



Request for Qualifications

Professional Report Writers

Submission Deadline: Proposals may be submitted at any time and will be reviewed at the end of the following months:

- February
- May
- August
- November

An application must be received by the 15th of the month in which it is to be reviewed.

Deadline for Questions: 5 days prior to submission deadline

Allegheny County Department of Human Services
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Pittsburgh, PA 15222

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The Basics

What we need

The Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS) is committed to transparency, quality improvement, open communication, and sharing of information in order to further the field of human services. To support this vision, DHS prepares reports on a wide variety of topics relevant to its work and publishes them electronically on its website. Most of these reports are based upon internal research, program evaluation or analysis, and are written by DHS staff. Occasionally, however, we enter into Agreements with writers who are selected on a project basis to write reports.

Through this Request for Qualifications (RFQ), DHS is interested in expanding the pool of Qualified Applicants with the skills and experience necessary to prepare quality written reports. Once qualified, an Applicant may be selected for a specific writing project based upon criteria described in this RFQ.

What we don't want

We are not interested in bids for specific contracts but rather Applications from Applicants flexible enough to be available when needed but not dependent upon a guaranteed number of hours or assignments.

What's important to us

We are seeking Applicants with writing expertise in the style and at the level of quality required by DHS. Interest in the mission of DHS or the field of human/social services is preferred. For certain assignments, a local presence may be important.

Qualified Applicants will need to be able to work collaboratively with data analysts, an editor and graphic designer, and other DHS staff to gather information and work through revisions. Applicants must be able to interview content experts and individuals/organizations involved in the relevant topic, communicate information in an easily-understandable and professional way, be reasonably available and able to respond to both quick

turn-around and long-term projects, and flexible enough to work well in an environment where things may change frequently or stall for periods of time.

Who we are

DHS is the issuing office for this RFQ, on behalf of Allegheny County.

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, intellectual disability, homelessness and community services.

More information about DHS is available at

<http://www.alleghenycounty.us/human-services/index.aspx>

DHS's Office of Data Analysis, Research and Evaluation (DARE) supports policy development, quality improvement, and internal/external planning and decision-making through research and evaluation, data analysis, client engagement, program design and procurement activities. The outcomes of many of these activities are shared in the form of reports published electronically on DHS's website. While the majority of reports are completed internally, DHS also enters into agreements with writers who are selected on a project basis to prepare reports.

Section 1: Key Information

1.1 General Information

- a. This Request for Qualifications (RFQ) is an invitation to individuals operating independently or as a non-profit or for-profit business (Applicants) to submit an Application to become qualified to write reports for the Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS).
- b. No guarantee of selection for specific assignments is made as a result of qualification.
- c. However, if a Qualified Applicant is selected for a specific assignment, an Agreement will be negotiated with Allegheny County to provide the specified Contract Services.

1.2 Definitions

The following words are used in this RFQ and are capitalized to indicate their special meaning:

1. Agreement: A contract negotiated between Allegheny County and the Qualified Applicant to provide specified Contract Services
2. Applicant: The individual submitting an Application in response to this RFQ
3. Contract Services: The services included in the Agreement, which the Qualified Applicant agrees to provide; defined more specifically in Section 2
4. Application: The response submitted to this RFQ
5. Qualified Applicant: the Applicant(s) who is qualified to be selected for specific writing assignment(s)

1.3 Timeline

- a. Application Submission: Applications may be submitted at any time and will be reviewed at the end of February, May, August, and

- November. In order to be considered at one of these times, Applications must be received by the 15th day of the month.
- b. Deadline for Applicants to Submit Questions: 5 business days prior to submission deadline
 - d. Deadline for DHS to Answer Questions: within 5 business days

1.4 How to Contact DHS

- a. All inquiries and questions must be submitted via email to DHSProposals@allegHENYcounty.us
- b. All information about the RFQ, including answers to questions, changes and clarifications, will be posted at [http://www.allegHENYcounty.us/Human-Services/Resources/Doing-Business/Solicitations-\(RFP/RFQ/RFI\).aspx](http://www.allegHENYcounty.us/Human-Services/Resources/Doing-Business/Solicitations-(RFP/RFQ/RFI).aspx)
- c. Please be sure to check this website regularly for answers to questions, additional information, or changes to the RFQ or the RFQ process.

1.5 Submitting Your Application

- a. This RFQ provides detailed information about Application and Applicant requirements, the evaluation process and how to develop your Application.
- b. Applicants seeking to be qualified under this RFQ must complete a Response Form and the following documents, available on our website at [http://www.allegHENYcounty.us/Human-Services/Resources/Doing-Business/Solicitations-\(RFP/RFQ/RFI\).aspx](http://www.allegHENYcounty.us/Human-Services/Resources/Doing-Business/Solicitations-(RFP/RFQ/RFI).aspx):
 - Response Form
 - Abbreviated Application
 - MWDBE Participation Statement form
 - W9
 - Vendor Creation Form
- c. Please do not send any attachments other than those listed above and on the Response Form.
- d. Please take time to review and understand the RFQ, specifically:
 1. The requirements detailed in Section 2

2. The evaluation process as described in Section 3
- e. Make sure to complete each section of the Response Form and to stay within the word counts specified.
- f. Applications must be submitted electronically to DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us no later than 3:00 P.M. on the specified date.
- g. Please make sure to get your Application in before the deadline! If your Application is late, it will not be considered until the next scheduled evaluation period.
- h. You will receive an email when your Application is received.
 1. If you do not receive this notification within 48 hours of submitting your Application, please contact us at DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us

1.6 Other Information

- a. This RFQ is subject to all of the Terms and Conditions specified in Section 5.
- b. Allegheny County is not obligated to qualify any Applicants as a result of this RFQ.
- c. You are responsible for all costs related to the preparation and submission of your Application.
- d. Your Application is the property of the County and may become part of any subsequent Agreement.

Section 2: Our Requirements

2.1 Background

DHS's commitment to transparency, quality improvement and client-driven service is supported by the publication of high-quality reports on a variety of topics. Report types vary from narrative documents to research reports, and fall within one or more of the following categories: aging; behavioral health and disabilities; children, youth and families; crime and justice; education; and innovation, reform and policy.

Based on past experience, DHS anticipates that it will continue to publish 20 to 30 reports annually.

All DHS's reports are posted on our website and can be found at:

<http://www.alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/Resources/Research-and-Reports.aspx>

2.2 What we are buying and why

DHS seeks to create a pool of Qualified Applicants who may be selected to prepare written reports on an as-needed basis. While qualification through this RFQ means that a Qualified Applicant is eligible to be selected for a specific assignment(s), it is not a guarantee of selection or of a specific number of hours of work. Because the need for such services varies over time, it is not possible to project how many of these reports will be assigned to Qualified Applicants. We are interested in Applicants who are flexible enough to be readily available when needed but not dependent upon this work for their livelihood.

All writing assignments will be managed by DARE.

Specific assignments may include preparation of a written report or editing of an already-drafted report. Reports may be developed from a variety of sources (e.g., data provided by DARE, interviews, a compilation of documents, or any combination thereof). All prepared reports are subject to editing by DHS staff and will be graphically designed in accordance with DHS's report template.

Audiences may include internal DHS staff and leadership, DHS-contracted providers, others interested in the work of DHS and the general public.

2.3 What we require

In order to be qualified through this RFQ, all Applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Responsive and able to complete projects in a timely manner
- Experience writing or working in the area of human services
- Ability to write high-quality reports in a style similar to those found at <http://www.alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/Resources/Research-and-Reports.aspx>, as demonstrated by writing samples
- In addition, writing samples should demonstrate the following:
 - Ability to incorporate data into written reports in an easily-understandable and accurate way

- Accuracy and absence of errors (grammar, tense, voice, structure, typographical, punctuation)
- Logical flow from beginning to end
- Clarity, organization and writing that is succinct but substantive
- Cultural sensitivity and use of appropriate language/correct usage in regard to individuals or groups

Applicants should address their qualifications in regard to the above criteria by completing the attached Response Form and including examples of work that were done independently and completely by the Applicant. The Response Form specifies content and maximum word count.

2.4 Key deliverables

Key deliverables will be clearly defined for each specific assignment.

Section 3: The Qualification Process

3.1 Evaluation Model

Applicants are evaluated by an evaluation committee that assigns scores to qualifying criteria. While an hourly rate is requested in the Response Form, it is not a qualification criterion, although it may be considered when specific projects are assigned.

3.2 Evaluation Process

The evaluation process will consist of the following steps:

- a. An evaluation committee will be identified by DHS. The evaluation committee will consist of some or all of the following:
 1. DHS staff, communication personnel and content experts, selected for their expertise and/or experience
 2. DHS administration
 3. Representatives of foundations, educational institutions, community and civic organizations, businesses and/or non-profit agencies
- b. Each member of the evaluation committee will sign a confidentiality and conflict of interest agreement.

- c. Each committee member will conduct an individual review and scoring of each Application.
- d. References will be checked for each Applicant.
- e. The evaluation committee will then meet to compile the individual scores of each committee member.
- f. Following the meeting, a list will be prepared of all Applicants who have met the evaluation criteria as described in Section 3.3.
- g. Applicants may be asked to submit additional information or to present to the evaluation committee in order to confirm their qualifications.
 1. If this step occurs, Applicants will receive detailed instructions and sufficient time for preparation.
 2. The evaluation committee will score additional information or presentations using the same process as described in Sections 3.2.d through 3.2.f.
- h. A list of recommended Qualified Applicants will be submitted to the Executive Director of DHS for his approval. This list may include all, some or none of the Applicants. The County is under no obligation to qualify any Applicants.
- i. All Applicants will be notified of their status following the final determination.

3.3 Other Requirements

For an Application to be eligible for evaluation, it must be:

- Received by the due date/time
- Properly formatted and include answers to all questions
- Include all required forms and attachments

Applications that do not meet the above criteria will not be considered.

Eligible Applications will be evaluated against the criteria specified in Section 2.3 using the information requested in the Response Form and any additional information subsequently provided during the evaluation process.

Section 4: What Happens After Qualification?

4.1 County Obligation

Qualification is not a guarantee of assignment of specific projects. A Qualified Applicant may or may not be selected for any assignments.

4.2 Selection Process

DHS will assign specific writing projects to the most appropriate Qualified Applicant, based upon the following criteria:

- Experience/knowledge in the specific content area
- Writing style
- Availability and ability to complete the assignment within a designated time frame
- Projected cost based on hourly rate and an estimate of hours required
- When applicable, previous performance with DHS

4.3 Agreement to Complete Specific Assignment(s)

If selected for a specific assignment, Qualified Applicants must first enter into an Agreement with Allegheny County, on behalf of DHS, under which services will be utilized and reimbursed on an hourly basis.

Qualification through this RFQ will be effective for two years with the potential for renewal. Any resulting Agreement with Allegheny County will be for a period of up to two years, with the possibility of renewal.

DESCRIPTION	YEARS
Qualification	Two years with option to re-qualify
Agreement	Will occur if Qualified Applicant is selected for specific Contract Services; Agreements may be for up to two years
Options to renew the Agreement	Agreement renewal options will be determined at the time of the Agreement, with mutual agreement of Qualified Applicant and County

Section 5: Contract Information

In order to engage in an Agreement with the County, you must comply with all contract requirements listed below. Additional details about contracting with Allegheny County are provided in the [DHS Contract Specifications Manual](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/Resources/Doing-Business/Solicitations-(RFP/RFQ/RFI).aspx), available at [http://www.alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/Resources/Doing-Business/Solicitations-\(RFP/RFQ/RFI\).aspx](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/Resources/Doing-Business/Solicitations-(RFP/RFQ/RFI).aspx).

5.1 Minority, Women or Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (M/W/DBE) Requirements

Allegheny County has M/W/DBE goals of 13% for MBEs and 2% for WBEs, and hopes that Applicants assist the County in meeting these goals.

- a. An M/W/DBE Participation Statement or Waiver Statement is REQUIRED to be submitted with your Application.
 - i. [MWDBE Participation Statement](#)
 - ii. [MWDBE Waiver Request](#)
 - iii. A list of M/W/DBEs that have been certified by Allegheny County and the Pennsylvania Unified Certification Program can be found at <http://www.county.allegheny.pa.us/mwdbbe/index.aspx>
- b. For more information about M/W/DBEs, please review the following. [MWDBE Contract Specifications Manual](#)

5.2 HIPAA Compliance

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

5.3 Cyber Security

- a. You must meet the minimum computer specifications which begin on page 14 of the [DHS Contract Specifications Manual](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/Resources/Doing-Business/Solicitations-(RFP/RFQ/RFI).aspx), available at [http://www.alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/Resources/Doing-Business/Solicitations-\(RFP/RFQ/RFI\).aspx](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/Resources/Doing-Business/Solicitations-(RFP/RFQ/RFI).aspx).
- b. All electronic devices must have sufficient security software and settings to minimize the risk of an information breach.

- c. You 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).

5.4 Equal Employment Opportunity and Non-Discrimination Requirements

By submitting an Application, you agree 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.