Monday, August 8 at 3 p.m. Eastern
Estimated Award Decision/Notification	September 2022

Who DHS is

On behalf of Allegheny County, DHS is the issuing department for this RFP.

DHS is the largest department of Allegheny County government and provides publicly funded services to more than 200,000 people annually, in areas including child welfare, behavioral health, aging, developmental supports, homelessness and community services.

More information about DHS is available at <http://www.alleghenycounty.us/human-services/index.aspx>

Section 1: Why DHS Is Issuing This RFP

Allegheny County has a multitude of services designed to help people with human service and behavioral health needs, including mental health crisis responders, substance use assessment and

treatment centers, homeless outreach and housing supports, financial assistance programs, and case management for individuals with justice system involvement. However, these individual programs do not add up to a comprehensive system—a linked set of programs and services that have the capacity to prevent crises, respond with the right intervention, share protocols and performance measures, and consistently link people to follow-up support that attempts to address the causes of the crisis. Instead, people continue to wait, struggle, deteriorate and fall into crisis, including homelessness. Law enforcement and child protection are too often still the default responders for individuals and families struggling with unmet behavioral health and other human service needs.

Barriers abound when attempting to access mental health services, including the time it takes to find a provider, insurance requirements, finances, stigma and transportation. For those in marginalized communities – Black individuals, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and immigrants and refugees – a lack of culturally competent providers as well as a litany of other barriers exacerbate these challenges.

- **Black Communities:** Mainstream behavioral health services often fail to engage Black residents at rates proportionate to their share of the population. Nationally, usage of treatment for adults with mental health diagnoses was only 46% in 2020, and only 37% for Black adults.⁴ Racial minorities in general have less access to mental health services. The care that racial minorities do receive is of poorer quality and lacking in cultural competence. For example, Black people are less likely to be offered evidence-based medication therapy or psychotherapy compared to the general population. One study found physicians were less likely to use patient-centered language in their conversations with Black patients than White patients.^{5,6} In Allegheny County, Black adults are less likely to access preventative behavioral health care and more likely to utilize behavioral health crisis services than their White counterparts.
- **LGBTQIA+ Communities:** Mental health support also is harder to access for LGBTQIA+ individuals, even though they are at a higher risk for mental health disorders compared to their heterosexual and cisgender peers. Studies report that LGBT adults are more likely to report having major depression or anxiety and to report suicidal ideation and attempts. While LGBT people are more likely to seek out treatment than heterosexual people, they face service providers who have negative attitudes toward LGBT individuals or who do not know enough to serve the unique mental health needs of the LGBT community. This leads LGBT people to be less likely to continue to receive mental health services. Nationwide, only 13% of mental health facilities reported LGBT-specific programming, even though LGBT individuals often seek out providers who have stated affirmatively that they provide services to LGBT people.⁷ Additionally, when an LGBTQIA+ person is not able to see themselves represented or not able to see a space as safe, they will likely walk away from a service before even making it to the front door. Locally, community members report that signals of a lack of support for LGBTQIA+

⁴ <https://www.nami.org/mhstats>

⁵ <https://www.psychiatry.org/File%20Library/Psychiatrists/Cultural-Competency/Mental-Health-Disparities/Mental-Health-Facts-for-African-Americans.pdf>

⁶ [CWS Data Tool: Demographics of the U.S. Psychology Workforce \(apa.org\)](#)

⁷ [The availability of LGBT-specific mental health and substance abuse treatment in the United States \(nih.gov\)](#)

communities include non-inclusive signage and binary options for dormitory spaces that could endanger the safety of non-binary and/or trans individuals.

- **Immigrant, Refugee and Linguistically Diverse Communities:** Immigrants and refugees can face significant additional stressors, including the trauma of leaving their home countries, being marginalized within the country where they settled, worrying about deportation if undocumented, being separated from their families and wider support structure, and starting over in an unfamiliar place, with unfamiliar policies, customs and language.⁸ Some immigrants and refugees may find formal mental health support to be an unfamiliar concept, and the existence of mental health needs as shameful. But even when immigrant, refugee and language-diverse communities want to access mental health services, there are cultural barriers (e.g., stigma, beliefs about mental illness, distrust of formal providers) and structural barriers (e.g., cost, language, insurance, discrimination, lack of culturally competent providers) that limit use of formal services.^{9,10} And, research has suggested that immigrant and refugee communities often turn to family, friends and religious leaders first before, or instead of, seeking formal mental health services.¹¹

Marginalized communities need more preventative Informal Mental Health Supports. The World Health Organization describes Informal Mental Health Supports as services that aren't provided by the "formal" health and welfare system, and that are "usually accessible and acceptable to the community as they are an integral part of the community." These informal supports are a complement to those traditional and "formal" supports.¹²

Allegheny County's Crisis Response Stakeholder Group (CRSG) noted the need for additional accessible crisis prevention and response services that are staffed and informed by community members and peers and that can serve as a bridge to keep them connected to care. The CRSG also noted a need to reduce the stigma associated with having behavioral health needs or receiving formal behavioral health services. Research indicates that in many communities, people struggling with mental health are more likely to reach out to informal supports for help because when the social distance between the person struggling and the helper is smaller, there can be greater agreement about the perception of the problem and possible solutions.

By funding Community-Led and Community-Operated organizations to deliver Informal Mental Health Supports in areas where these supports are wanted and needed, and by enabling those organizations to identify the strategies that they believe will best serve their communities that are underserved by the current system, DHS seeks to make strides toward the vision set forth by the CRSG last year:

- A crisis response system that builds trust with communities of color; LGBTQIA+ communities; and immigrant, refugee and language-diverse communities and meaningfully integrates community work, voices, skills and expertise

⁸ [fact-sheet.pdf \(apa.org\)](#)

⁹ [Mental Health Service Use Among Immigrants in the United States: A Systematic Review \(nih.gov\)](#)

¹⁰ [Psychology of immigration 101 \(apa.org\)](#)

¹¹ [Mental Health Service Use Among Immigrants in the United States: A Systematic Review \(nih.gov\)](#)

¹² Definition of Informal Mental Health Supports is taken from both [this study](#) and from WHO's "[Optimal Mix of Services for Mental Health](#)."

- There are fewer people in active crisis
- Whenever possible, law enforcement is not the first or only response on behavioral health crisis calls
- Jail incarceration is no longer viewed as the primary method for connecting people to behavioral health services/supports
- People are aware of – and have more and easier access to – structurally competent, culturally humble, trauma-informed human services in the community

This RFP is one of several we are issuing as part of a broader effort to improve Allegheny County’s crisis prevention and response system. More information about this work can be found [here](#) and in Appendix A.

Section 2: What DHS Is Looking For

2.1 Project Details

DHS seeks Projects from Community-Led and Community-Operated organizations that expand an established program or start a new initiative offering Informal Mental Health Supports services for, or within, an identified geographic and/or demographic priority community. Projects must align with one or more of the following goals:

1. Grow access within a community to informal helpers (for example, a community health worker or advocate who offers support via faith-based sites or local libraries to provide help to those in need of someone to talk to); and/or
2. Increase the availability of culturally competent, proactive supports that connect people to preventative care when their mental health symptoms are escalating or when they are in emotional distress; and/or
3. Support and respond to individuals/families following a mental health, housing or other crisis, connecting them to needed supports and making sustained connection more likely; and/or
4. Reduce stigma and smooth the way to formal mental health supports for people who may not know about or feel comfortable accessing them.

DHS envisions a variety of approaches that a Proposer may take to provide a Project as described in this RFP and is interested in creative Proposals. Proposed Projects may seek to improve outcomes for children, youth, adults and/or families within an identified priority community.

Through this RFP, we are not looking to fund Projects that depend on the 911 Emergency Call network for referrals or that would send mobile responders directly from 911 or from [resolve Crisis Services](#), the County’s local mental health crisis call center. DHS anticipates releasing other RFPs to fund the expansion of alternative and community responders that are linked directly to these central crises call numbers. However, Projects that propose to partner in other ways with existing crisis services (e.g., call center, mobile, walk-in, residential), homeless services and other traditional providers are welcome.

A planning phase may be included as part of the proposed Project, but implementation should start within a reasonable timeframe after receiving funds.

Projects that serve communities that have been marginalized by our systems (e.g., Black, LGBTQIA+, immigrant and refugee) and/or operate in areas where there is a high need for supports will be prioritized (see Appendix B).

2.2 Community Involvement and Trust

Projects must be community-led, -designed, and -operated. Successful Proposers must clearly demonstrate the social capital and trust they hold with the communities they intend to serve. Successful Proposers must describe how they plan to or already do involve community members in the design, implementation and staffing of their Project. Project staff must earn no less than \$15/hour.

2.3 Data Collection and Reporting

Successful Proposers must collect data about their Projects and share that data as well as narrative reports with DHS. To collect Project data, DHS will provide access to the County's client management information software system, called ClientPath.

Data may include the following types of information, depending on the proposed Project:

- Narrative summary of services provided and the impact those services have had on individuals, their loved ones and/or their community
- Narrative summary indicating what is working well about the Project and what challenges or barriers the Project is facing
- Number of unique individuals/families served or trained
- Number of services/trainings provided
- Number of referrals to formal behavioral health and other services (and type of service)
- Number of referrals to non-behavioral health services (and type of service)
- Number of individuals who followed through with behavioral and non-behavioral health services
- Survey data from those served indicating their reaction to services
- Survey data from those served (or the community as a whole) concerning their beliefs about behavioral health issues and their knowledge of behavioral health services

2.4 Additional Considerations

Consistent with DHS policy, all Successful Proposers must make language assistance services available to participants/clients with LEP, working with DHS as needed to link to County-contracted resources (e.g., translation, interpretation, and other aids). Project budgets may reflect anticipated costs associated with accessing such resources.

Section 3: Proposal Requirements and Evaluation Criteria

DHS will evaluate Proposals based upon the evaluation criteria listed below. Proposers must address their qualifications in their Proposal by responding to the requested items or questions in the Response Form. Proposers should download and type their responses directly into the Response Form available on the Active Solicitations webpage at www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations. The maximum score that a Proposal can receive is 125 points, as outlined in the following sections.

Experience and Leadership (25 points possible)

- Experience providing support or services to/in communities that have been marginalized by mainstream systems (5 points)
- Experience building trust with the communities within which you work, including at least one specific example and at least one letter of support from a community-based organization/individual (10 points)
- Statement of organizational philosophy (5 points)
- Demographic information for organizational leaders and staff (5 points)

Project Details (50 points possible)

- Informal Mental Health Support services the proposed Project will provide and the intended outcomes, including how the Project will meet one or more of the goals listed in RFP Section 2.1 (15 points)
- Project location and target population, and why that community needs the proposed Project (10 points)
- Description of formal or informal partnerships that the Project requires, including a description of how DHS will support the Proposer (10 points)
- Project timeline (5 points)
- Staffing plan, role descriptions and training requirements, including any peer specialist certification requirements (10 points)

Community Involvement and Trust (30 points possible)

- Plan to include community members in Project planning and design (10 points)
- Plan to include community members in Project implementation/staffing/assessment (10 points)
- Explanation of why the Proposer is the appropriate provider of this Project (10 points)

Data Collection and Reporting (10 points possible)

- Ability to track data as evidenced by program data currently collected (5 points)
- Plan for assessing Project effectiveness and list of data to be collected (5 points)

Budget (10 points possible)

- Line-item budget reflects a realistic estimate of the costs associated with planning, implementing, and sustaining the Project (5 points)
- Detailed budget narrative that clearly explains and justifies all line items in the proposed budget (5 points)

Section 4: How to Submit a Proposal

4.1 Prepare

a. Office Hours

- There will be “RFP open office hours” at 11 a.m. Eastern Time on Friday, May 27, 2022, and at 9:30 a.m. Eastern Time on Thursday, June 30, 2022, via Microsoft Teams. Anyone interested in the RFP and in submitting a Proposal may drop in at any time to ask questions.
- Attendance at the office hours is not required in order to submit a Proposal. Preliminary answers will be provided orally for questions asked during the office hours. Final, definitive answers will be posted in writing on the DHS Solicitations webpage.
- Please join the Friday, May 27 office hours session by:
 - Calling (267)368-7515 and using Conference ID 484 674 284#
 - Or following this link: [Click here to join the meeting](#)
 - Or copying and pasting this link: https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_OWVINTM3MTYtMGM4My00OTkxLTk2NTAtZTZmZGRjNDEyN2U1%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22e0273d12-e4cb-4eb1-9f70-8bba16fb968d%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%224c7924c5-3d5a-494b-ba54-242fc5f6db86%22%7d
- Please join the **Thursday, June 30** office hours session by:
 - Calling (267)368-7515 and using Conference ID 474 660 502#
 - Or following this link: [Click here to join the meeting](#)
 - Or copying and pasting this link: https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_NjM2MGYxMGYtODRhMC00YWRiLTNmZTMtNDE0MzJiZDhkOWYz%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22e0273d12-e4cb-4eb1-9f70-8bba16fb968d%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%224c7924c5-3d5a-494b-ba54-242fc5f6db86%22%7d

4.2 Submit a Proposal

- #### a. Proposers should take time to review and understand the RFP in its entirety including:
- The background (see Section 1: Why DHS Is Issuing This RFP)
 - The narrative (see Section 2: What DHS Is Looking For)

- The requirements (see Section 3: Proposal Requirements and Evaluation Criteria)
 - The evaluation process (see Section 5: How DHS Will Evaluate Your Proposal)
- b. Proposers must use the Response Form to develop your Proposal. Type your responses to each requested item directly into the Response Form. It is available at our Active Solicitations website with the RFP announcement at www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations.
- c. Collaborative Proposals
- a. Collaborative Proposals, in which two or more entities partner to apply together, are permitted. Collaborative Proposals can include:
 - i. Lead Agency: The County can enter a contract with only one partner of a Collaborative Proposal. Therefore, a Collaborative Proposal must identify one entity as the Lead Agency that will be the contracting party with the County. The Lead Agency should be the Proposer.
 - ii. Partners: Partners must be committed to a role in carrying out the Contract Services and will be compensated for that role. Collaborative Proposals must attach a signed letter of commitment from each Partner that details and agrees to their role in the Contract Services.
 - b. Entities may participate in more than one Collaborative Proposal.
- d. Proposers must submit a complete Proposal that includes the following attachments that are available on our Active Solicitations website:
- Response Form
 - Partner commitment letters, if applicable
 - Minority, Women or Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (MWDDBE) and Veteran Owned Small Business (VOSB) documents (see sections 7.1 and 7.2)
 - Allegheny County Vendor Creation Form
 - Audited financial reports or other financial documentation for the last three years
 - Internal Revenue Service Form W-9
 - At least one letter of support from a community-based organization or community member
- e. Proposers should not send any attachments other than those listed either above or in the Response Form.
- f. If a Proposer does not have audited financial reports for the last three years, then the Proposer must submit other financial documentation that attest to the Proposer's financial health of your organization. Tax returns are the preferred alternative. Please note that providing adequate financial documentation is a requirement of contracting with Allegheny County.
- g. Proposers must make sure to complete each section of the Response Form and to stay within any word counts or page limits that may be specified in the Response Form.
- h. Proposals must be submitted electronically to DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us no later than 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time on Monday August 8, 2022 to be considered for review.**
- i. All Proposals must be submitted before the deadline! If a Proposal is late, it will be rejected and will not be presented to the Evaluation Committee (as described in Section 5 below) for review and scoring.

- j. Proposers will receive an email acknowledging receipt of their Proposal. If a Proposer does not receive this notification within 48 hours of submitting their Proposal, please contact: DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us.

4.3 How to Contact DHS about this RFP and RFP Communications

- a. If you have any questions about this RFP, please email us at DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us.
 - a. All content-related questions must be emailed by the Questions Deadline at 3 p.m. Eastern Time on Friday, July 22, 2022.
 - b. You may submit technical or logistical questions at any time, even after the Questions Deadline.
- b. All information about the RFP, including answers to all content-related questions and any changes or amendments, will be posted at our Active Solicitations website at www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations.
 - a. Please check this website regularly for answers to questions, additional information and changes to the RFP or the RFP process.
 - b. The website will be updated only on Thursdays, with any new information visible after 6 p.m.
 - c. The last Q&A and website update for this RFP will be on Thursday, July 28, 2022, at 6 p.m. We will make every effort not to post any new information after this time; however, we reserve the right to post new information in emergency circumstances.

4.4 Other Information

- a. **The issuance of this RFP does not obligate the County to accept any Proposal or enter into an Agreement with any Proposers. The County reserves the right to reject any and all Proposals and not to enter into an Agreement for the Contracted Services.**
- b. Any Agreement originating from this RFP is subject to all the Terms and Conditions specified in Section 6: Contract Requirements for Successful Proposers.
- c. Proposers are responsible for all costs related to the preparation and submission of a Proposal.
- d. Proposals become the property of the County and may become part of any subsequent Agreement between the Proposer and the County.
- e. Successful Proposal(s) will be posted online in the DHS Solicitations Archive after an Agreement has been fully executed by the County and the Successful Proposer(s).

4.5 Pennsylvania's Right-to-Know Law

Proposers should be aware that all documents and materials submitted in response to this RFP may be subject to requests for access to public records made pursuant to Pennsylvania's Right-To-Know Law (RTKL). Under the RTKL, records in the possession of a public agency like the County are presumed to be public records and the County may have to make documents and materials submitted by the Proposer available to a requestor after an award of an Agreement is made.

If the Proposer includes any information within its Proposal that the Proposer asserts is either a “trade secret” or “confidential proprietary information,” as those terms are defined under the RTKL, the Proposer must include with its Proposal a written statement signed by an authorized representative of the Proposer identifying those portions or parts of its Proposal that the Proposer believes constitute a “trade secret” or “confidential proprietary information” and provide contact information to enable DHS to contact the Proposer in the event that the County receives a Right-To-Know request for the Proposal. The Proposer shall have five (5) business days from date of receipt of any notification from the County to provide a written statement signed by an authorized representative of the Proposer explaining why the Proposal or any portion thereof is exempt from disclosure as a trade secret, confidential proprietary information or other legal reason. The County shall consider this statement in either granting or denying a request for public access to the Proposal or any portion thereof. The County will notify the Proposer of its decision whether to grant or deny the request either in whole or in part.

Section 5: How DHS Will Evaluate Your Proposal

DHS will convene an Evaluation Committee to evaluate Proposals. The Evaluation Committee will assign scores to each Proposal by awarding points based on the evaluation criteria in Section 3: Proposal Requirements and Evaluation Criteria, by using the point scale listed in Section 5.1 b.

5.1 Evaluation of Proposals

The evaluation process will consist of the following steps:

- a. DHS will form an Evaluation Committee. The Evaluation Committee, which will be comprised of evaluators with expertise in the subject matter of this RFP, may include community members with lived experience, external subject matter experts or provider representative(s), representative(s) from key partners or funders and DHS internal staff.
- b. All Evaluation Committee members will individually review and score each Proposal. Each Evaluation Committee member will award points for each response on a Proposer’s Response Form utilizing their personal expertise and best judgment of how the Proposal submitted by that Proposer meets the evaluation criteria in Section 3 using the following scale:
 - 0 – Not addressed in Proposal
 - 1 – Poor
 - 2 – Below expectations
 - 3 – Meets expectations
 - 4 – Exceeds expectations
 - 5 – Outstanding
- c. Each 0-5 score will be multiplied by the appropriate weight for the number of possible points noted after each evaluation criterion in Section 3. For example, for a criterion worth 15 points, the 0-5 score would be multiplied by three. An “Outstanding” response would receive 15 points, while one that “Meets Expectations” would receive nine points.

- d. DHS will tally the average scores of the members of the Evaluation Committee and report a list of average scores to the entire Committee. The Committee will meet, consider the average scores, and arrive at a consensus on which Proposer(s) can best provide the Contract Services in response to the RFP. The Committee will have the discretion to proceed as follows: (i) to recommend to the Director of DHS that a reduced number of Proposals be shortlisted for more extensive review through a formal oral presentation to the Committee; or (ii) to recommend to the Director of DHS that DHS request authorization for the County to enter into an Agreement(s) with the Successful Proposer(s).
- e. As described in c above, DHS, on behalf of the County, shall have the exclusive discretion to shortlist a reduced number of Proposals for more extensive review. In this case, DHS may request that shortlisted Proposers make a formal oral presentation to the Evaluation Committee. Each Committee member will individually score the oral presentation of the shortlisted Proposers using the following criteria and the scale outlined in 5.1b. The maximum score that a shortlisted Proposer's oral presentation can receive is 15 points:
 - Presentation demonstrates Proposer's ability to implement the Contract Services effectively (5 points)
 - Proposer's answers to Evaluation Committee's questions demonstrate Proposer's ability to implement the Contract Services (5 points)
 - Proposer's presentation is thoughtful and professional (5 points)
- f. DHS will tally the average scores of the members of the Evaluation Committee to the shortlisted Proposer formal oral presentations and report a list of average scores to the entire Committee. The Committee will meet, consider the scores, and arrive at a consensus on which Proposer(s) can best provide the Contract Services in response to the RFP.
- g. The Committee will submit its recommendation for award of an Agreement or Agreements to the Director of DHS for approval. The Director will, in turn, submit a request to the County Manager for approval for the County to enter into an Agreement or Agreement with the Successful Proposer(s).
- h. At any time during the evaluation process, DHS may contact a Proposer to discuss any areas of the Proposal needing clarification or further explanation.
- i. As part of determining a Proposer's eligibility to enter a contract with Allegheny County, all Proposers' financial audits or other documentation will be reviewed by DHS fiscal analysts to ensure a Proposer's financial stability.
- j. The County is under no obligation to award or enter into an Agreement with a Proposer as a result of this RFP. The County reserves the right to reject any and all Proposals.**
- k. All Proposers will be notified of the County's final decision of which Proposer(s) will be awarded an Agreement.
- l. Proposers that are not awarded an Agreement but who are interested in receiving feedback regarding their submission may request a phone call at DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us.

5.2 Other Requirements

For a Proposal to be eligible for evaluation, it must be:

- a. Received by the due date/time.
- b. Properly formatted and include responses to all requested information.
- c. Complete with all required forms and attachments.

Proposals which do not meet the above requirements will be automatically rejected and will not be presented to the Evaluation Committee.

Section 6: Contract Requirements for Successful Proposers

In order to enter into an Agreement with the County, Proposers must comply with all contract requirements listed below and all standard terms and conditions contained in a County contract for provision of services to DHS and its offices. Additional details about contracting with Allegheny County are provided in the [DHS Contract Specifications Manual](#), available at www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations.

6.1 Minority, Women or Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (MWDBE) Requirements

Allegheny County has MWDBE goals of 13% participation for Minority Business Enterprises and 2% participation for Women Business Enterprises and expects that Successful Proposers will make a “good faith effort” in assisting the County in meeting these goals.

- a. All Proposals must include a completed Allegheny County DHS Combined MWDBE Form and supporting documents. The Allegheny County DHS Combined MWDBE Form should be completed as follows:
 - All Proposers must complete Section 1 – Contact Information and attach their MWDBE Diversity Plan (see Section 4 – Sample Diversity Policy).
 - If the Proposer is able to meet the MWDBE contract goals, the Proposer should complete Section 2 – MWDBE Participation Statement. Proposers also must attach the MWDBE certifications of the firms cited in the Participation Statement.
 - If the Proposer would like to request a waiver from participating in the MWDBE contract goals, the Proposer should complete Section 2 – MWDBE Participation Statement and Section 3 – MWDBE Participation Waiver Request Form.
- b. MWDBE forms and resources can be found at www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations:
 - [Allegheny County DHS Combined MWDBE Form](#)
 - MWDBE Resources
 - [MWDBE Contract Specifications Manual](#)
 - [MWDBE Guide for DHS Proposers](#)
- c. For more information about MWDBEs, visit the [Allegheny County Department of Equity and Inclusion website](#).

6.2 Veteran Owned Small Business (VOSB) Requirement

Allegheny County also has a goal of 5% participation for veteran-owned small businesses (VOSB) in all contracts. The County, therefore, expects that Successful Proposers will make a “good faith effort” in assisting the County in meeting this goal.

- a. A veteran-owned small business is defined by the County as a business having 100 or fewer full-time employees and not less than 51% of which is owned by one or more veterans, or in the case of any publicly owned business, not less than 51% of the stock of which is owned by one or more veterans, and the management and daily business operations of which are controlled by one or more veterans. The VOSB vendor **MUST** provide proof of veteran ownership including percentage and name and address of business.
 - For contracts under \$100,000, VOSB vendors shall be exempt from all bonding requirements.
- b. All Proposals must include either of the following:
 - If the Proposer can meet the VOSB contract goal, a completed VOSB Participation Statement is required. You must also attach a copy of the VOSB vendor(s) DD 214 discharge form(s) cited in the Participation Statement.
 - If the Proposer requests a waiver from participating in the VOSB contract goal, a completed VOSB Participation Statement and VOSB Waiver Request are required.
- c. VOSB forms can be found at www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations:
 - [VOSB Participation Statement](#)
 - [VOSB Waiver Request](#)

6.3 HIPAA Compliance

DHS is a covered entity under the Health Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Therefore, a Successful Proposer must comply with all HIPAA requirements.

6.4 Cyber Security

- a. Successful Proposers must meet the minimum computer specifications that begin on page 14 of the [DHS Contract Specifications Manual](#), available at www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations.
- b. All electronic devices must have sufficient security software and settings to minimize the risk of an information breach.
- c. Successful Proposers must also have policies in place to ensure that electronic devices are physically secure when not in use (e.g., locked in a vehicle trunk, password protected).

6.5 Equal Employment Opportunity and Non-Discrimination Requirements

By submitting a Proposal, a Proposer agrees to not discriminate against any employee, applicant for employment, independent contractor, client or any other person on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin or ancestry, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation,

disability, marital status, familial status, age (40 or over), or use of a guide or support animal because of blindness, deafness or physical disability.

6.6 Language Diversity Requirements

Successful Proposer(s) must assure resources are secured and/or made available for participants/consumers/clients with limited English proficiency or other communication barriers. Such actions shall include but not be limited to assessing the need for interpreters, evaluating the need for alternate language materials, identifying internal and external resources to meet identified needs, and accessing services contracted by DHS through their assigned contract monitor(s).

6.7 New Provider Requirements

If awarded an Agreement, Successful Proposers who do not have current Allegheny County contracts will be required to complete the DHS New Provider Application.

Building a Crisis System

Allegheny County has a multitude of services designed to help people with behavioral health and other human service needs, including mental health crisis responders, substance use assessment and treatment centers, homeless outreach and housing supports, financial assistance programs and case management for individuals with court involvement. However, these individual programs do not add up to a comprehensive crisis system—a continuum of programs and services that prevent crises, respond with the right intervention, share protocols and performance measures, and consistently link people to follow-up support that attempts to address the root causes of the crisis. Instead, people continue to struggle and law enforcement remains a default responder for individuals and families struggling with unmet behavioral health and human service needs.

In September 2020, DHS and Allegheny County’s Department of Emergency Services (ACES) convened a [Crisis Response Stakeholder Group \(CRSG\)](#) focused on improving existing services and piloting new ones to address the overreliance on law enforcement and incarceration for people with human service and behavioral health needs.

Among the stakeholders included in this effort are law enforcement, local government entities, providers, behavioral health specialists and people with lived experiences in the criminal legal system. As a result of the CRSG process and recommendations for improving the crisis system, the County [envisions an improved crisis system](#) that:

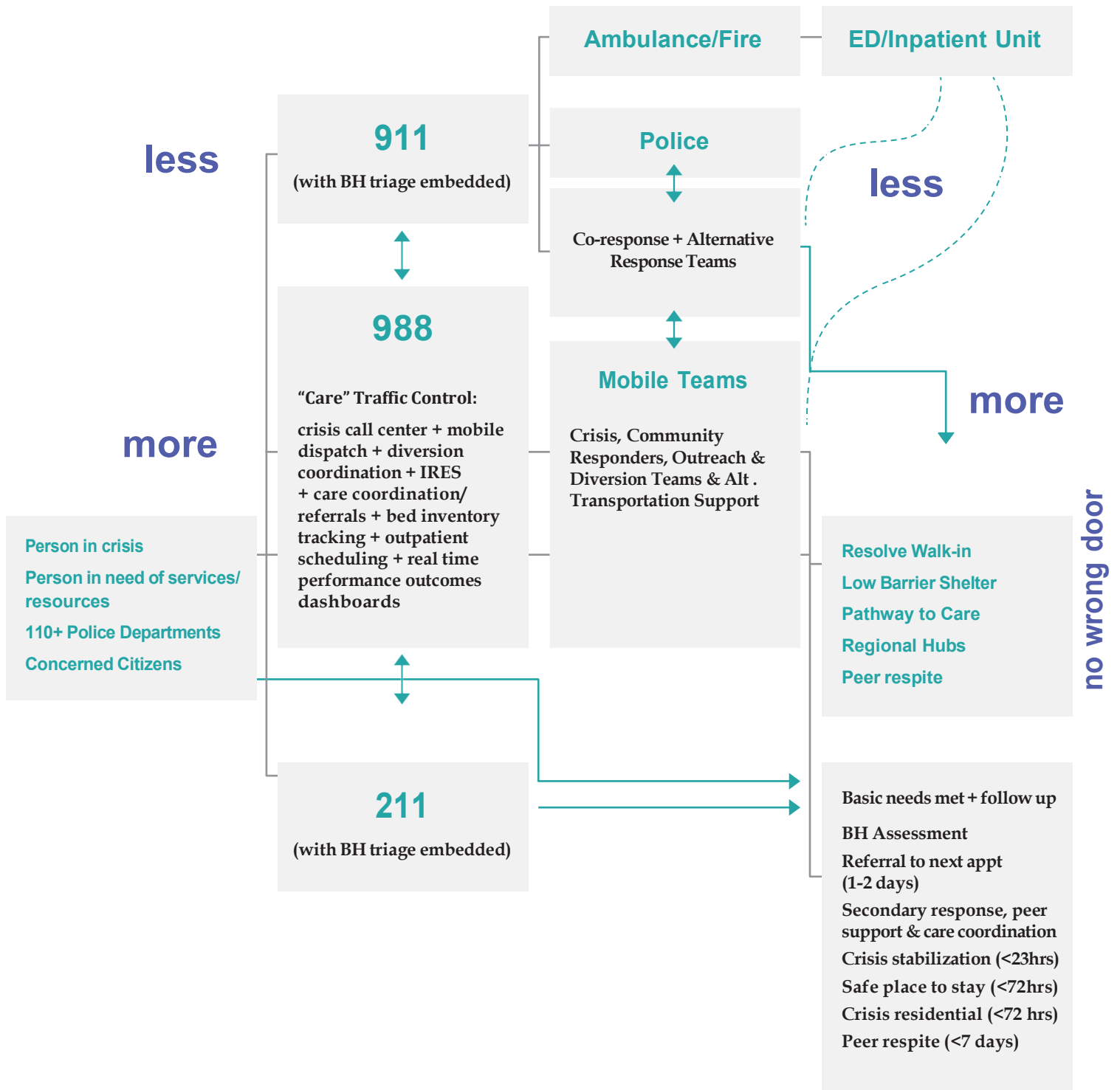
- Leverages the new national mental health crisis line, called 988, that launches in July 2022.
- Equips 911 and law enforcement to send the appropriate responder(s) to behavioral health calls.
- Strives to have “no wrong door,” so people are more likely to get connected to the care they need, regardless of where they call or show up for help.
- Improves access to care by bolstering existing 24/7/365 human services and by adding new services that are available during both traditional and non-traditional hours, in new areas around the county.

In creating this crisis prevention and response system, DHS seeks to ensure that no matter what people need help with, no matter when they need help, they can get the right level of care. We aim for all this work to reduce the use of and interaction with law enforcement, jail, emergency departments and inpatient hospitalization for people with behavioral health and other human service needs, while improving health and human service outcomes for those individuals.

DHS will be releasing several solicitations in 2022 as part of our efforts to improve crisis prevention and response. Information about these opportunities and other improvement strategies we are supporting can be found [here](#).

Building a comprehensive system will take time, as well as the commitment of new and existing partners. We look forward to building together.

Improved Crisis System Vision



Appendix B: Communities in Need

There are many indicators of a community's need for Informal Mental Health Supports. From a geographic perspective, there are two sets of data that may be useful to identify geographic communities that may benefit from additional, Community-Led Informal Mental Health Supports: The Community Need Index and 911 Dispatch Data. Below, we offer a list of communities that may benefit based on an analysis of that data.

Please note that the lists of communities below are not meant to be exhaustive. In fact, there may be communities (geographic and demographic) that have a high need for mental health supports but are not reflected in the information and lists below.

2018 Community Need Index

The [updated 2018 Community Need Index](#) looks at five metrics in determining the level of a community's need:

- The percentage of families living below the federal poverty level
- The percentage of families with children under 18 headed by a single female
- The percentage of males age 20 to 64 who are unemployed or unattached to the labor force
- The percentage of individuals ages 25 and older without a bachelor's degree or more
- The number of gunshot-related 911 dispatches per 500 people

Combining all of these metrics allows for the identification of areas of the county that have significant needs. The Community Need Index classifies need into five categories: Very Low Need, Low Need, Moderate Need, High Need and Extreme Need. Each census tract in Allegheny County was assigned to one of these need categories. Some communities have multiple census tracts within them, each with its own need category. Other communities, especially within the City of Pittsburgh, may share a census tract and a need category.

Below is a list of the communities in which at least one census tract is experiencing **Extreme Need**:

- **In the City of Pittsburgh:** Bedford Dwellings, Bluff (Uptown), California-Kirkbride, Crawford Roberts, East Hills, Garfield, Glen Hazel, Hazelwood, Homewood South, Homewood West, Homewood North, Knoxville, Larimer, Lincoln-Lemington-Belmar, Middle Hill, Northview Heights, Terrace Village
- **Outside the City of Pittsburgh:** Braddock, Duquesne, East Pittsburgh, Homestead, McKees Rocks, McKeesport, Millvale, North Braddock, Rankin, Wilksburg

Below is a list of the communities in which at least one census tract is experiencing **High Need**:

- **In the City of Pittsburgh:** Allentown, Arlington/Arlington Heights, Beltzhoover, Bon Air, Carrick, Crafton Heights, East Liberty, Elliot, West End, Esplen, Garfield, Hays, Hazelwood, Manchester, Marshall-Shadeland (Woods Run), Perry South, Sheraden, South Oakland, Spring Hill City View, Terrace Village, West Oakland, Upper Hill
- **Outside the City of Pittsburgh:** Braddock Hills, Clairton, Glassport, Harrison Township, McKeesport, McKees Rocks, Mount Oliver, North Braddock, Penn Hills, Rankin, Stowe Township, Swissvale, Turtle Creek, Wilkinsburg, Wilmerding

911 Dispatch Data

911 Dispatch data includes information about every time police, EMS or Fire are sent out to answer a call or initiate a response themselves. This dispatch data can be filtered to only see certain incident types. Incident types are selected by 911 telecommunicators based on the information shared by a caller or first responder. There are certain incident types that we believe may be more indicative of behavioral health needs than others: Mental Health, Overdose, Welfare Checks, and Soliciting. By looking at the rate of 911 dispatches for these types of calls, we can get a sense of communities in which there are higher rates of behavioral health crises occurring. Those communities are listed below.

- **In the City of Pittsburgh:** California-Kirkbride, Central Northside, East Allegheny, Esplen, Golden Triangle, Homewood South, Homewood West, Larimer, Middle Hill, North Shore, Point Breeze North, South Side Flats, West End
- **Outside the City of Pittsburgh:** Braddock, Duquesne, East Pittsburgh, Frazer Homestead, McKeesport, McKees Rocks, Millvale, Neville, Rankin, Stowe, Tarentum, West Elizabeth