



Allegheny County Department of Human Services

Request for Proposals

Supportive Housing Program for Individuals and Families Experiencing Both Homelessness and Behavioral Health Needs

RFP Posting:

Thursday, September 21, 2023

Office Hours:

1 p.m. Eastern Time on Tuesday, October 3, 2023

Questions Deadline:

3 p.m. Eastern Time on Friday, October 20, 2023

Submission Deadline:

3 p.m. Eastern Time on Thursday, November 2, 2023

Estimated Award Decision/Notification:

December 2024

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. Bonfire: The County's online procurement software. Proposers must have a Bonfire account to submit a Response to this RFP.
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. Coordinated Entry: A standardized method for connecting individuals and families experiencing homelessness to the resources available in a geographic area. The Allegheny Link and its Field Unit are the Coordinated Entry entities in Allegheny County.
5. HMIS: Homeless Management Information System, an information technology system used to collect client-level data and collective data on the provision of housing and services to individuals and families who are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness
6. Housing Contingency Funds: Financial assistance to cover initial housing expenses including, but not limited to, security deposit, utility deposits, essential furniture and household goods
7. Housing First: An approach to ending homelessness that focuses on quickly moving people experiencing homelessness into permanent housing and then providing additional support for physical and mental health, education, employment, substance abuse and community connections
8. Master Leasing: An arrangement in which a provider leases housing from a property owner (rather than a Participant leasing the housing) and subleases units to Participants to provide Temporary Rental Assistance. Master Leasing can be an effective strategy for quickly housing individuals or families with significant barriers to securing housing in the private market.
9. Moving On: A HUD-recognized strategy for connecting Participants in supportive housing, who no longer need or want the intensive services offered in supportive housing, to other mainstream permanent housing options (e.g., Housing Choice Vouchers, subsidized housing)
10. Participant: An individual or family served by a proposed Supportive Housing Program
11. Proposal: A completed Response Form, with specified attachments, submitted in response to this RFP
12. Proposer: The individual, non-profit organization, or for-profit organization or business submitting a Proposal in response to this RFP
13. Rental Subsidy: A mechanism for making housing affordable (e.g., no more than 30% of household income) to low-income renters. Can include Temporary Rental Assistance (defined below) or other mechanisms such as Housing Choice Tenant or Project-Based Vouchers.

14. Response Form: The Word document in which Proposers respond to requested information about this RFP
15. RFP: Request for Proposals
16. RFP Opportunity Page: The Bonfire webpage where the RFP and all supporting documents are listed and where the RFP submission documents must be uploaded for a Proposal to be considered for review
17. Successful Proposer: The Proposer(s) selected by the County to provide the Contract Services
18. Supportive Housing Program: The Services being procured through this RFP, which include a combination of Temporary Rental Assistance, Supportive Services, Housing Contingency Funds and landlord engagement funds. The Supportive Housing Program will follow the evidenced-based practice tenants of Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), in which affordable housing is combined with support services to help people with complex challenges achieve housing stability.
19. Supportive Services: Services designed to prepare a Participant to make a successful transition from homelessness to independence
20. Temporary Rental Assistance: Funds provided through this RFP paid to landlords by the Successful Proposer(s) on behalf of Participants to make their rent affordable (i.e., no more than 30% of household income)

Other terms shall have the meaning or definition as stated in the RFP.

The RFP at a Glance

Purpose

Allegheny County, through its Department of Human Services (DHS), is seeking Proposals from qualified Proposers to establish one or more new Supportive Housing Programs (henceforth referred to as the Program). The Program(s) will serve individuals and/or families experiencing homelessness who also have a mental illness and/or co-occurring substance use disorders, and offers Temporary Rental Assistance and housing supports, including housing search assistance, Housing Contingency Funds and Supportive Services to sustain housing.

Proposer(s) may offer Temporary Rental Assistance for any combination of facility-based and/or scattered site housing units in Allegheny County. Master Leasing will be permitted for funding through this RFP. All referrals will be made by Allegheny Link, the County's Coordinated Entry system.

In issuing this RFP, DHS seeks to expand upon its current capacity to effectively house people experiencing homelessness who also have mental health and/or co-occurring substance use disorders. The goals of the Program(s) will be to ensure Participants are quickly and safely housed, achieve stability in housing and transition off Temporary Rental Assistance as soon as possible (this can include transition to a longer-term Rental Subsidy, such as Housing Choice Voucher).

Award Details

DHS intends to enter into Agreement(s) with one or more Successful Proposer(s). The Agreement(s) with the Successful Proposer(s) will be for a term of one year with a County option to renew for up to five years. Projects will begin in Spring 2024.

Projects awarded under this RFP will be funded through Allegheny County's HealthChoices Reinvestment funds. In its state approved HealthChoices Reinvestment Plan, DHS has budgeted approximately \$6 million over five years for the services outlined in this RFP (approximately \$1.2 million annually). Proposers should provide a realistic estimate and strong justification of costs. All proposed costs will be considered for reasonableness, and the final budget and contract terms will be negotiated with the Successful Proposer. DHS will work with the Successful Proposer(s) to ensure that the final award amount(s) are adequate to achieve the goals outlined in this RFP.

DHS expects the need for this program will be ongoing. After initial funds are exhausted, DHS will evaluate the continued need for, and performance of, the selected Program(s) and identify additional funding as needed.

Who can submit a Proposal

Anyone (including but not limited to, government organizations, education organizations, 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.

Collaborative Proposals, in which two or more organizations partner together to submit one Proposal, are permitted.

What’s important to us

In order to effectively serve the target population and meet the goals outlined in this RFP, DHS expects the Successful Proposer(s) to:

- Employ a deep understanding of the interplay between behavioral health and homelessness, gained through a strong track record of helping people with mental illness and/or co-occurring substance use disorder to become and remain stably housed.
- Follow a Housing First¹ approach that focuses on quickly housing people experiencing homelessness and then offering Supportive Services necessary to help them achieve stability and sustain housing.
- Offer trauma-informed, culturally responsive services and embrace harm reduction principles.
- Eliminate barriers to housing through creative and flexible approaches.
- Tailor services based on each households’ strengths, needs and milestones.
- Use Moving On² strategies to offer clear pathways for Participants’ transition off the program’s Temporary Rental Assistance, leveraging mainstream resources (e.g., Housing Choice Voucher) as much as possible.

Proposals must be submitted electronically by logging into or creating an account on [Bonfire](#) (See Section 4: How to Submit a Proposal).

Timeline

RFP Posting	Thursday, September 2021
Information Session/Office Hours (see section 4.1 for details)	Tuesday, October 3 at 1 p.m. Eastern
Questions Deadline	Friday, October 20 at 3 p.m. Eastern
Last Website and Q&A Update	Thursday, October 26 at 6 p.m. Eastern
Submission Deadline	Thursday, November 2 at 3 p.m. Eastern
Estimated Award Decision/Notification	December 2024

Who we are

¹ For more information about Housing First and support services within the Housing First approach, see: <https://community.solutions/what-is-housing-first/>

² For more information about Moving On Strategies, see: <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/moving-on/>

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

Housing is a critically important social determinant of health (SDoH) and a cornerstone of individual wellness and recovery. There is considerable evidence that addressing housing as a SDoH improves engagement in treatment and recovery supports and reduces utilization of crisis services and inpatient hospitalizations. While DHS already leverages federal funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to provide housing for people experiencing homelessness, current capacity falls short of meeting community needs. For the first time, DHS will leverage its Behavioral HealthChoices Reinvestment Fund to address housing as a SDoH for people experiencing homelessness who also have mental illness and/or co-occurring substance use disorders.

The need for this investment is well-illustrated by the size of Allegheny County's waitlist for existing HUD-funded housing programs: an August 2021 point-in-time count of waitlisted individuals experiencing homelessness and behavioral health needs was 257. Only 34% of this cohort (n=257) were housed within 12 months of application/eligibility determination. Data also show that 28% of individuals who were eligible but waitlisted (n=257) accessed crisis services in the 12-month period (compared with 17% of individuals who were housed).³ This demonstrates a need to house more people, sooner, as a key strategy for reducing crises and harm.

Further, the behavioral health system incurs a high cost for people experiencing homelessness. By addressing housing as a SDoH, Allegheny County expects to reduce utilization of high-cost crisis services and inpatient hospitalizations. This expectation is supported by findings from the Medicaid Research Center at the University of Pittsburgh, which indicate that, for the adult population enrolled in Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), total Medicaid spending decreased by \$145 per person per month by the third year after entry.⁴

Section 2: What DHS Is Looking For

DHS is requesting Proposals for Supportive Housing Programs that will expand our capacity to quickly and effectively house individuals and families experiencing homelessness and behavioral health needs.

³ Allegheny County Data Warehouse

⁴ Hollander, M. A. G., Cole, E. S., Donohue, J. M., & Roberts, E. T. (2021). Changes in Medicaid Utilization and Spending Associated with Homeless Adults' Entry into Permanent Supportive Housing. *Journal of general internal medicine*, 36(8), 2353–2360. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-020-06465-y>

A. Target Population

DHS's goal is to serve 70 households annually with the services outlined in this RFP. Programs will serve households experiencing homelessness in which mental illness and/or co-occurring substance use is an issue for one or more household members. Programs may be designed to serve individuals, families, or both. Households comprised of individual(s) at elevated risk for a mental health inpatient stay, a jail booking and/or frequent use (four or more visits) of hospital emergency rooms will be prioritized for services. Prioritization will be determined by Allegheny Link (DHS's Coordinated Entry unit) using the Allegheny Housing Assessment, a validated risk assessment and decision-support tool that uses administrative data from Allegheny County's data warehouse (see Referral and Outreach below).

B. Service Description

Successful Proposer(s) will be expected to offer Temporary Rental Assistance and Supportive Services that include navigation to obtain housing, contingency funds to overcome any financial barriers to housing and support services to sustain housing. Services should be responsive to the real-time needs of Participants. For example, Successful Proposer(s) may need to continue providing Supportive Services (defined further below) to help Participants stabilize in permanent housing after their Temporary Rental Assistance has ended.

Programs must align with Housing First,⁵ a recovery-oriented approach to ending homelessness that focuses on quickly moving people into independent and permanent housing and then providing additional supports and services. In alignment with Housing First, Successful Proposer(s) will be expected to engage Participants through the effective use of motivational interviewing⁶ and assertive outreach⁷ and employ harm reduction and trauma-informed approaches. Further, Successful Proposer(s) must be committed to providing high quality, culturally responsive services to all Participants regardless of their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE), intellectual or physical ability, English language proficiency or life experiences.

⁵ More on Housing First can be found on the [NAEH website](#) and [HUD's Housing First in Permanent Supportive Housing Brief](#).

⁶ Motivational Interviewing (MI) is a person-centered and goal-oriented approach to help people make change in their lives. Evidence clearly demonstrates that MI improves treatment engagement and outcomes among many different individuals, including those experiencing homelessness. MI has been referred to as a "person-centered directive method of communication for enhancing intrinsic motivation to change by exploring and resolving ambivalence."

⁷ Assertive outreach may be best understood as the process whereby a worker effectively uses their interpersonal skills and creativity to make the environments and circumstances in which their service users are encountered more conducive to change than they might otherwise be, at least for the duration of the engagement. Assertive outreach is a persistent and purposeful approach used with people who do not present to, and/or have difficulties engaging with, housing and homelessness services and/or health services. Research suggests that the most effective assertive outreach approaches are those that combine persistent engagement, practical assistance, self-determinations and access to permanent housing. Assertive engagement approaches client engagement from the perspective that clients are willing to make changes and it is the responsibility of clinicians, case workers and support staff to adapt their engagement to create an environment that is conducive to change.

Requirements for each specific Service component are outlined below.

Temporary Rental Assistance

Successful Proposer(s) will provide Temporary Rental Assistance on behalf of Participants, with the objective of making housing more affordable as defined by both SAMHSA and HUD, i.e., no more than 30% of income. Temporary Rental Assistance must support a mix of single rooms, efficiencies and one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments, depending on Participant need.

Successful Proposer(s) will be expected to support Participants' transition off Temporary Rental Assistance by helping them identify and secure other sustainable sources of income and/or housing assistance as appropriate. These may include, but are not limited to, Housing Choice Vouchers and subsidized senior housing. When assessing Participants' need for Temporary Rental Assistance, Successful Proposer(s) will focus on key milestones rather than length of time in the Program. Examples of relevant milestones may include obtaining sufficient income to pay rent or long-term Rental Subsidy; improved credit score; and establishing strong connections with community or natural supports. Proposers are expected to use their relevant experience to propose their approach as to what milestones may determine that a Participant no longer needs Temporary Rental Assistance or Supportive Services and is ready to exit the Program. This will ultimately be determined collaboratively between DHS and the Successful Proposer(s).

Proposers should be aware that Master Leasing is allowable with this funding. Master Leasing is an arrangement in which the Provider leases one or more units of housing from a property owner (rather than a Participant leasing the housing) and subleases the unit(s) to Participants to provide Temporary Rental Assistance. Master Leasing can reduce risk for the property owner and expedite access to safe, permanent housing for Participants with barriers to holding a lease in their own name, such as poor credit history or a criminal record.

Proposer(s) may offer Temporary Rental Assistance for any combination of facility-based and/or scattered site housing units in Allegheny County. All housing must: 1) pass a housing quality inspection; 2) meet all requirements identified in the Fair Housing Act; and 3) meet reasonable rent standards.

Supportive Services

Successful Proposer(s) must offer Supportive Services that ensure Participants are quickly and safely housed, achieve stability in that housing and able sustain housing after Temporary Rental Assistance ends. Research on PSH has shown that participation in Supportive Services often results in increased housing stability. One study found that Participants engaged with Supportive Services are more likely to successfully manage their household budget, participate in job training programs, retain stable employment and/or attend school. Moreover, people opting into these services spent fewer days in the hospital than those who did not.⁸

⁸ <https://www.first5la.org/files/SeaverPolicyBrief4-10-06.pdf>

Successful Proposer(s) must offer, at a minimum, the following supportive services:

- Housing search assistance, including landlord/property manager recruitment and engagement activities, to ensure Participants can obtain safe, affordable housing
- Move-in assistance and access to contingency funds as necessary (see *Housing Contingency Funds* section below)
- Needs assessments to guide the tailoring of services and supports
- Assistance with obtaining and maintaining mainstream benefits, e.g., Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI), health insurance through Medicaid and food assistance through Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Linkages to/coordination with community-based services, including:
 - Mental health services
 - Substance use treatment services
 - Healthcare
 - Food
 - Childcare
 - Transportation
 - Employment/education assistance and job training
 - Life skills coaching
 - Legal services
- Tenancy education and support to ensure housing stability/retention
- Support to help Participants prevent and resolve landlord/tenant disputes
- Connections to community-based and natural supports that support housing stability
- Moving-On services that ensure Participants can access permanent, affordable housing resources after Temporary Rental Assistance ends

Participants in the program will also have behavioral health needs that often complicate engagement with services and retention in housing. As evidence of this challenge, 27% of unhoused individuals engaged by Allegheny County's Street Outreach teams in October 2022 (n=156) were enrolled in a housing program (PSH or Rapid Re-housing) in the prior 12 months. Of these, about half had exited a program during the prior 12 months and about half were enrollees at the time of engagement (combination of people still looking for housing and those already receiving rental assistance). Given this, Successful Proposer(s) must clearly demonstrate their ability to use assertive outreach, motivational interviewing and other evidence-based practices to effectively house and support the ongoing housing stability of households affected by mental illness and/or co-occurring SUD.

While the Successful Proposer(s) is not expected to deliver behavioral health services directly, collaboration with behavioral health providers to support Participants' retention in, and ultimate exit from, the Supportive Housing Program is expected. In a forthcoming solicitation, DHS intends to improve upon existing capacity for effectively leveraging mental health and crisis services offered by behavioral health providers across its contracted housing programs, including the program contracted through this RFP.

Housing Contingency Funds

Housing Contingency Funds will provide financial assistance to Participants to cover initial housing expenses including security deposits, utility deposits, essential furniture and household goods. Housing Contingency Funds can also cover the cost of obtaining identification to complete applications for housing and public benefits, as well as application-related fees. Successful Proposer(s) will directly administer the contingency funds on behalf of Participants. Upon award, DHS will collaborate with the Selected Proposer(s) to define the specific criteria for administration of funding.

Landlord Engagement Funds

Successful Proposer(s) will be authorized to make one-time payments to landlords to encourage participation in the Supportive Housing Program by helping to mitigate the perceived risk of being a landlord. Payments may include: 1) compensation for joining or adding new units to the program; 2) vacancy funds that offset the financial burden of a unit sitting vacant and awaiting initial housing inspection; 3) damage funds to repay landlords for any losses incurred as a result of program-related damage or for repairs above and beyond normal wear and tear; and/or 4) funds to make repairs necessary to pass Housing Quality Inspections. Landlord engagement funds will be directly administered by the Successful Proposer(s) in accordance with the parameters of Allegheny County's Risk Mitigation Fund and Landlord Incentive Program. Upon award, DHS will collaborate with the Successful Proposer(s) to define the specific criteria for administration of funding.

C. Referral Process

All referrals will come from Allegheny Link. Successful Proposer(s) will be expected to contact referred Participants within one business day of referral and to work quickly to secure an appropriate housing placement. Additional parameters for outreach and intake will be developed in collaboration with DHS upon award.

D. Staffing

Successful Proposer(s) will establish a staffing complement with sufficient full-time equivalents and qualifications to address the target population's housing, behavioral health and Supportive Service needs. Successful Proposer(s) will also be expected to leverage services offered in-house or by partner organizations.

Successful Proposer(s) will be expected to train all staff in best practices for service delivery, including Housing First, Motivational Interviewing, Moving On, Social Security Income/Social Security Disability Insurance Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR), Harm Reduction, Mental Health First Aid and DHS SOGIE/LGBTQIA+ Standards of Practice.

E. Performance Outcomes

Successful Proposer(s) must collaborate with DHS to track Program outcomes and performance. DHS will track the following outcomes:

- Average Program utilization rate, with a goal of 98%

- Average length of time from Program enrollment to move-in date, with a goal of less than 30 days
- Participants maintaining or increasing their income, with a goal of 85%
- Participants obtaining or maintaining employment (part-time or full-time), with a goal of 20%
- Participants maintaining or increasing non-cash benefits, with a goal of 85%
- Participants maintaining or securing Medicaid or private health insurance, with a goal of 100%
- Participants maintaining permanent housing or exiting to other permanent housing, with a goal of 95%
- Participants who exited the Program to a permanent housing destination return to the homeless system within 6 months, with a goal of under 5%
- Reductions in mental health inpatient stays, jail bookings and hospital emergency department utilization
- Decreased involvement in crisis behavioral health services
- Increased initiation of/engagement in non-crisis mental health and SUD services (e.g., outpatient services, case management)

Upon award, DHS may work with the Selected Proposer(s) to establish specific goals related to the program scope (e.g., Participants will secure healthcare through public or private sources, Participants will be linked to mental health outpatient services, Participants will enroll in substance use recovery groups).

F. Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

Successful Proposer(s) will be responsible for participating in the Allegheny Link process and for entering all necessary data into HMIS.

G. Budget

Project budgets submitted by Proposers should reflect a five-year term, with annual costs shown as separate columns for each program year. If proposing to serve fewer than 70 households, the budget should reflect a reasonable per-household cost. Should DHS select more than one Successful Proposer, funding will be divided among Successful Proposers according to Program size and needs.

In addition to estimated costs for Temporary Rental Assistance and staff to offer Supportive Services, budgets should include Housing Contingency Funds and landlord engagement funds. No more than 10% of funds may be used for administrative expenses (e.g., insurance, office supplies, service agreements).

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 110 points, as outlined in the following sections.

Organizational Experience (25 points total)

- Organizational experience delivering high-quality, holistic services to households experiencing homelessness and behavioral health needs (10 points)
- Clear description of how the organization implements principles of Housing First, Harm Reduction and Trauma-Informed Care (5 points)
- Strong organizational and management structure including evidence of effective internal communication, external coordination, an adequate financial accounting system, and an absence of unresolved monitoring or audit findings for any grants (5 points)
- Experience and demonstrated success in meeting standards for managing data with HMIS or an equivalent data management system (5 points)

Supportive Housing Program Strategy (55 points total)

- Description of the project scope, including the number of households to be served annually and the estimated average length of time households will receive Temporary Rental Assistance. Additionally, identify whether the proposed Program will serve individuals, families, or both. (5 points)
- Comprehensive plan for meeting households' immediate housing needs, creating pathways to permanent housing and mitigating barriers to housing. The response should clearly describe how the Proposer will deliver each of the housing program components outlined in the Service Description. (20 points)
- Comprehensive plan for providing housing and related supports to households affected by mental illness and/or co-occurring substance use disorder. The response should be inclusive of Participants who are engaged with behavioral health services and supports as well as Participants who are not yet engaged with these services/supports. (20 points)
- Description of how the Proposer will incorporate Moving On strategies, including what milestones the Proposer will use to determine whether a Participant is ready to exit the Supportive Housing Program (10 points)

Program Staffing and Administration (20 points total)

- Strong staffing plan including Program staff positions, qualifications, recruitment, training and performance management (10 points)
- Appropriate schedule for the proposed activities, a management plan, and a method for assuring effective and timely completion of all work (5 points)
- Plan to track and achieve performance standards (5 points)

Budget and Budget Narrative (10 points total)

- Detailed line item budget that reflects a realistic estimate of the costs associated with implementing and sustaining the Program each year for a 5-year period (5 points)
- A budget narrative that clearly explains all assumptions and justifies all line items in the proposed budget (5 points)

Section 4: How to Submit a Proposal

4.1 Prepare

a. Office Hours

- DHS will hold “RFP open office hours” from 1 to 1:30 p.m. Eastern Time on Tuesday, October 3, 2023 via Microsoft Teams. Anyone interested in the RFP and in submitting a Proposal may drop in during this time to ask questions.
- Attendance during 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 RFP Opportunity Page and the DHS Solicitations webpage.
- Prospective Proposers can join the office hours by:
 - Calling (267) 368-7515 and using Conference ID 925 473 90#
 - 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_MDcyYWZhNDctMzVmNi00ODhmLWE1ZDgtMTlMjZkNGM3OWQy%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22id%22%3a%22e0273d12-e4cb-4eb1-9f70-8bba16fb968d%22%2c%22oid%22%3a%22d14c6dca-47dd-45a0-a62e-11bf0cce95e0%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 on the [RFP Opportunity Page](#) on our [DHS Bonfire Portal](#) and on our Active Solicitations webpage with the RFP announcement at www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations.
- c. Collaborative Proposals
 - 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 commits to their role in the Contract Services.
 - 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
 - W-9
 - Minority, Women or Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (MWDBE) and Veteran Owned Small Business (VOSB) documents (see sections 7.1 and 7.2)
 - e. Proposers should not send any attachments other than those listed either above or in the Response Form.
 - f. Proposers must make sure to complete each section of the Response Form and to stay within any word counts or page limits specified in the Response Form.
 - g. **Proposals must be submitted electronically by logging into or creating an account on Bonfire at <https://alleghenycountydhs.bonfirehub.com> and uploading the required submission documents to the appropriate RFP Opportunity Page no later than 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time on Thursday, November 2, 2023, to be considered for review. If you are having trouble making an account or uploading your documents, please contact Bonfire Support. You can also reach out to the DHS Procurement Team at DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us or (412) 350-6352.**
 - h. All Proposals must be submitted before the deadline! Once the deadline has passed, the RFP Opportunity Page will no longer accept Proposals. 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.

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 use the Vendor Discussion feature through the DHS Bonfire Portal at <https://alleghenycountydhs.bonfirehub.com> on the RFP Opportunity Page, or email us at DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us.
 - a. All content-related questions must be submitted by the Questions Deadline at 3 p.m. Eastern Time on Friday, October 20, 2023.
 - 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 on the Bonfire RFP Opportunity Page and on our Active Solicitations website at www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations. Once you have

created an account and indicated you are interested in this RFP, you will receive automatic email updates through Bonfire when any questions, changes or amendments are available.

- a. Please check our DHS Bonfire Portal and the website regularly for answers to questions, additional information and changes to the RFP or the RFP process.
- b. The webpage will be updated only on Thursdays, with any new information visible after 6 p.m.

The last Q&A and website update for this RFP will be on Thursday, Thursday, October 26, 2023, 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 New Provider Requirements

Any Successful Proposer(s) who does not have a current Allegheny County DHS contract must submit the DHS New Provider Application and its supporting documents upon Notice of Intent to Award. Proposers are not required to submit this documentation with their Proposal.

- a. The DHS New Provider Application is available at our Active Solicitations website under the “Required documents” bar at www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations. The DHS New Provider Application asks for audited financial reports for the last three years. If a Proposer does not have audited financial reports for the last three years, then the Proposer may submit other financial documentation that attest to the financial health of the organization. Tax returns are the preferred alternative. Please note that providing adequate financial documentation is a requirement of contracting through Allegheny County.

4.5 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 to not 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.
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).

4.6 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, provider representative(s), representative(s) from key partners or funders, and DHS 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 discretion to either: (1) recommend to the DHS Director that a reduced number of Proposals be shortlisted for more extensive review through a formal oral presentation to the Committee, interview or a site visit or (2) recommend to the DHS Director that DHS request authorization for the County to enter into an Agreement(s) with the Successful Proposer(s).
- e. As described in d 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 well prepared (5 points)
- f. DHS will tally the 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 scores and arrive at a consensus as to 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 DHS Director for approval. The Director will, in turn, submit a request to the County Manager for approval for the County to enter into an 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. At any time during the evaluation process, DHS may contact a Proposer's references.
- j. 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.
- k. **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.**
- l. All Proposers will be notified of the County's final decision of which Proposer(s) will be awarded an Agreement.
- m. 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, Successful 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. In addition, Successful Proposers must be able to meet the insurance requirements necessary to provide the Contract Services. Additional details about contracting with Allegheny County and the insurance requirements are available in the [DHS Contract Specifications Manual](#) and the [Insurance Requirements Overview](#) at www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations under the “Required documents.”

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” to help the County meet 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 can 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” to help the County meet 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 are 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).