

**Request for Interest**

**Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Eliminate the Need for Group Placement Initiative**

# Why We are issuing this rfi

The Department of Human Services (DHS), on behalf of Allegheny County and through a partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF), is interested in partnering with a community-based organization (CBO) to co-lead an initiative called Eliminate the Need for Group Placement (ENGP) that seeks to end the need for group placements for youth involved with the child welfare system by 2030.[[1]](#footnote-1) ENGP is a national initiative, with demonstration sites in Connecticut and Oklahoma, as well as in Allegheny County.

It is critical to develop effective, community-based solutions to end the need for group placements. Public child welfare agencies, like DHS, cannot do this important work alone, and must partner with community stakeholders to ensure that the voices of young people and families with lived experience play a prominent role in development of these solutions.

To support this work in Allegheny County, AECF will provide funding and technical assistance to one local, grassroots CBO to authentically engage youth, family and community stakeholders in partnership with DHS to develop and test solutions to eliminate the need for group placements, especially for youth of color. DHS is using this RFI to learn what CBOs are interested in ENGP and to help inform the selection of the CBO to co-lead the initiative.

**Background**

This is an initiative that Allegheny County has always been invested in, but especially since 2013, when DHS received a five-year Diligent Recruitment Grant to reduce its dependence on congregate care and improve its ability to find a suitable family for every youth needing care. Notable is that the use of congregate care dropped significantly for teens from 215 teens to 123 during the grant period. After the grant, Allegheny County continued to work towards eliminating the need for group home placement by: advocating and building supports for mental health services; developing a “Placement Stability Team,” a “Family Preservation Team” and a “Congregate Task Force;” and issuing a solicitation to redesign foster care in Allegheny County. These efforts have led to Allegheny County having 54 youth in group homes in 2021. Now, Allegheny County is continuing its effort to eliminate the need for group home placements by partnering with AECF to help develop new strategies through the ENGP initiative.

**beliefs and values**

The work we are proposing is values-driven:

* We believe that children and youth should live with the families they are naturally connected to – their parents and relatives in their own communities.
* We believe youth, families and the broader community most affected by system involvement need to share in the design of solutions and decision-making to keep families together, to access supports in the community, and to identify better alternatives to group placements prior to and when youth are in foster care.
* Further, we believe that this deep partnership with family, youth and community will result in: a shift in mental models of key stakeholders; implementation of new policies, practices and approaches; and elimination of racial disparities of children and youth in foster care.
* The work we are envisioning includes a focus on racial equity, family strengthening and supports, and prevention of unnecessary system involvement through shared decision-making and community-driven solutions.

# scope of work

DHS is seeking a CBO to co-design and co-facilitate a process for ENGP, including serving as the convener for the partnership, using community-based solutions. The selected CBO must recruit diverse stakeholders (community, youth and families) to participate in ENGP; these stakeholders will be part of the Co-Design Team with the CBO and DHS.

The CBO must have:

* The ability to develop strong relationships
* Effective facilitation and collaboration skills
* Proactive communication strategies
* Commitment to equity and inclusion
* Ability to promote shared decision-making with youth and families with lived experience

The selected CBO will enter into a contract with AECF for $100,000 for 12 months to cover direct cost, plus$25,000 for indirect costs, to support this work.

* **Direct Costs include but are not limited to:**
  + Salaries for project staff
  + Payment to youth and families
  + Printing and office supplies
  + Meeting refreshments
  + Other costs directly related to the co-design work
* **Indirect Costs include but are not limited to:** 
  + Costs for services and activities that support the CBO as a whole, for example, general administration, finance, accounting, HR administration and fundraising

ENGP is envisioned in Allegheny County as a multi-year effort; this scope of work described herein is for the first year, with an opportunity for extension at the County’s/AECF’s discretion, based on the CBO’s performance.

## **CBO tasks and activities**

The selected CBO will be responsible for the following.

**Co-facilitate the ENGP process, in partnership with the Co-Design Team, to:**

* Establish a shared decision-making process with DHS and other stakeholders
* Develop shared values, group norms, roles and goals
* Identify factors and root causes through qualitative and quantitative data analysis
* Prioritize, plan and prepare implementation strategies
* Determine resources that are needed to support the work
* Provide opportunities for regular coordination, problem solving and collaboration with other existing initiatives

**Convene and organize the Co-Design Team:**

* Recruit diverse stakeholders with a deep understanding and commitment to the community, and with the ability to influence opinions and perceptions and build public will
* Prepare and co-facilitate ENGP Co-Design Team meetings with the designated DHS co-lead
* Develop and prepare agendas and related materials, schedule and design effective meetings
* Schedule meetings in the evenings and on weekends to maximize community, family and youth inclusion, when necessary
* Support and participate in workgroups on specific topics related to ENGP, as needed

**Support families and young people on the Co-Design Team:**

* Develop, prepare and support family and young people to participate as equal partners on Co-Design Team
* Compensate family and young people for their time and expertise

**Communicate with the Co-Design Team, stakeholders and community:**

* Develop mechanisms to distribute and archive materials of the Co-Design Team
* Develop a system for communicating and engaging with all Co-Design Team stakeholders and the larger community
* Meet regularly with AECF lead
* Participate in gatherings with Connecticut and Oklahoma ENGP demonstration sites to share learnings and peer support

**Monitor progress:**

* Develop measures to track progress towards results
* Participate with AECF’s evaluation partner for evaluation, learning and technical assistance activities
* Participate in technical assistance to build capacity in areas that are self-identified by the selected CBO

## **performance measures**

The selected CBO’s performance will be evaluated through the following performance measures:

* Development of a structure to engage and meet regularly with community and partners with lived experience to co-design group placement elimination solutions/strategies
* Establishment of measurable targets for local group placement reduction
* Design of two community-driven solutions/strategies that are ready to be tested in 2023
* Equal engagement of stakeholders, especially youth and families with lived experience, in the co-design of solutions
* Participation by person/people with lived experience as co-lead on all committees/workgroups

**ABOUT DHS**

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

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>

**HOW TO SUBMIT A RESPONSE**

Please respond to this RFI by typing your responses to each requested item directly into this Word document. The written responses should not exceed **three** pages. To select the CBO, the quality and completeness of all responses will be reviewed by DHS, AECF and an evaluation committee composed of youth, families and community members with lived experience.

Submit your completed response electronically to [DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us) no later than **3:00 p.m. Eastern Time on Wednesday, August 3, 2022**. You will receive an email when your response is received. If you do not receive this notification with 48 hours of submitting your response, please contact [DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us). If additional information is required after receipt of your expression of interest, you will be contacted.

**How to Contact DHS about this RFI and RFI Communications**

If you have any questions about this RFI, please email us at [DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us).

* + All content-related questions must be emailed by the Questions Deadline at 3 p.m. Eastern Time on Friday, July 22, 2022.
  + You may submit technical or logistical questions at any time, even after the Questions Deadline.

All information about the RFI, including answers to all content-related questions and any changes or amendments, will be posted at our Active Solicitations website at [www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations).

* + Please check this website regularly for answers to questions, additional information and changes to the RFI or the RFI process.
  + The website will be updated only on Thursdays, with any new information visible after 6 p.m.
  + The last Q&A and website update for this RFI will be on Thursday, July 28, 2022, at 6 p.m. We will make every effort not to post any new information after this time; however, we reserve the right to post new information in emergency circumstances.

**Timeline**

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| RFI Posting | Thursday, June 16, 2022 |
| Questions Deadline | Friday, July 22, 2022, at 3 p.m. Eastern |
| Last Website and Q&A Update | Thursday, July 28, 2022, at 6 p.m. Eastern |
| Submission Deadline | Wednesday, August 3, 2022, at 3 p.m. Eastern |
| Estimated Decision/Notification | September 2022 |

**RESPONSE**

Respondent’s Name: Click or tap here to enter text.

Authorized Representative Name & Title: Click or tap here to enter text.

Address: Click or tap here to enter text.

Telephone: Click or tap here to enter text.

Email: Click or tap here to enter text.

Website: Click or tap here to enter text.

How did you hear about this RFI? Click or tap here to enter text.

1. How do you feel your agency embodies the beliefs and values outlined above?

Click or tap here to enter text.

2. Why do you feel your agency is the best partner for this initiative designed to end the need for group home placements?

Click or tap here to enter text.

1. While DHS and AECF envision that eliminating the need for group placements means that youth are never placed in any out-of-home setting that is not family-based, we recognize that there always will be a small number of children who need short term, therapeutic interventions in a residential setting to meet their clinical needs. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)