



Allegheny County Department of Human Services
Request for Proposals

Language Assistance Services

RFP Posting:

Tuesday, March 22, 2022

Office Hours:

11 a.m. Eastern Time on Wednesday, April 6, 2022

Deadline for Questions:

3 p.m. Eastern Time on Wednesday, April 20, 2022

Submission Deadline:

3 p.m. Eastern Time on Wednesday, April 27, 2022

Estimated Award Decision/Notification:

July 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: A home rule county and political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
3. ASL: American Sign Language; a complete, natural language that has the same linguistic properties as spoken languages, with grammar that differs from English. ASL is expressed by movements of the hands and face.
4. Client/Participant: Individual receiving Language Assistance Services.
5. 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
6. DHS: [Allegheny County] Department of Human Services
7. Foreign-Born: People residing in the U.S. who were not citizens of the U.S. at birth
8. Immigrant: A person who leaves their country to settle permanently in another country
9. Immigrant Services & Connections (ISAC): A local service coordination program that works with foreign-born residents seeking human services
10. Language Assistance Services: A general term to refer to the language services sought by this RFP, including Spoken Language Interpretation, Sign Language Interpretation and Written Translation
11. Limited English Proficiency (LEP)/English Language Learners (ELL): A term used in the U.S. that refers to a person's limited ability to read, speak, write or understand English
12. Non-Immigrant (International): Legal status that allows a non-U.S. citizen to remain in the U.S. temporarily for a specific purpose
13. Proposal: A completed Response Form, with specified attachments, submitted in response to this RFP
14. Proposer: The individual, non-profit organization, or for-profit organization or business submitting a Proposal in response to this RFP
15. Refugee: A non-U.S. citizen given permission to come to the U.S. because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution in one's home country. A refugee is granted the right to live and work in the U.S. and may eventually apply for Legal Permanent Residency and U.S. citizenship.
16. Response Form: The Word document in which Proposers respond to requested information about this RFP
17. RFP: Request for Proposals
18. Sight Translation: The verbal rendering of a written text from one language into another
19. Sign Language Interpretation: The rendering of communication between spoken English and American Sign Language (ASL) and the transliteration of spoken English and a visual, manually coded form of English following the grammatical structure of English (signed English)

20. Spoken Language Interpretation: The verbal rendering of speech from one language to another. Interpretation may be rendered through various arrangements and mediums, including onsite, telephonically and video remote.
21. Successful Proposer: The Proposer(s) selected by the County to provide the Contract Services
22. Written Translation: The transfer of a written text from one language into a comparable written text in another language

The RFP at a Glance

Purpose

The Department of Human Services (DHS), on behalf of Allegheny County, is seeking Proposals from qualified Proposers to provide affordable, professional Spoken Language Interpretation, Sign Language Interpretation and Written Translation services (referred to collectively as Language Assistance Services) to assist individuals who are seeking or receiving services through DHS and/or its contracted partners and have Limited English Proficiency (LEP) or who are English Language Learners (ELL), deaf or hard of hearing. Proposals will be considered for any or all of the services solicited in this Request for Proposals (RFP)—Spoken Language Interpretation, Sign Language Interpretation and Written Translation—rendered in any or all of the languages described herein.

Award Details

The County reserves the right to enter into one or more Agreements with one or more Successful Proposers as a result of this RFP. Any Agreements resulting from this RFP will not exceed \$100,000 per year per Agreement. The term of the Agreement will not exceed one year, with the possibility for renewal on an annual basis based on the Successful Proposers’ performance and availability of funding.

Proposers may submit Proposals for one or more of the Language Assistance Services identified above and as further detailed in Section 2 of this RFP, entitled *What We Are Looking For*.

Who can submit a Proposal

Anyone, including but not limited to non-profit organizations, for-profit organizations, small businesses and individuals, is eligible to submit a Proposal in response to this RFP. Proposers do not need to have an existing contract with Allegheny County to apply, but they must meet 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.

Timeline

Office Hours	Wednesday, April 6 at 11 a.m. Eastern
Deadline for Questions	Wednesday, April 20 at 3 p.m. Eastern
Deadline for Proposals	Wednesday, April 27 at 3 p.m. Eastern
Estimated Award Decision/Notification	July 2022

Who we are

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 We Are Issuing this RFP

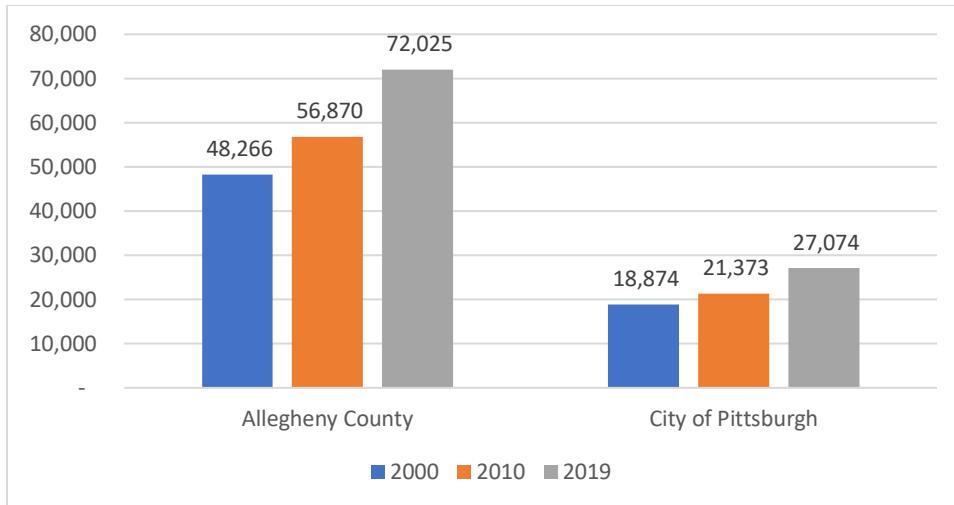
DHS's vision is to create an accessible, culturally competent, integrated and comprehensive human services system that ensures individually tailored, seamless and holistic services to Allegheny County residents generally and to the County's vulnerable populations in particular. Consistent with this vision and the supporting organizational values and applicable laws and regulations (e.g., Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, Executive Order 13166, and other regulatory guidelines), DHS is committed to safeguarding access to culturally and linguistically appropriate services for all County residents, including those with LEP/ELL or who are deaf or hard of hearing.

As the number of immigrants and internationals continues to grow in Allegheny County, the frequency with which DHS and its partner agencies encounter individuals with LEP/people who are ELLs also has increased. The DHS report, [Immigrants and Refugees in Allegheny County: Scan and Needs Assessment](#), identified the language barrier as a major impediment to service access throughout the human services system. It is important that DHS and partner agencies have reliable access to Language Assistance Services in order to effectively serve individuals and families with LEP/ELL.

Allegheny County is home to an estimated 72,000 foreign-born residents, who make up roughly 9 percent of the total county population.¹ Although the proportion of foreign-born residents in Allegheny County is considered relatively modest when compared to similar geographic areas, the chart below shows a notable increasing trend over the last two decades, which is expected to continue.

Foreign-born Residents of Allegheny County and the City of Pittsburgh

¹ U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*.



LEP/ELL is becoming more widespread among the County’s households. An estimated 86,000 residents of Allegheny County (age five and older) live in households where a language other than English is spoken.² Of these residents, approximately 26,000 (30%) report their ability to speak English as less than “very well” and are generally regarded as individuals with LEP/ELL.

Other local sources of data provide details about the characteristics of immigrants and internationals who typically seek assistance from the human services system. DHS currently funds a service coordination program, including Immigrant Services & Connections (ISAC), Family Cohesive Empowerment Program (FCEP) and Refugee & Immigrant Support Groups (RISG), that works with foreign-born residents seeking human services. From the period of July 2020 through June 2021, ISAC reported serving approximately 3,900 individuals speaking over 40 distinct languages. The most frequently spoken languages were Nepali, Spanish, Arabic, Swahili and Uzbek. Common countries of origin included Bhutan, Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and Uzbekistan.

While there is no available data on the exact number of residents in Allegheny County with hearing loss, the CDC estimates that about 8.6% of the population is born with permanent hearing loss.³ Based on this estimate, there are approximately 100,000 County residents⁴ with hearing loss (though this may be an undercount as it does not reflect those who develop hearing loss later in life). For those residents who are seeking or receiving human services, DHS is committed to ensuring access.

While DHS can estimate the size of the LEP/ELL and deaf and hard of hearing populations in the County, estimating the number of these individuals receiving or seeking services from DHS and its partner agencies is difficult because client-level and financial data is captured across numerous data systems. Data collection may be further complicated by a reluctance of foreign-

² U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*.

³ <https://www.dli.pa.gov/Individuals/Disability-Services/odhh/odhh-resources/Documents/PA%20Demographics%20How%20Many%20Pennsylvanians%20are%20Deaf%20or%20Hard%20of%20Hearing.pdf>

⁴ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Allegheny%20County,%20Pennsylvania%20Populations%20and%20People&tid=DECENNIALPL2020.P1>

born individuals to share information with the government, by communication barriers during the provision of services, and by low cultural awareness among direct service staff.

Nonetheless, DHS has observed a general increase in the number of foreign-born clients/participants who enter the human services system and recognizes the need for quality Language Assistance Services as a component of effective service delivery to those with LEP/ELL and those who are deaf or hard of hearing. As such, DHS seeks to develop a contractual relationship with one or more Language Assistance Service providers to secure Spoken Language Interpretation, Sign Language Interpretation/Transliteration, and Written Translation services for DHS clients.

Section 2: What We Are Looking For

Proposers may submit Proposals to offer any or all of the below-described Language Assistance Services (Spoken Language Interpretation, Sign Language Interpretation and Written Translation) required by DHS staff to serve individuals with LEP/people who are ELL, in any or all the specified languages, or who are deaf or hard of hearing. For most DHS projects or cases involving Language Assistance Services, it is difficult to estimate the quantity and extent of work to be performed with a reasonable degree of certainty because needs and requirements vary greatly across DHS offices and programs.

2.1 Language Assistance Services

A. Spoken Language Interpretation

DHS is seeking Spoken Language Interpretation services—the verbal rendering of speech from one language to another—to be delivered via onsite, telephonic and video remote formats.

Onsite Interpretation

Onsite interpretation involves the delivery of Spoken Language Interpretation in-person, or face-to-face. The interpreter must be physically present with the client/participant. DHS requires onsite interpretation in a variety of settings and with a variety of participants and group sizes, according to the nature of DHS programs and services. Locations of onsite interpretation may include but are not limited to: DHS offices, the offices of other public agencies and social service providers, healthcare facilities, client households and other locations throughout the County. Nearly all onsite interpretation services will be located in Allegheny County. Situations involving the need for services to be delivered outside of Allegheny County will be coordinated through DHS.

Onsite Spoken Language Interpretation also may involve sight translation, which is the verbal rendering of a written text from one language into another. Successful Proposer(s) must use interpreters capable of rendering sight translation. Sight translation is required when, during the course of interpretation, a written text (or some part thereof) must be understood by one or more participants in order for meaningful communication to occur. Written texts that may require sight

translation by interpreters include, but are not limited to: client/participant-related forms, court orders, letters, program brochures, informational guides and other vital documents.

Additional requirements and standards of onsite Spoken Language Interpretation include:

- Successful Proposer(s) must provide onsite interpretation services within 48 hours of receiving an official request for such services from DHS unless otherwise scheduled at a later date and time.
- Expedited onsite interpretation services must also be available. In such cases, Successful Proposer(s) must provide onsite interpretation services within 24 hours of receiving an official request for expedited service from DHS.
- Onsite interpreters must be physically present at the time and location specified by DHS and abide by all security and site-related procedures and protocols.
- DHS will maintain the ability to request a specific interpreter, when deemed important and if the interpreter is available.

Telephone Interpretation

Telephone interpretation involves the delivery of Spoken Language Interpretation over the phone, which may be utilized when the physical presence of an interpreter is not feasible (e.g., time-sensitive emergency situations), required or requested by a client/participant. Telephone interpreting may include any number of parties and phone lines, as participants may need assistance from the same or different physical locations. Successful Proposer(s) must make telephone interpretation services available to DHS through a single telephone number, 24 hours per day, seven days per week, 365 days per year.

Video Remote Interpretation (VRI)

VRI is the delivery of Spoken Language Interpretation utilizing an interpreter by way of videoconferencing instead of onsite interpreting. VRI requires videoconferencing technology, equipment and a high-speed Internet connection with sufficient bandwidth to provide the services of a qualified interpreter to people at a different location. VRI may include any number of parties accessing a single, virtual site. Successful Proposer(s) must make VRI services available to DHS 24 hours per day, seven days per week, 365 days per year.

B. Sign Language Interpretation

DHS is seeking Sign Language Interpretation services—the transmission of communication between spoken English and American Sign Language (ASL) and the transliteration of spoken English and a signed representation of English—to be delivered via onsite and video remote formats.

Onsite Interpretation

Onsite interpretation involves the delivery of Sign Language Interpretation in-person, or face-to-face. The interpreter must be physically present with the client/participant. DHS requires onsite

interpretation in a variety of settings and with a variety of participants and group sizes, according to the nature of DHS programs and services. Locations of onsite interpretation may include, but are not limited to: DHS offices, the offices of other public agencies and social service providers, healthcare facilities, client households and other locations throughout the County. Nearly all onsite interpretation services will be located in Allegheny County. Situations involving the need for services to be delivered outside of Allegheny County will be coordinated through DHS.

Additional requirements and standards of onsite Sign Language Interpretation include:

- Successful Proposer(s) must provide onsite interpretation services within 48 hours of receiving an official request for such services from DHS unless otherwise scheduled at a later date and time.
- Expedited onsite interpretation services must also be available. In such cases, the Successful Proposer(s) must provide onsite Interpretation services within 24 hours of receiving an official request for expedited service from DHS.
- Onsite interpreters must be physically present at the time and location specified by DHS and abide by all security and site-related procedures and protocols.
- DHS will maintain the ability to request a specific interpreter, when deemed important and if the interpreter is available.

Video Remote Interpretation (VRI)

VRI is the delivery of Sign Language Interpretation, utilizing an interpreter by way of videoconferencing instead of on-site interpreting. VRI requires videoconferencing technology, equipment and a high-speed Internet connection with sufficient bandwidth to provide the services of a qualified interpreter to people at a different location. VRI may include any number of parties accessing a single, virtual site. Successful Proposer(s) must make VRI services available to DHS 24 hours per day, seven days per week, 365 days per year.

C. Written Translation

Written Translation is the transfer of a written text (source text) from one language into a comparable written text (translated text) in another language. DHS requires Written Translation services for a variety of texts, including, but not limited to: client-related forms, court orders, letters, program brochures, informational guides and other vital documents. DHS may also require Written Translation services to support additional forms of media and informational content, including but not limited to webpages, social media, graphic design or audio recordings.

Additional requirements and standards of Written Translation shall include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Provide accurate Written Translation services from English into source language and/or source language into English, maintaining original source formatting, including, but not limited to, annotations, table of contents, abstract, main texts, references and charts.
- Receive source documents and deliver translated documents through a variety of communication channels, including but not limited to email, other electronic means,

postal service or courier. The majority of texts for Written Translation will be sent and should be received by email.

- Manage source and translated texts electronically and provide translated texts to DHS in universally acceptable formats, such as Microsoft Word, Excel and PDF.
- Provide Written Translations with correct spelling, grammar and language structure.
- Provide Written Translations that accurately reflect cultural nuances of the source document, considering not only words, but original meaning and concepts as well.
- Provide review, editing and proofreading of already-translated documents for accuracy.

DHS expects completion and delivery of routine Written Translations within five business days from the day DHS sends the source document to the Successful Proposer(s) electronically. Routine Written Translations will be considered documents of ten or fewer pages that are not considered urgent. Time frames for delivery of translated documents that exceed ten pages will be adjusted according to DHS requirements and the capacity of Successful Proposer(s).

Successful Proposer(s) must also have the capacity to provide expedited Written Translation services upon request. Expedited Written Translation will be considered documents of ten or fewer pages that are deemed urgent. DHS expects completion and delivery of expedited Written Translation within two business days from the day DHS sends the source document to the Successful Proposer(s) electronically. Time frames for delivery of translated documents that are deemed urgent and exceed ten pages will be adjusted according to DHS requirements and the capacity of Successful Proposer(s).

DHS will notify the Successful Proposer(s) of any source documents sent through other than electronic means and will adjust time frames for delivery appropriately.

2.2 Spoken and Written Language Requirements

Foreign-born individuals and those with LEP/ELL living in Allegheny County come from a diverse set of ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. DHS seeks to accommodate as many consumer languages as possible; however, certain languages are encountered more often in the local human services system than others. The following categorization of languages reflects the expected proportion of requests for Spoken Language Interpretation and Written Translation services at DHS, based on current patterns of service usage. Tier One reflects the highest expected proportion of requests; Tier Two reflects the next highest; and Tier Three reflects the lowest.

- Tier One: Nepali, Spanish, Portuguese, Burmese, Swahili
- Tier Two: Somalia, Arabic, Uzbek, Croatian, Bengali
- Tier Three: All other languages, including but not limited to Russian, Karen, Kirundi, Dari, Chinese, Hindi, Farsi, French

Proposers may submit Proposals to provide Language Assistance Services in any or all of these languages. Proposers should prioritize planning and service delivery around languages in tiers one and two, as DHS considers them priority languages. The actual frequency of languages is difficult to estimate as patterns of need are often determined by the unique factors of demand for human services by individuals and groups, which are challenging to predict.

2.3 Interpreter and Translator Qualifications

DHS requires a high standard and level of quality for the provision of Language Assistance Services. Successful Proposer(s) must utilize interpreters and translators who possess and have demonstrated characteristics commonly expected of interpretation and translation professionals. Qualifications include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Fluency in English and the relevant source language(s), including the ability to read, write, communicate and comprehend complex material at a professional level.
- Prior training, certification and professional experience demonstrating the ability to effectively and reliably perform the Language Assistance Services described in this RFP. Experience providing Language Assistance Services within the field of human services is strongly preferred.
- Ability to deliver services that are linguistically accurate, culturally appropriate and technically consistent with original messages or documents.
- Knowledge of confidentiality requirements and ability to comply with HIPAA guidelines and other related privacy regulations.
- Knowledge of basic concepts of the human services field.
- Legally authorized to work in the U.S.

2.4 Data Collection & Reporting Requirements

In addition to providing Language Assistance Services, Successful Proposer(s) must collect, maintain and provide to DHS key performance data. The specific data required will depend on the Agreement awarded, as eligible parties may submit Proposals to provide any or all of the three Language Assistance Services described in this RFP.

At a minimum, Successful Proposer(s) must provide the total number, duration and dollar value of orders for Language Assistance Services purchased, as well as more specific client-level data. Successful Proposer(s) also must provide data about: the type of Language Assistance Services provided; source language of service; participating DHS program or support office and staff; phone numbers; DHS program office code; date of DHS request for services; date, frequency and duration of service rendered; client/participant name; and other data points as determined by DHS.

Successful Proposer(s) may need to provide data regarding the services by individual interpreters and translators. DHS may request the Successful Proposer(s) to provide these data for various time frames, including but not limited to monthly, quarterly, semiannually or annually.

2.5 Evaluation of Services

DHS will utilize various monitoring and evaluation tools and techniques to ensure adherence of Successful Proposer(s) to the standards and requirements of this RFP and any resulting Agreement. If Language Assistance Services are not compliant with such standards and requirements, Successful Proposer(s) will be required to correct deficiencies and areas of

noncompliance. If Language Assistance Services are persistently deficient, DHS retains the right to withhold further requests for service or consider terminating the Agreement(s) with the Successful Proposer(s).

2.6 Providing Services to DHS's Provider Network

Successful Proposer(s) must make their proposed Language Assistance Services available to DHS-contracted providers at the same rates agreed upon with DHS, when capacity permits. These providers include, but are not limited to, non-profit and for-profit agencies that deliver a variety of services to Allegheny County residents through contracts with and funding from DHS. Contracted DHS providers will be solely responsible to the Successful Proposer(s) for all obligations relative to any purchase of services resulting from this RFP. DHS will incur no financial or legal responsibility for the purchase of services by contracted providers unless otherwise formally stated.

Section 3: Proposal Requirements and Evaluation Criteria

DHS will evaluate Proposals based upon the evaluation criteria listed below, scoring each Language Assistance Service separately. The scores from the Organizational Experience and Capacity and Budget sections will be added to the score for each Language Assistance Service proposed. The maximum score a Proposal can receive in each Service is:

- Spoken Language Interpretation = 105 points possible
- Sign Language Interpretation = 95 points possible
- Written Translation = 105 points possible

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.

3.1 Organizational Experience and Capacity (25 points possible)

- Organizational experience providing Language Assistance Services in the field of human services and/or local government (10 points)
- Organizational resources and capacity that enable you to effectively meet the standards of this RFP (5 points)
- Capacity and strategies to collect and provide key performance data to DHS (5 points)
- Internal processes and mechanisms to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the services (5 points)

3.2 Spoken Language Interpretation (45 points possible)

- Description of Spoken Language Interpretation services (onsite, telephonically, VRI) to be provided and how they will fulfill the standards outlined in the RFP (10 points)
- Description of key aspects of the delivery model used to provide Spoken Language Interpretation, including, but not limited to, the business processes used for service requests and the mechanisms for account management and customer service (10 points)
- Inventory of all foreign languages in which the organization will provide Spoken Language Interpretation, and organizational experience and proficiency for each language listed (10 points)
- Qualifications and standards required of interpreters to be utilized for Spoken Language Interpretation, including required knowledge, skills, experience, credentials and other professional standards (10 points)
- Strategies for recruiting, retaining and evaluating performance of qualified interpreters to be utilized for the Spoken Language Interpretation services (5 points)

3.3 Sign Language Interpretation (35 points possible)

- Description of Sign Language Interpretation services (onsite and VRI) to be provided and how they will fulfill the standards established in the RFP (10 points)
- Description of key aspects of the delivery model used to provide Sign Language Interpretation, including, but not limited to, the business processes used for service requests and the mechanisms for account management and customer service (10 points)
- Qualifications and standards required of interpreters to be utilized for Sign Language Interpretation, including required knowledge, skills, experience, credentials and other professional standards (10 points)
- Strategies for recruiting, retaining and evaluating performance of qualified interpreters to be utilized for the Sign Language Interpretation services (5 points)

3.4 Written Translation (45 points possible)

- Description of Written Translation services to be provided and how they will fulfill the standards established in the RFP (10 points)
- Description of key aspects of the delivery model used to provide Written Translation, including, but not limited to, the business processes used for service requests and the mechanisms for account management and customer service (10 points)
- Inventory of all foreign language in which the organization will provide Written Translation, and organizational experience and proficiency for each language listed (10 points)
- Qualifications and standards required of translators to be utilized for Written Translation, including required knowledge, skills, experience, credentials and other professional standards (10 points)
- Strategies for recruiting, retaining and evaluating performance of qualified translators to be utilized for the Written Translation services (5 points)

3.2 Budget (35 points possible)

- Pricing for each Language Assistance Service proposed, identifying rates across the service delivery modalities (e.g., onsite, telephonically, VRI) and supported languages (25 points)
- A pricing narrative that describes and supports all costs and cost-related factors that impact the proposed pricing (10 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 Wednesday, April 6, 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 Wednesday, April 6th office hours by:
 - Calling (267)368-7515 and using Conference ID 109 049 714#
 - 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_ZDlkYjcxNGltMzBkNC00NTNmLTg5YzItNjUzMTc5ZTJmOTli%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 We Are Issuing this RFP)
 - The narrative (see Section 2: What We Are Looking For)
 - The requirements (see Section 3: Proposal Requirements and Evaluation Criteria)
 - The evaluation process (see Section 5: How We 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 (MWDBE) 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
 - Completed pricing template
 - 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 Wednesday, April 27, 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

- a. All inquiries and questions must be submitted via email to DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us by 3 p.m. Eastern Time on Wednesday, April 20, 2022.
- b. All information about the RFP, including answers to questions, changes and clarifications, will be posted at our Active Solicitations website at www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations.
- c. Please check this website regularly for answers to questions, additional information or changes to the RFP or the RFP process.

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 We 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](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations), 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.