

Allegheny County

Department of Human Services

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

PROFESSIONAL WRITERS TO PREPARE REPORTS FOR THE ALLEGHENY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

RFQ issued	July 8, 2015
Responses due	Ongoing
Questions in advance by email	Ongoing
Publish Q&A	Responses will be posted on the DHS webpage within 14 business days after a question is received
RFQ evaluation period	Evaluations of Statements of Qualifications will be conducted at the end of evenly-numbered months.
Recommendation of writer(s)	Decisions will be made within 6 weeks of the evaluation period

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ACRONYMS

Agreement: The contract negotiated between the County and the Qualified Respondent to provide the Contract Services.

Contract Services: The specific services which the Qualified Respondent agrees to provide to the County in response to this RFQ, as more particularly described in the Scope of Services in the Agreement.

DARE: [DHS] Office of Data Analysis, Research and Evaluation

DHS: [Allegheny County] Department of Human Services

Statement of Qualifications: [SOQ] The response submitted by a Respondent to this Request for Qualifications.

Respondent: the entity submitting a response to the RFQ in an effort to become the Qualified Respondent

Qualified Respondent: The Respondent qualified by the County to provide the Contract Services.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Purpose

Allegheny County seeks Qualified Respondents who may be selected to prepare written reports on a project basis for the Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS), Office of Data Analysis, Research and Evaluation (DARE). Qualified Respondents will enter into an agreement with Allegheny County and be eligible to be selected for writing assignments on an as-needed basis, on a range of topics related to programs and services provided by the Department of Human Services. Assignments will be based upon criteria including: knowledge of issue, experience, writing samples and style, availability and rate.

About this Request for Qualifications

This Request for Qualifications (RFQ) seeks Statements of Qualifications (SOQ) that demonstrate the Respondent's ability to provide writing services as defined in the Scope of Services. Evaluation criteria are included in an RFQ (see Statement of Qualifications Review and Evaluation Process section) to measure how well a SOQ meets these guidelines; additional information may be requested during the SOQ evaluation period. Following the evaluation period, all Qualified Respondents will enter into an agreement with Allegheny County and will be eligible to accept project assignments as offered by DARE. A Qualified Respondent is not guaranteed work on specific projects or a minimum or maximum amount of project work. DHS will make every effort to distribute assignments in a fair and objective manner, within the context of DHS's needs.

The issuance of this RFQ does not obligate the County to enter into an Agreement with any Respondents.

Communication about this RFQ

DHS is the "Issuing Office" for this RFQ and is the sole point of contact for all questions and communication regarding this RFQ. All communication about the RFQ, including requests for additional information or clarification, should be submitted via email to: DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us.

All information about the RFQ, including changes, clarifications and responses to Respondents questions, will be posted at: <http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations.aspx>

Eligibility

Entities eligible to respond to this RFQ include individuals, non-profit organizations, for-profit organizations and businesses.

In order to be considered under this RFQ, Respondents must be able to meet all of Allegheny County's contractual requirements, available at: <http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/contracting.aspx>

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

This RFQ contains requirements for Respondents to assist Allegheny County in meeting its M/W/DBE goal (all contracts and other business activities entered into by Allegheny County having overall goals of 13% for MBEs and 2% for WBEs). A listing of M/W/DBEs certified by Allegheny County and the Pennsylvania Unified Certification Program can be found at www.county.allegheny.pa.us/mwdb

For more information about M/W/DBEs, please review the following. An M/W/DBE Participation Statement or Waiver Statement is **REQUIRED** with SOQ submission.

[MWDBE Contract Specifications Manual](#)
[MWDBE Participation Statement form](#)
[MWDBE Waiver Statement form](#)

SOQ Preparation Costs

The Respondent is responsible for all costs related to the preparation and submission of a SOQ. Allegheny County is not obligated, in any way, to pay any costs incurred in the preparation and submission of a SOQ.

BACKGROUND

About DHS

DHS was created in 1997 to consolidate the provision of human services across Allegheny County. It is the largest department within Allegheny County government. In addition to its Executive Office, DHS encompasses five program offices (Behavioral Health; Children, Youth and Families; Community Services; Intellectual Disability; and the Area Agency on Aging) and three support offices (Administrative and Information Management Services; Community Relations; and Data Analysis, Research and Evaluation). Last year, DHS served more than 210,000 individuals (approximately one in six County residents) through an array of 1,700 distinct services.

DHS is responsible for providing and administering publicly-funded human services to Allegheny County residents and is dedicated to meeting these human service needs, particularly for the County's most vulnerable populations, through information exchange, prevention, early intervention, case management, crisis intervention and after-care services.

DHS provides a wide range of services, including: services for older adults; mental health and drug and alcohol services (includes 24-hour crisis counseling); child protective services; at-risk child development and education; hunger services; emergency shelters and housing for the homeless; non-emergency medical transportation; job training and placement for public assistance recipients and older adults; and services for individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities.

DHS provides services to eligible individuals without regard to race, color, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, political affiliation, disability, familial status, military service, or religious, community or social affiliations.

About the Office of Data Analysis, Research and Evaluation (DARE)

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. Because DHS is committed to transparency, to open communication with stakeholders and to furthering the field of human services in general, 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.

SCOPE OF SERVICES REQUESTED

DARE hopes to increase the pool of pre-qualified writers who may be selected for specific writing assignments. With some exceptions, these reports will be posted on the DHS website after a process of editing/proofreading and graphic design.

Successful pre-qualification through this RFQ means that a Qualified Respondent is eligible to be assigned to one or more projects, but it is not a guarantee of assignment or a specific number of hours of work. All Qualified Respondents and writing assignments will be managed by DARE. Based on past experience, DHS anticipates that DARE will continue to publish 20 to 30 reports annually. However, it is not possible to project how many of these reports will be assigned to Qualified Respondents.

Specific assignments may include preparation of a variety of report types; on occasion, Qualified Respondents may also be asked to edit already-drafted reports. Reports are typically structured as one of four types: narrative report, research report, data brief or scan, and are categorized by subject area: aging; basic needs; behavioral health and disabilities; children, youth and families; crime and justice; early intervention and education; and innovation, reform and policy.

Examples of past reports may be viewed on the Research and Reports page of the DHS website at www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/research.aspx.

Qualified Respondents must have human service-related writing experience as well as the capacity to work remotely and submit documents and invoices electronically. Pre-qualification will be determined on the basis of evaluation criteria specified in the section entitled "Pre-Qualification Process."

Qualified Respondents will enter into an agreement with Allegheny County and will then be eligible to be selected for specific writing assignments. Assignments are based upon a number of variables, including:

- Content knowledge
- Skills specific to the project
- Writing style
- Previous performance
- Rate and estimated cost of project
- Availability

If selected for a specific assignment, the Qualified Respondent will be guided by the [Writing Project Charter](#) prepared in collaboration with DARE staff and others involved in the project. In addition to specifying timeline and project participants, the Charter describes the project background, scope, audience and expected deliverables. All written submissions are subject to review and editing by DHS staff and others involved in the review and/or preparation of the report. Prior to publication, reports undergo external review as well as review by DHS leadership. All reports are the property of DHS.

STATEMENT OF QUALIFICATIONS INSTRUCTIONS AND FORMAT

A complete SOQ must include all of the components listed below, submitted as a word document or PDF (budget may be submitted in Excel). Use 1-inch margins, 12 point font and numbered pages. Single spacing is permissible. Please adhere to page limitations indicated below; other than required attachments, no additional attachments will be accepted (attachments may be included as a link).

Experience

- Describe your experience and qualifications, including:
 - experience writing and/or working in the area of human services
 - experience writing one or more of the types of reports specified in the Scope of Services Section
 - experience working in a setting similar to DHS
- Describe which type of report you are best qualified to write.
- Describe your experience gathering information from interviews and/or data analysis, or reference a writing sample that evidences this work.
- If appropriate, provide the above information for other key staff.

Writing Samples

Please provide three writing samples, relevant to the subject categories and types of reports specified in the Scope of Services section. Writing samples should evidence the Respondent's ability to:

- Write content that is descriptive or explanatory, related to human services, interesting and compelling, succinct but substantive and free of extraneous or irrelevant information.
- Write with clarity, organizing reports in a logical way that is easy to follow and using language that can be understood by a broad audience without being overly simplistic. Writing samples should address all points raised in the text and stay on topic.
- Write accurate reports that are free of spelling, grammatical and typographical errors. Writing samples should be formatted consistently and paragraphs and sentences should be structured correctly.

Rates

Please specify your expected hourly rate.

SOQ Content

- Narrative Summary (2 pages)
- References (1 page): Include name, affiliation and contact information [include email address and telephone number] for three references who are able to address relevant experience with your organization.
- Respondent's résumé
- Three writing samples, relevant to the subject categories and types of reports specified in the Scope of Services section.
- Required Attachments (Documents marked with a * are available on our website at <http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations.aspx>)
 - Cover Page*

- Resumes or job descriptions
- MWDBE Participation Statement form*
- W9*
- Vendor Creation Form*

PRE-QUALIFICATION AND SCORING PROCESS

Scoring Criteria

The narrative and budget sections will be evaluated on a scale of 65 points as detailed below.

Experience (15 points, 2 page max)

Writing Samples (45 points)

- **Content (15 points)**
- **Clarity (15 points)**
- **Accuracy (15 points)**

Selection Process

DHS will use a formal evaluation process to select the Qualified Respondent, including review of the SOQ and additional information/presentation as requested. DHS may contact individuals or entities with whom the Respondent has had dealings in the past, regardless of whether or not they are included as references in the SOQ.

DHS will perform an initial screening of all SOQs received. For a SOQ to be eligible for evaluation, the SOQ must be:

- **Properly signed by the Respondent**
- **Properly formatted and include required forms and sections**

SOQs that do not meet the initial screening are subject to rejection without further evaluation.

After the initial screening has occurred, the evaluation process for SOQs is as follows:

- DHS will designate an evaluation committee to review and evaluate all SOQs submitted in response to this RFQ. The evaluation committee may consist of some or all of the following individuals:
 - County employees/contractors
 - Representatives of foundations, educational institutions, community and civic organizations, businesses and/or non-profit agencies
 - Individuals selected for subject matter/content expertise or experience, or by virtue of other relevant experience/knowledge
- The evaluation committee will evaluate the SOQs based upon the Scoring Criteria listed above.
- If determined necessary, DHS may contact the Respondent for the purpose of clarifying any ambiguities in the SOQ, requesting SOQ modifications, or discussing hourly rate expectations.

Final Award Process

Based upon evaluation results, references, DHS contract history (if applicable) and past experience, the evaluation team will submit an award recommendation to the DHS Director (the County reserves the

right to recommend that none of the Respondents be selected). The DHS Director will then issue a recommendation to the County Manager who will make the final determination concerning the award of the Agreement.

Qualified Respondents will be notified of their status as soon as possible. Qualified Respondents will be offered the opportunity to engage in an agreement with Allegheny County. Qualified Respondents may then be selected for specific assignments as described under Scope of Services Requested.

NOTHING HEREIN SHALL BE CONSTRUED OR INTERPRETED IN ANY WAY AS OBLIGATING THE COUNTY TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH ANY RESPONDENT. THE COUNTY RESERVES THE RIGHT AT ALL TIMES NOT TO AWARD OR ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT FOR THE SCOPE OF SERVICES FOR ANY REASON WHATSOEVER.

SUBMISSION INFORMATION

SOQs must be submitted by email to DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us.

If necessary, attachments may be sent via U.S. Mail, Courier or hand-delivery, to:

Maria Wallace
Allegheny County Department of Human Services
One Smithfield Street – Suite 400
Pittsburgh, PA 15222-2221

You will receive an email confirmation of receipt of your SOQ. Please contact us (via email or by calling Maria Wallace at 412-350-7144) if you do not receive an email confirmation.

To be considered, the SOQ must include all of the specified information. DHS may request additional information and/or conduct investigation as necessary to determine the Respondent's ability to provide the requested service. This additional information may become part of the County's final award decision-making process.

All SOQs are the property of the County and may become part of any subsequent Agreement.

CONTRACT TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Agreement Terms and Conditions

The Qualified Respondent will enter into an Agreement with the County of Allegheny, on behalf of DHS, for performance of the Scope of Services specified in this RFQ and set forth in the SOQ. The Scope of Services specified in the RFQ and SOQ shall become the Contracted Services. Information about contracting with the County to provide services to DHS and the standard County terms and conditions for County contracts for services for DHS which will be included in the Agreement can be found on the DHS website at:

<http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/contracting.aspx>
[HIPAA compliance](#)

DHS is a “covered entity” under the Health Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). The Successful Respondent must describe how it will comply with HIPAA requirements.

CYBER Security

A significant portion of DHS business activities and related billing carried out under this RFQ are done through information management systems or tools, including email. Respondents should meet the minimum computer specifications beginning on page 14 of the [DHS Contract Specifications Manual](#) which can be found on the Allegheny County DHS website and should make sure their computers, laptops and other electronic devices have sufficient security software and settings to minimize the risk of a breach of information. In addition, the Respondent should have policies and procedures in place to assure that their electronic devices are physically secure when not in use (e.g., locked in a vehicle trunk, password protected, etc.).

Conflict of Interest

By submitting a SOQ, the Respondent certifies and represents to the County that the Respondent has not offered, conferred or agreed to confer any pecuniary benefit or other thing of value for the receipt of special treatment, advantaged information, recipient’s decision, opinion, recommendation, vote or any other exercise of discretion concerning this RFQ.

Equal Employment Opportunity/Non-Discrimination

Respondent agrees to not discriminate against any employee, applicant for employment, independent contractor, consumer 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 of any individual or independent contractor or because of the disability of an individual with whom the person is known to have an association or on any other basis prohibited by federal, state or local law.