



Request for Proposals

Supported Employment Services for Adults with a Serious Mental Illness

RFP Posting: Monday, March 5, 2018

Deadline for Questions: Friday, March 30, 2018, 3 p.m. Eastern Time

Submission Deadline: Friday, April 6, 2018, 3 p.m. Eastern Time

Estimated Award Decision/Notification: June 2018

Allegheny County Department of Human Services
One Smithfield Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Contents

Definitions

The RFP at a Glance

Section 1: Why We Are Issuing this RFP

Section 2: What We Are Looking For

Section 3: Proposal Requirements and Evaluation Criteria

Section 4: How to Submit a Proposal

Section 5: How We Will Evaluate Your Proposal

Section 6: Contract Requirements for Successful Proposers

Definitions

Unless the context indicates otherwise, the following capitalized words are defined as follows for purposes of this RFP:

1. Agreement: A contract negotiated between Allegheny County and the Successful Proposer to provide the Contract Services
2. Allegheny County: A home rule county and political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
3. CART: Consumer Action Response Team of Allegheny County
4. Contract Services: The specific services which 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
5. DHS: [Allegheny County] Department of Human Services
6. EBP: Evidence-Based Practice
7. Employment Specialist: A trained individual who delivers SE services to help clients participating in SE services obtain and sustain employment consistent with the client's vocational goals and recovery
8. LPHA: Licensed Practitioner of the Healing Arts
9. Proposal: A completed Response Form, with specified attachments, submitted in response to this RFP
10. Proposer: The individual, non-profit organization, or for-profit organization or business submitting a Proposal in response to this RFP
11. Response Form: The Word document in which Proposers respond to requested information about this RFP
12. RFP: Request for Proposals
13. SAMHSA: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
14. SE: Supported Employment are the services being requested pursuant to this RFP. SE is vocational rehabilitation for clients with a serious mental illness that helps those clients obtain competitive work in integrated settings and provides the supports necessary to ensure their success in the workplace.
15. Successful Proposer: The Proposer(s) selected by the County to provide the Contract Services

The RFP at a Glance

Purpose

Allegheny County, on behalf of its Department of Human Services (DHS), is soliciting Proposals from qualified Proposers to provide Supported Employment (SE) services to adults with a serious mental illness, in accordance with the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)'s Evidence-Based Practices (EBP).¹ SE helps adults with a serious mental illness find jobs that pay competitive wages in integrated settings in the community (i.e., with other people who do not necessarily have disabilities) and provides them with supports necessary to ensure their success in the workplace.

Award Details

DHS will allocate approximately \$1,600,000 per year to fund a County program of SE services. DHS expects to enter into Agreement(s) and divide the total funding amount with no more than five Successful Proposers to provide the Contract Services for a term of one year, with the County having the option to extend the term of the Agreement. The Agreement(s) will provide for compensation to the Successful Proposer(s) on a fee-for-service basis based upon negotiated rates for the SE Services provided.

Who can apply

All entities, including but not limited to, non-profit organizations, for-profit organizations and small businesses, are eligible to submit a Proposal in response to this RFP. Entities do not need to have an existing contract with Allegheny County, 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 capability to provide the Contract Services.

Collaborative Proposals are encouraged but not required. Entities may participate in more than one collaborative Proposal.

All current SE providers must submit a Proposal in response to this RFP if they wish to continue providing SE.

What we don't want

DHS is not interested in Proposals that provide a version of SE that differs from the model put forth in the RFP. The Successful Proposer(s) must have staff assigned specifically to provide SE services. The assigned staff should not provide SE services to any other population other than the one described in the Target Population section of this RFP.

¹ For more information, see <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Supported-Employment-Evidence-Based-Practices-EBP-KIT/SMA08-4365>

What's important to us

DHS values experience working with individuals with mental illness and a commitment to maintaining fidelity to the model outlined in this RFP, especially in regard to job functions. Each Employment Specialist (defined below) must perform all job functions outlined in the RFP.

Timeline

Deadline for Proposers to submit questions is 3 p.m. Eastern Time on Friday, March 30, 2018.
Proposals must be submitted by 3 p.m. Eastern Time on Friday, April 6, 2018.
Proposers will be notified of their selection status by June 2018.

Who we are

On behalf of Allegheny County, DHS is the issuing office for this RFP.

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>

Section 1: Why We Are Issuing this RFP

People with mental health needs have many strengths and abilities that are often overlooked, including the ability and desire to work. Research has shown that 70 percent of adults with serious mental illnesses want to work (Mueser et al., 2001; Rogers et al., 2001) and that many consider finding and keeping a job to be a priority. Further, respondents to an annual survey of individuals who receive a range of mental health services in Allegheny County, conducted by Consumer Action Response Team (CART) of Allegheny County, indicated that they would like additional assistance with job training and education. A 2001 study found that 60 percent of adults successfully found work while participating in SE (Bond et al., 2001).

The Supported Employment (SE) model has been the most extensively studied model of vocational rehabilitation for adults with serious mental illnesses. A recent review of 17 studies involving employment programs consistently demonstrated that SE showed significant advantages over traditional approaches. Across these studies, 58 percent of people who were in SE obtained competitive employment compared to 21 percent in traditional programs (Bond et al., 2001). Specifically, individuals who participated in SE services were more successful in:

- Obtaining work
- Working more hours
- Earning higher wages

Some research shows that when adults with serious mental illnesses succeed in finding competitive work, improvements may occur in symptoms, self-esteem and satisfaction with finances (Bond et al., 2001; Musser et al., 1997). Most individuals participating in SE services who obtain employment work part-time and are able to keep their benefits (e.g., social security payments, health insurance). Work often becomes a meaningful part of their lives.

Section 2: What We Are Looking For

DHS is seeking providers for SE services who will deliver vocational rehabilitation for adults with a serious mental illness (henceforth referred to as clients). The Successful Proposer(s) will employ Employment Specialists and SE Supervisors who will help clients obtain competitive work in integrated settings and provide clients with supports to help them succeed in the workplace. Competitive jobs are part-time or full-time jobs that exist in the open labor market and pay at least minimum wage. They are jobs that anyone could have regardless of their disability status. The wage should not be less than the wage (and level of benefits) paid for the same work performed by people who do not have mental illness.

In 2016, 683 people received SE services through DHS-funded provider agencies. DHS currently contracts with nine agencies to provide SE. Those agencies currently under contract with the County for SE services and which want to continue providing these services, must submit a proposal for consideration. This RFP serves as an opportunity to re-envision SE at DHS, following DHS's SAMHSA-based model described in this RFP to greater fidelity, improving quality and producing better outcomes for clients.

2.1 Target Population

Any adult living in Allegheny County who has a serious mental illness and wants to work is eligible for SE. Clients may participate in SE regardless of their psychiatric diagnosis, symptoms, justice system involvement, work history or other problems, including history of substance use and cognitive impairment. The core philosophy of SE is that all individuals can work at competitive jobs in the community without prior training, and no one should be excluded from this opportunity. SE does not have a standard of work readiness that individuals must meet before they seek employment. Rather, SE operates under the credo that people are ready to work when they say that they want to work. Research shows that symptoms, substance use and other factors are not strong and consistent predictors of work success when clients receive assistance from SE services. Therefore, no justification exists for excluding individuals who are interested in working in SE. Clients may currently be employed and looking for different work.

2.2 Standards for SE Services

A. Accessing SE

Clients may self-refer to SE or be referred from a mental health agency or other support. DHS envisions that SE services could operate in mental health centers in the community, so that people can easily access other supports or become aware of SE while utilizing the mental health center for other purposes. Regardless of where the SE services are located, the Successful Proposer(s) must provide connections to other supports as needed or requested by the client (e.g., therapy, substance use disorder treatment, referrals to benefits).

B. Assessment and Service Planning

Once a client is connected to SE, an Employment Specialist must meet with the client within 14 days and conduct an intake assessment. During the intake assessment, the Employment Specialist determines if the client is eligible for SE (i.e., client has a serious mental illness and is interested in working). Eligibility can be determined through one of the following means:

- A mental health professional sends a letter confirming a specific diagnosis.
- A psychiatric evaluation is submitted with a diagnosis listed in the evaluation.
- A treatment plan, signed by a Licensed Practitioner of the Healing Arts (LPHA) and with a diagnosis listed, is submitted.

Within 30 days of the first meeting with the client, the Employment Specialist completes a service plan together with the client. The first step in building the service plan is completing the Dartmouth Vocational Assessment Tool² which determines what type of work the client is interested in and their skillset. The Employment Specialist must individualize the service plan, with the goal of rapidly moving the client toward employment. These plans should be updated at least every six months or whenever a major milestone occurs. Key aspects of the service plan must include:

² See <https://ipsworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Career-Profile-Form-2017.docx>

- Specific employment-related goals and time periods associated with those goals (e.g., I will go on an interview within two weeks), operating under the knowledge that the primary goal of the plan is to obtain competitive employment.
- Outlined responsibilities of both the Employment Specialist (e.g., “I will follow up with Jones’ Flower Shop to see if they are hiring”) and the client (e.g., “I will email out my résumé to Jones’ Flower Shop”).
- The frequency of contact between Employment Specialist and client after the client is placed in a job (this would occur after the client has secured a job)
- Issues that the client needs to work on while on the job search and during employment (e.g., anger management, assertiveness)

C. Integrating SE with the Client’s Existing Supports

The Employment Specialist must integrate SE into a client’s system of care by contacting his or her existing supports (e.g., mental health support provider, treatment team, family member, or other support of the client’s choosing). The Employment Specialist must open a clear line of communication with a support contact through phone and/or email to share electronic records, the results of the plan and the client’s progress. Closely coordinating SE services with other mental health rehabilitation and clinical treatment ensures that all support the client’s vocational goals. For this reason, it is important that SE staff regularly and clearly communicate with the client’s designated contact(s). Communicating with the client’s other supports, especially clinical supports, gives the Employment Specialist a vehicle to discuss clinical and rehabilitation issues that are relevant to work, including medication side effects, persistent symptoms, cognitive difficulties and/or other rehabilitation needs (e.g., skills training to improve ability to socialize with co-workers or self-assertion skills). The Employment Specialist should continue to communicate with contacts on a monthly basis, at minimum, or whenever there is an urgent matter relating to the client’s employment or psychiatric functioning.

Upon entry into SE, the Employment Specialist must ask the client for a release of information to initiate contact with their supports. The Employment Specialist is required to develop a Letter of Agreement for use with support agencies, if their agency does not already have one.

D. Job Search

Employment Specialists must help clients explore job opportunities within 30 days after a client starts SE. Rapid job search helps engage clients in SE and takes advantage of their current motivation. Studies show that fewer individuals obtain employment when the job search is delayed by pre-vocational preparations and requirements. For this reason, it is against SE principles to require extensive pre-employment assessment and training or intermediate work experience (e.g., pre-vocational work units, transitional employment positions, sheltered workshops). Employment Specialists must build relationships with a variety of diverse employers so that all clients can be matched with a job that complements their unique interests and skillset.

E. Continuous Support and Discharge

After a client obtains employment, the Employment Specialist must complete a follow-along support plan³ within three days. The follow-along support plan outlines what the Employment Specialist and

³ For an example, see <https://ipsworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Job-Follow-Along-Plans-1.pdf>

client will do to ensure that the client maintains employment. Employment Specialist support continues if the client desires it and can last for an unlimited amount of time. Some clients struggle with symptoms that change or persist over time, so their optimal treatment and rehabilitation require a long-term commitment. Further, clients may be interested in ongoing career development that requires support from the Employment Specialist.

For this reason, despite their vocational success, clients who receive SE services are never terminated unless they directly request to be so. Follow-along supports are provided to clients on a time-unlimited basis. While follow-along supports are continuous, for many clients the extent of support gradually decreases over time. The goal for Employment Specialists is to provide support and assistance while helping the client become independent.

F. Staffing

Proposers may submit a Proposal to provide one or more SE teams. An SE team includes four Employment Specialists and one SE Supervisor. The roles of the Employment Specialist and SE Supervisor are as follows:

Employment Specialists carry out SE services by helping clients obtain and sustain employment that is consistent with their vocational goals and recovery. To do this, Employment Specialists:

- Engage clients and establish trusting, collaborative relationships directed toward the goal of competitive employment in integrated job settings.
- Assess client vocational functioning on an ongoing basis.
- Follow SE principles and procedures, and help clients in their job search activities directed toward positions that are consistent with client needs and interests.
- Conduct job development activities with prospective employers which may or may not relate to a specific client.
- Provide individualized, time-unlimited, follow-along services to help clients sustain employment.
- Based on agreement with clients, provide education and support to employers, which may include negotiating job accommodations and follow-along contact with employers.
- Provide outreach services to clients, as necessary, when they appear to disengage from SE services. If necessary, Employment Specialists maintain some contact with clients even without a vocational focus to sustain engagement.
- Communicate regularly with the client's existing supports to coordinate and integrate vocational support into the client's mental health treatment.
- Draw up personalized employment plans with clients, case managers and other treatment team providers and update the plans at minimum every six months or sooner, depending on the need of the client.
- Spend at least 70 percent of their time out of the office and in direct service in the community engaging clients, client supports, family members and employers.
- Complete all paperwork within 30 days of an event taking place (client meetings) or of its due date (service plan).

To effectively do their job, Employment Specialists must have strong communication and marketing skills. They must have education and experience equivalent to an undergraduate degree in mental health or social services, business, personnel management or vocational services, and experience

working with people with a serious mental illness and in vocational services, and possess knowledge of the work world. Hiring staff with lived experience is encouraged. The Successful Proposer(s) must recruit and retain quality Employment Specialists. Acknowledging that turnover is a reality, the Successful Proposer(s) must have a strong plan in place for supporting clients in the interim between when an Employment Specialist leaves and a new Employment Specialist is hired.

SE Supervisors must possess a complex set of administrative and clinical skills. The Supervisor must be dedicated exclusively to SE. Supervisors provide direct services and supervision (they may, but are not required to, carry a small caseload). Supervisors also have administrative responsibilities like hiring, preparing reports, and developing policies and procedures. They are responsible for ensuring that SE services operate with fidelity to the model, by conducting quality improvement activities, including ensuring the quality and content of staff-client interactions. To effectively supervise staff, SE Supervisors must have, at minimum, weekly face-to-face group staff meetings where staff share concerns, strategies and tips with one another. DHS expects that Supervisors will conduct supervised visits in the field with each Employment Specialist and maintain records of the visits. These field visits must occur at least twice per year, where at least one of which must be while the Employment Specialist is conducting job development. During these visits, the Supervisor will ensure that the Employment Specialist is following the model to fidelity.

G. Benefits Counseling

For individuals receiving public health and financial benefits (e.g., social security, health insurance), fear of losing those benefits is a major reason that they may not seek employment. For this reason, it is crucial that all individuals who are interested in working are given accurate information to guide their decisions about work. All Employment Specialists must attend an AHEDD⁴ annual benefits training funded by DHS to learn to communicate basic information about the impact of work on a client's benefits. The staff of the Successful Proposer(s) must receive this training annually. In addition to attending the training, the Employment Specialist should actively advocate with the client to meet with AHEDD counselors for benefit counseling, especially once employment is obtained. Once the client is employed, the Employment Specialist should continue to help the client submit his or her wages to the Social Security Administration and to assist as needed.

H. Recovery and Wellness Principles and Practices

To effectively do their job, the staff of the Successful Proposer(s) must have a strong foundation in recovery and wellness principles and practices. The Successful Proposer(s) must train their staff at the beginning of their employment and have ongoing training and educational opportunities on these topics. In addition, the Successful Proposer(s) must have ways to monitor employees' use of these principles and practices.

I. Client Preference

Clients who obtain work that they find interesting tend to have higher levels of satisfaction with their jobs and longer job tenures. For this reason, client preference must guide all phases of SE services. Honoring personal preference is critical in helping clients to pursue their vocational goals.

⁴ AHEDD is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to serve the community as a catalyst in the employment and development of people with disabilities, see <http://www.ahedd.org/>.

J. Medical Records

The Successful Proposer(s) must have policies and procedures in place to ensure that proper medical record releases are signed and maintained, as well as all paper and electronic records.

K. Adherence to EBP

DHS expects that Successful Proposer(s) will maintain fidelity to the SE model being requested pursuant to this RFP. This model is the SAMHSA model with two exceptions: 1) Employment Specialists are not expected to be embedded within a service coordination team and 2) clients do not need to have an existing service coordinator. Employment Specialists must work to ensure that they are communicating with a client's existing supports (see Section 2.2 C: Integrating SE with the Client's Existing Supports, above).

2.3 Quality Assurance and Outcomes

The Successful Proposer(s) must adhere closely to the EBP. The SE Fidelity Scale⁵ measures how well a Successful Proposer's SE services follow key elements of the model (Bond et al., 1997). Studies of evidence-based models show that the higher an agency scores on a fidelity scale, the greater the likelihood the agency will achieve favorable client outcomes (Bond & Salyers, 2004). For this reason, it is important to monitor both SE fidelity and SE outcomes. The characteristics of SE services that would have a perfect score on the SE Fidelity Scale are show below:

Caseload	Employment Specialists manage caseloads of up to 25 clients.
Vocational services staff	Employment Specialists provide only vocational services.
Vocational generalists	Each Employment Specialist carries out all phases of SE services.
Integration with existing supports	Employment Specialists are in open and regular communication with the client's existing supports, especially key mental health clinicians.
Vocational unit	Employment Specialists function as a unit.
Zero-exclusion criteria	There are no eligibility requirements to receive SE supports.
Ongoing work-based assessment	Vocational assessment is an ongoing process.
Rapid search for competitive jobs	The search for competitive jobs occurs rapidly after referral.
Individualized job search	Employer contacts are based on client job preference.
Diversity of jobs is developed	Employment Specialists provide job options that are in different settings.
Permanence of jobs developed	Employment Specialists provide competitive job options that have permanent status.
Jobs as transitions	Employment Specialists help clients end jobs when appropriate and then find new jobs.
Follow-along supports	Individualized, follow-along supports are provided to employers and clients on a time-unlimited basis.

⁵ See DHS's SE fidelity tool at <https://tinyurl.com/yc3mr3tn>

Community-based services	Vocational services are provided in community settings.
Assertive engagement and outreach	Employment Specialists make multiple contacts with clients, are part of initial engagement, and make contact at least monthly on a time-unlimited basis and when clients stop attending vocational services.

2.4 Data Collection and Reporting

The Successful Proposer(s) is responsible for entering information into DHS’s web-based SE application in a timely manner. In order to do this, the Successful Proposer(s) will undergo training, provided by DHS, about use of the web-based system.

2.5 Budget

Approximately \$1.6 million per year total will be allocated to SE services. DHS expects to contract with no more than five Proposer(s), and apportion the total funding amongst those selected. DHS will program fund SE in year one, and will move to fee-for-service in year two, assuming the County and the provider pursue the option to extend the terms of the Agreement. During the first program-funded year, Successful Proposer(s) will be required to do shadow-billing by submitting invoicing as if they are operating a fee-for-service program. Shadow billing will enable the Successful Proposer(s) to prepare for a fee-for-service environment by providing the opportunity to: 1) put appropriate billing codes and procedures in place and 2) more fully understand the amount of revenue that would be generated in a fee-for-service reimbursement model.

Proposers are asked to complete a sample budget. The template can be found on DHS’s Solicitation webpage at www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations.

Section 3: Proposal Requirements and Evaluation Criteria

Proposals are evaluated based upon the following evaluation criteria. Proposers must address their qualifications in their Proposal by responding to the specifically-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 a Proposal can receive is 110 points, as outlined in the following sections.

A. Organizational Experience (10 points possible)

- Experience working with adults with a serious mental illness (5 points)
- Experience working with adults in the area of job search and development (5 points)

B. Standards for SE Services (80 points possible)

- Accessing SE Services (10 points)
 - A plan to promote SE services and partner with other mental health providers so they can make referrals for SE services
 - A plan for clients to easily self-refer for SE services

- A plan to create a separate SE team supervised by a full-time supervisor in which staff work only with adults who have a serious mental illness (10 points)
- A strategy for rapid goal planning that will build an individualized service plan within 30 days of intake that reflects the interests, skills and personal preferences of clients to help them meet their goal of finding and obtaining competitive employment (5 points)
- A plan for follow-along support that will continuously supporting clients once they obtain work (5 points)
- Client support integration (10 points)
 - A plan for coordinating with an SE client’s existing supports to ensure that all supports are working together to help the client meet their vocational goals, including how routine communication will occur and as well as situations that necessitate additional communication
 - If the Proposer is a mental health center, the Proposer demonstrates how it will facilitate client access to other supports at the center and describes what supports are available at the center. If the Proposer is not a mental health center or not proposing to operate in a mental health center, the Proposer demonstrates how it will facilitate easy client access to supports within the community.
 - A plan for connecting clients to additional supports, as requested by the client
- A plan for educating staff about benefits counseling basics and for working with AHEDD to ensure that all clients who qualify for benefit counseling receive it (10 points)
- A plan for ensuring staff spend at least 70 percent of their time out of the office and in direct service in the community engaging and supporting clients and employers (5 points)
- A plan for actively engaging with the community to locate a diverse array of referral sources for competitive jobs and employers that match client interests and skill sets (5 points)
- Staffing (10 points)
 - A plan for supporting clients in the interim between when an Employment Specialist leaves and when a new Employment Specialist is hired
 - A plan for conducting weekly group supervision
 - A plan for observing staff in the field at least twice per year, at least one of which must be while staff is conducting job development
- A plan for providing quality assurance and commitment to fidelity to the SE model described in this RFP, including a plan to ensure paperwork is timely and complete, a plan to ensure staff understand and utilize recovery and wellness principles and practices in their work with clients, and a plan to ensure that staff honor client preferences in the job search process and that staff use a variety of employers (10 points)

C. Data Reporting and Collection (5 possible)

- A plan to ensure that data are entered in the web-based SE application in a timely, accurate manner (5 points)

D. Budget (15 points)

- Completed budget template that reflects a realistic estimate of the costs associated with the requested services (10 points)
- Detailed budget narrative that clearly explains and justifies the proposed budget (5 points)

Section 4: How to Submit a Proposal

4.1 Submission Process

- a. Proposers should take time to review and understand the RFP in its entirety including:
 - The background (see Section 1: Why We Are Issuing this RFP)
 - The narrative (see Section 2: What We Are Looking For)
 - The requirements (see Section 3: Proposal Requirements and Evaluation Criteria)
 - The evaluation process (see Section 5: How We Will Evaluate Your Proposal)
- b. Proposers must use the Response Form to develop your Proposal. Type your responses to each requested item directly into the Response Form. It is available at our Active Solicitations website with the RFP announcement at www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations.
- c. Proposers must submit a complete Proposal, which includes the following attachments that are available on our Active Solicitations website:
 - Response Form
 - MWDBE documents
 - Allegheny County Vendor Creation Form
 - Audited financial reports for the last three years
 - W-9
 - Completed budget template
- d. Proposer should not send any attachments other than those listed above and on the Response Form.
- e. If you do not have audited financial reports for the last three years, you may submit other financial documentation that attest to the financial health of your organization. Tax returns are the preferred alternative. Please note that providing financial documentation is a requirement of contracting through Allegheny County.
- f. Make sure to complete each section of the Response Form and to stay within any word counts or page limits that may be specified in the Response Form.
- g. **Proposals must be submitted electronically to DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us no later than 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time on Friday, April 6, 2018 to be considered for review.**
- h. Please make sure to get your Proposal in before the deadline! If your Proposal is late, it will be rejected and will not be presented to the evaluation committee for review and scoring as described in Section 5 below.
- i. You will receive an email when your Proposal is received. If you do not receive this notification within 48 hours of submitting your Proposal, please contact DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us

4.2 How to Contact DHS about this RFP

- a. All inquiries and questions must be submitted via email to DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us
- b. All information about the RFP, including answers to questions, changes and clarifications will be posted at our Active Solicitations website at www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations
- c. Please be sure to check this website regularly for answers to questions, additional information or changes to the RFP or the RFP process.

4.3 Other Information

- a. The issuance of this RFP does not obligate the County to enter into an Agreement with any Proposers. The County reserves the right to reject any and all Proposals.
- b. Any Agreement originating from this RFP is subject to all of the Terms and Conditions specified in Section 6: Contract Requirements for Successful Proposers.
- c. Proposers are responsible for all costs related to the preparation and submission of a Proposal.
- d. Proposals become the property of the County and may become part of any subsequent Agreement between the Proposer and the County.
- e. The Successful Proposal will be posted online in the DHS Solicitations Archive after an Agreement has been fully executed by the County and the Successful Proposer(s).
- f. Proposers also should be aware that all documents and materials submitted in response to this RFP are subject to requests made pursuant to Pennsylvania's Right-To-Know Law and that the County may have to make submitted documents and materials available to a requestor after an award of an Agreement is made.

Section 5: How We Will Evaluate Your Proposal

Proposals will be evaluated by an evaluation committee convened by DHS. The evaluation committee will assign scores based on the evaluation criteria in Section 3: Proposal Requirements and Evaluation Criteria using the scale listed in Section 5.1 b.

5.1 Evaluation Model

The evaluation process will consist of the following steps:

- a. An Evaluation Committee will be formed by DHS and may consist of some or all of the following:
 - Content experts from within DHS, selected for their expertise and/or experience
 - Representatives of foundations, educational institutions, community and civic organizations, businesses and/or non-profit agencies
- 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 according to their 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. The Evaluation Committee members then will meet collectively to discuss the individual scores and evaluations of each committee member.

- d. DHS, on behalf of the County, shall have 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. The Evaluation Committee will score the oral presentation and add it to the Proposer's Proposal score. The oral presentation will be scored using the following criteria and the scale outlined in 5.1b. The maximum score that an oral presentation can receive is 15 points:
 - Presentation demonstrates Proposer's ability to implement the proposed services effectively (5 points)
 - Proposer's answers to Evaluation Committee's questions (5 points)
 - Proposer's presentation is thoughtful and professional (5 points)
- e. At any time during the review process, DHS may contact a Proposer to discuss any areas of the Proposal needing clarification or further explanation.
- f. The Evaluation Committee will submit their recommendation for award of an Agreement to the Director of DHS for his approval, who in turn will submit a request to the County Manager for approval for the County to enter into an Agreement with the Successful Proposer(s).
- g. **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.**
- h. All Proposers will be notified of their status following the final determination of which Proposer(s) will be awarded Agreements.
- i. Proposers not awarded an Agreement 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:

- Received by the due date/time
- Properly formatted and include responses to all requested information
- Complete with all required forms and attachments

Proposals which do not meet the above requirements will be automatically rejected and will not be presented to the evaluation committee.

Section 6: Contract Requirements for Successful Proposers

In order to enter into an Agreement with the County, Proposers must be willing to comply with all contract requirements listed below and all standard terms and conditions contained in a County contract for provision of services to DHS and its offices. Additional details about contracting with Allegheny County are provided in the [DHS Contract Specifications Manual](#), available at www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations.

6.1 Minority, Women or Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (MWDBE) Requirements

Allegheny County has MWDBE goals of 13% participation for Minority Business Enterprises and 2% participation for Women Enterprises, and expects that Successful Proposers will make a “good faith effort” in assisting the County in meeting these goals.

- a. All Proposals must include either of the following:
 - If your organization is able to meet the MWDBE contract goals, a completed MWDBE Participation Statement and MWDBE Contact Information form is required. You must also attach the MWDBE certifications of the firms you intend to use with the Participation Statement.
 - If your organization will request a waiver from participating in the MWDBE contract goals, a completed MWDBE Participation Statement, MWDBE Contact Information form and MWDBE Waiver Request are required.
- b. MWDBE forms and resources can be found at www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations:
 - MWDBE Forms
 - [MWDBE Participation Statement](#)
 - [MWDBE Waiver Request](#)
 - [MWDBE Contact Information form](#)
 - MWDBE Resources
 - [MWDBE Contract Specifications Manual](#)
 - [MWDBE Response Checklist](#)
 - [Guide for completing the MWDBE Participation Statement](#)
 - [Sample Diversity Policy](#)
- c. For more information about MWDBEs, visit the [Allegheny County MWDBE website](#).

6.2 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.

6.3 Cyber Security

- a. Successful Proposers must meet the minimum computer specifications which 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).

6.4 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.

6.5 New Provider Requirements

If awarded an Agreement, Successful Proposers who do not have current Allegheny County contracts will be required to complete the [DHS New Provider Application](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/Resources/Doing-Business/Prospective-Providers.aspx), available at <http://www.alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/Resources/Doing-Business/Prospective-Providers.aspx>. While not required as part of your Proposal, Proposers may wish to review the requirements of this application.